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TRANSMIGRATION EXPERIENCES OF NEWCOMERS IN THE CONTEXT OF AN  
ENGLISH-ONLY EDUCATION: SENSE-MAKING BY FORMER NEWCOMER  
ELLS

A Dissertation Presented

by

ELIZABETH PAULSEN TONOGBANUA

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies,  
University of Massachusetts Boston,  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

May 2016

Leadership in Education Program



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## ABSTRACT

# TRANSMIGRATION EXPERIENCES OF NEWCOMERS IN THE CONTEXT OF AN ENGLISH-ONLY EDUCATION: SENSE-MAKING BY FORMER NEWCOMER ELLS

MAY 2016

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This qualitative interpretive study explored how former newcomer English Language Learners (ELLs) in Boston Public Schools (BPS) made sense of their transmigration experiences through a digital storytelling project. This study filled a gap on transmigration experiences in the context of English-only learning environments, with a particular orientation toward the value of students' home languages, and in turn, cultures within an urban school setting. The immigrant student population in BPS continues to increase and teachers must be able to understand and plan for newcomers' specific needs. My conceptual framework drew from the following four areas: general educators and their urban students, with sections on teachers' habitus and the hidden curriculum; cultural relevance in urban education; identity, which included social identity

theory and transnational identity; and school adjustment, with sections on student voice and social integration. Set in a community center in Boston and drawing on ethnographic methods, participants shared their unique educational experiences moving from Haiti to different academic programs in BPS.

The overarching research question was: How do former newcomer ELLs make sense of their transmigration experiences through a digital storytelling project? I used a combination of methods: interviews, participant observations, photography, digital storytelling to gather and analyze artifacts for themes. Adding to the body of immigration literature on how newcomers fare, implications include the role of language in social integration, ways of understanding teacher preparation and preparedness, and the utility of digital storytelling. I proposed future directions of research on how ESL teachers and administrators can enhance their professional practice of meeting ELLs' needs in their new setting and how the role of race impacts one's transmigration experience.

## DEDICATION

To my children – Amalia and Paolo.

You each came along during this process. It was a joy to have you close by me napping and rolling around as I read and reread and wrote and rewrote until finally my committee declared that I could stop.

May you both be inspired to achieve anything you desire for yourselves.

To my husband, Marc.

I was able to pursue this work because you so selflessly took care of everything else (for years). Much love and thanks to you.

To all the newcomer students who bravely begin new schools every day.

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Thank you to the six participants of this study. You were willing to take a risk on a novice researcher and bravely shared your transmigration stories with me. I learned far more about transmigration and perseverance from you than I could have anticipated. I am grateful for your dedication to this project.

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Finally, thank you to my family. Besides giving you the night off for the next five years (which I am not prepared to do), I do not know how to repay you, Marc. The professionalism and dignity that you bring to your work has influenced me from the time we met. I hope I bring even a fraction of that into my classroom. I am lucky to have such a supportive partner in every aspect of my life. Amalia and Paolo – thank you for so effortlessly taking my mind off of work and teaching me how to be more present.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The whole continent of North America appears to be destined by Divine Providence to be peopled by one nation, speaking one language, professing one general system of religious and political principles, and accustomed to one general tenor of social usages and customs.

—John Quincy Adams, 1811 (as cited in Lens, 1974, p. 3)

The well-being of immigrant children is especially important to the nation because they are the fastest-growing segment of the U.S. population.

—Tienda & Haskins, 2011, p. 5

#### **Introduction / Research Problem**

As exemplified by Adams' epigraph above, there was a strong push in the 1800s to perpetuate the myth that linguistic, religious, and political unity in the United States was not only possible but also inevitable. Adams was an early proponent of continentalism, the belief that the U.S. would ultimately spread across all of North America. He wrote the above in a letter to his father, asserting his conviction that there would come a time in the country when homogeneity would reign and differences of any



kind would cease to exist. Fast forward to the present day. Counter to Adams' assertion is the recent claim by Tienda and Haskins (2011) that linguistically and culturally diverse immigrants continue to arrive in large numbers to the United States, and once here, their cultural and linguistic mores impact how they settle into their new life. Regardless of how it seemed 200 years ago to Adams, it is not only a matter of time for immigrant children to shed their former identities and adopt the language and way of life of the new country. Whatever his meaning at that time, the reality today reflects a much different makeup of urban education and society at large.

Comprising part of the support that newcomer students need are general educators who understand and acknowledge how newcomers' educational, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds extend beyond that of their American-born, monolingual peers. As Villegas and Lucas (2007) point out, teaching these diverse students who have come from "historically marginalized groups—involves more than just applying specialized teaching techniques. It demands a new way of looking at teaching that is grounded in an understanding of the role of culture and language in learning" (p. 29).

Raising academic achievement and retaining highly qualified teachers are two priorities that often absorb much of an urban district's time and resources, whereas exploring how immigrant newcomers can and should expect to transition and adjust to their new schooling experiences usually falls by the wayside. When considering the various demands and challenges newcomers face as they adjust to their life in a new country, city, neighborhood, school, and classroom, academic needs tend to take precedence over social integration. This study sought to examine these priorities and turn them on their heads.

This interpretive study explored how former newcomer English language learner (ELL) students made sense of their transmigration experiences in relation to their education. Drawing on qualitative and ethnographic methods, I facilitated a group of former newcomer students outside of school time as they engaged in a digital storytelling project that captured their perceptions of how they adapted and adjusted to their new academic and social life in Boston.

For the purposes of this study, former newcomer ELLs are students who have lived in Boston, Massachusetts, for approximately one to three years. The data gathered while working with this group of former newcomers in Boston Public Schools (BPS) were analyzed, with a view to developing recommendations for urban school districts such as BPS. By uncovering aspects of the transmigration experiences that were both challenging and helpful for students, my hope is that newcomers, teachers, and administrators, as well as school communities as a whole, will benefit from the findings, which yielded some specific instructional and managerial recommendations.

The relationship between newcomer students' transmigration experiences and their future educational attainment has been established in the research (Gozdziak & Martin, 2005). Many urban students (U.S.-born and those who have immigrated) enter school with little or no exposure to English, the dominant language in U.S. schools, yet they are expected to take large-scale grade-level assessments in their core content areas in a relatively short amount of time. Despite these "linguistic deficits," students in Massachusetts only have one year to master the academic language and content before

their scores on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS)<sup>1</sup> are counted toward their school's adequate yearly progress (AYP). In other words, in no more than one year and one day after beginning their academic careers, regardless of their year of entry, students are held accountable for their knowledge of both language and content on statewide examinations. Students know this and feel a great deal of stress as a result (as is discussed in the analysis section), regardless of their level of English language proficiency. At the same time, schools are also judged by how well or poorly students perform on these examinations, and districts and states make funding decisions based on these results.

The policy of holding newcomer ELLs accountable for language and content knowledge at their grade level in such a short amount of time runs counter to well-established research: Grade-level competency in academic English takes between five and seven years to acquire in optimal conditions (Cummins, 2006). Optimally, students have acquired literacy in their native language before entering the school, and teachers are competent in their content area and employ second language learning methods of instruction. Language and content must be comprehensible for learning to take place (Batt, 2008). Students can only learn what they can understand, an obvious point that often gets lost in policy debates that determine the specifics of students' learning experiences.

Compounding matters, within Boston Public Schools there is limited space in full

---

<sup>1</sup>The MCAS tests all Massachusetts public school students in Grades 3-8, and again in Grade 10, including students with disabilities and English language learners per the Education Reform Law of 1993. Students must pass the Grade 10 tests in English Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics, and one of the four high school Science and Technology/Engineering tests as a requirement of high school graduation (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [MA DESE], 2013).

sheltered English immersion (SEI) programs, in which students receive their academic instruction through a scaffolded approach that simultaneously teaches students strategies for acquiring academic English and grade-level content. To date, SEI programs, though located in every network in the Boston Public School system, are not found in all schools; yet, newcomer ELLs are assigned to schools based on seat availability, where students live, and parental preference rather than SEI availability. Further, there are simply not enough licensed ESL teachers to meet the needs of all students who would benefit from having a teacher with a better suited instructional approach than what is offered in the general education setting, where teachers may or may not be able to effectively differentiate instruction to students with a range of learning needs (Rennie Center, 2007).

In Boston, there is a “critical shortage” of licensed ESL teachers (MA DESE, 2009). Funding shortfalls that reduce schools’ budgets have had a detrimental effect on the educational services that are available to immigrant children (Goodwin, 2002). However, Massachusetts General Law states that ELLs will receive an education either in an SEI program or a general education setting with additional support to acquire English (English Language Education, 2011). In order to comply, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education estimates that Massachusetts needs approximately 3,000 additional elementary and secondary SEI content teachers and approximately 500 additional licensed ESL teachers (MA DESE, 2009). Looking ahead at the projected number of ELLs in the next 10 years, the need for highly qualified ESL-certified staff in Massachusetts will only continue to increase. The shortage forces newcomers to remain in schools and classrooms where general educators may not have the necessary professional development training to address the students’ various needs (C. Suarez-

Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001).

The reality is that general educators may have had only limited professional development for fostering intercultural competence among their newcomer and U.S.-born students prior to the RETELL initiative,<sup>2</sup> which requires all core academic teachers of ELLs to earn a Sheltered English Immersion Teacher Endorsement by July 1, 2016. Thus, general educators may lack appropriate strategies that foster an environment that makes all students feel welcome and valued, and thus offer newcomers a positive social integration experience regardless of their prior educational experience, home language, or country of origin (Batt, 2008).

General educators have also been found to overlook the newcomer voice—that is, students’ needs are not taken into account (Gozdziak & Martin, 2005). This educational mismatch between general educators and newcomers—in which teachers are delivering incomprehensible instruction—can leave students feeling unwelcome, as if their culture, language, and identity are unworthy. When students feel unwelcome within an academic setting of the dominant culture, an additional barrier, beyond language use, is established at the classroom, school, and district levels from the students’ perspective. Thus, general educators must be knowledgeable of how to build relationships with all students and encourage them to appreciate the diversity they bring with them as learners, not only for themselves professionally but for the sake of positive interactions among their students as well (Goodwin, 2002).

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<sup>2</sup> In 2012, the Massachusetts Board of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education adopted new regulations in an effort to improve academic achievement by better equipping teachers with the tools to support ELLs. This initiative is known as Rethinking Equity and Teaching for English Language Learners (RETELL) and aims to radically change the way ELLs are taught all over Massachusetts (MA DESE, 2014).

## **Research Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to explore how former newcomer ELLs in Boston Public Schools made sense of their transmigration experiences through a digital storytelling project. Newcomers are students who have moved to the United States within the last one to three years and represent a range of educational, linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds. I worked with former newcomers because I wanted to learn about students' reflections on the numerous transitions they had made after living in the United States for approximately one to three years. At the time of the study, some of my participants still received English as a second language (ESL) services while others received language instruction in English language arts (ELA) classes. None of the participants had become formerly limited English proficient (FLEP)<sup>3</sup> to my knowledge. With a range of one to three years living in Boston, participants' language acquisition varied greatly. Everyone produced social language in English during our sessions; however, some of the participants' receptive language skills, namely listening, impacted their ability to understand the issues raised in this study. There were times when the participants were unable to provide answers in English without needing to rely on translation.

The transmigration experiences I aimed to learn about included: prior educational history; circumstances surrounding the move, including those with whom students moved and what advance notice they were given; feelings regarding reception upon arrival; and social integration at school. For the purposes of this study, social integration, as defined

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<sup>3</sup> A student who is formerly limited English proficient (FLEP) has transitioned out of ESL instruction at some point during the current school year or within the past two school years. The federal government requires that states continue to monitor the progress of FLEP students (MA DESE, 2007).

by the Integration Work Group of the Office of Refugee Resettlement, is a dynamic, multidirectional process between newcomers and their receiving school communities in which both parties work together intentionally, through a “shared commitment to acceptance and justice, to create a secure, welcoming, vibrant, and cohesive learning community” (as cited in Gilbert, Hein, & Losby, 2010, p. 6). Social integration can only be achieved through an honest and clear assessment of the problems newcomers face (Gozdziak & Martin, 2005).

This study adds to the bodies of literature on immigration and education, and on bilingual education in that it explored students’ transmigration experiences in the context of an urban school in English-only learning environment. As such, Boston Public Schools, with the largest concentration of ELLs in the Commonwealth, made an excellent case site to examine students’ transmigration experiences. Thus, this qualitative study filled a gap on transmigration experiences in the context of English-only learning environments, with a particular orientation toward the value of students’ home languages and, in turn, cultures within an urban school setting.

To date, immigration literature has informed teachers and administrators about ways in which newcomers can be supported within the context of bilingual education. However, exploring how receiving school communities welcome newcomers is a timely topic worthy of examination because in Massachusetts ELLs receive nearly all of their academic classroom instruction in an English-only setting due largely to a 2002 ballot initiative that amended state law and greatly limited bilingual education. More to the point, the extent to which newcomer ELLs are integrated socially into their learning environment—which has become a complex issue since 2002—can and will affect these

students later on in their education and in the workplace. Later in this chapter I will provide an extensive historical overview of the English-only movement and include background information about the 2002 ballot initiative.

In reviewing the numerous studies pertinent to the reception of newcomer students, I also present the context in which ELLs attend and have historically attended urban public schools in the U.S. I also explore historic and current language policies in conjunction with the English-only movement nationally and locally. These policies have impacted school culture and teachers' perspectives, which in turn have affected newcomers' educational experiences.

Massachusetts is a unique setting for newcomers to begin their schooling in the U.S., particularly as Boston Public Schools is in the process of revamping how ELLs are educated. Many newcomer students, through no choice of their own, are uprooted and placed in learning environments that are unfamiliar to them in many respects. Yet, unbeknownst to them, their teachers' collective memory of intolerance and a lack of acceptance toward cultural and linguistic diversity in schools can create an experience in which newcomers may feel that their language and culture have little value. Students' learning experiences and the language policies that influence them will be discussed in relation to inclusive school environments, which value new students' languages, cultures, and identities (Carter, 2012).

### **Research Overview**

This study documents the experiences and perceptions of former newcomer students who arrived in the United States approximately one to three years prior. Participants took pictures or used existing imagery to add to a digital story, which



expressed participants' views of how they adapted and adjusted to their new environment. This work informs what an inclusive school setting—that is, one which values new students' languages, cultures, and identities—"looks like" in the context of an English-only education. The findings have clear implications for policy recommendations about how schools can anticipate and plan for newcomers' specific social needs.

### **Research Questions**

This study's research questions center on understanding how former newcomer ELLs make sense of their transmigration experiences after approximately one to three years in the context of completing a digital storytelling project with peers of a similar background. The overarching research question guiding the study was, how do former newcomer ELLs make sense of their transmigration experiences through a digital storytelling project that uses Photovoice? To examine this question, four sub-questions were developed: (1) How do students understand the circumstances around their move? (2) What types of initial interactions do students recall having in their schools? (3) How do students make sense of social integration in their schools in the context of an English-only education? (4) How can a digital storytelling project using Photovoice facilitate student meaning-making of their transmigration experiences?

### **Significance of the Issue**

Newcomer ELLs bring with them additional needs that go beyond those of U.S.-born, monolingual students. Along with the pressures of taking large-scale assessments in a relatively short amount of time, newcomers must also adjust to a new school environment, learn a second language and culture at an intense pace, and face the

possibility that no one else in their classroom may know their home language and culture, as was the case for one of the participants in this study.

It is also significant to note that there is more than one type of newcomer entering urban public schools (Goodwin, 2002). Some students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE) in Boston Public Schools have had limited educational opportunity in their home country and may have limited literacy skills in their native language. In general though, ELLs who have attended school in their home country and are literate in their native language are able to transfer the knowledge, skills, and concepts obtained in their home country to their new second language (Cummins, 2006). However, with limited literacy in a first language and limited experience being a student, research has established that educating SLIFE must begin with the acquisition of literacy skills in their native language before they can begin to transfer their knowledge to English, their second language (DeCapua, Smathers, & Tang, 2009). By utilizing a native-literacy-intensive process, students' native languages serve as a bridge as they acquire their second language.

These types of issues with newcomers, specifically SLIFE, are significant because the immigrant population—and thus the ELL student population—in the U.S. continues to increase (Crumpler, 2014; Rennie Center, 2007). ELLs in Massachusetts are the state's fastest growing group of students and, as a group, “experience the largest proficiency gap when compared to their native English speaking peers” (MA DESE, 2014). According to a recent census report, there are 40 million foreign-born residents currently residing in the U.S., 984,000 of them in Massachusetts alone (Walters & Trevelyan, 2011). Most of these residents arrived prior to 2005, although trends indicate steady arrivals of

newcomers between 2005 and 2010. At the national level, 17% of these residents are newly arrived, while in Massachusetts the percentage is slightly higher at 20.5% (Maxwell, 2011; Walters & Trevelyan, 2011). Over the last two decades, the share of Boston's foreign-born population has increased at a faster pace than Massachusetts and the U.S. In 1990, 20% of the city's total population was foreign-born, compared to 27% in 2010 (Boston Redevelopment Authority [BRA], 2012; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). In fact, Boston had the sixth highest proportion of foreign-born residents among the 25 largest U.S. cities (BRA, 2012). Thus, the immigrant student population in Boston Public Schools continues to increase. It appears that this trend will continue and schools will continue to enroll increasing numbers of newcomers of varying ages, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and socioeconomic status.

### **Boston Public Schools**

Boston Public Schools, the oldest school district in the United States, has 134 schools with an enrollment of 56,650 students. Student demographics indicate that learners within the district are 41% Hispanic, 35% Black, 15% White, 9% Asian, and 1% other/multiracial. In light of this student diversity, the mission of BPS is to transform students' lives through "exemplary teaching in a world-class system of innovative, welcoming schools," though some school sites are better equipped to do this than others (BPS Communications Office, 2015).

ELL students in BPS speak 75 different languages, the most widely spoken being Spanish, Haitian Creole, Cape Verdean Creole, Chinese, Vietnamese, Portuguese, Somali, French, and Arabic. BPS has a sizable and diverse ELL population of 24,757 (46% of the total BPS student body), with 15,503 (29%) designated as limited English

proficient (LEP). The majority of these students (62%) were born in the U.S. and within a few years have shown they are able to pass an assessment deeming them formerly limited English proficient (FLEP), meaning they no longer require English as a second language (ESL) classes to master academic language and content simultaneously. Upon careful research, 28% of BPS students continue to struggle to understand academic English, leaving little doubt that the instructional core—teacher’s knowledge, students’ engagement, and academically challenging curriculum—needs more effective strategies to increase academic achievement for ELLs (BPS Communications Office, 2015).

Based on current data, I found that no solid, district-wide policy existed in BPS that informed schools about how newcomers should be welcomed into their new environment. Thus, this study sought to help fill the gap between policy and practice by exploring students’ transmigration experiences as they related to educational practices in BPS. Boston Public Schools learners’ rich cultural and linguistic backgrounds necessitate educational services that go beyond the needs of general education. BPS staff and schools must therefore be prepared to educate all learners while meeting the stringent requirements established by a settlement agreement the district entered into in 2010. For the past few years, Boston Public Schools and the U.S. Departments of Justice and Education have been working together to address the violation of ELLs’ civil rights in the district. Federal agencies have faulted BPS for inappropriately categorizing students as having “opted out” of ESL classes, when in fact that was found not to be the case at all (Zehr, 2010). The U.S. Justice Department cited that since 2003, BPS “failed to properly identify and adequately serve thousands of ELLs as required by the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974 and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964” (as cited in Zehr,

2010). (These statutes are further discussed in the next section.) In order for ELLs to be successful in the U.S., as maintained by the Justice Department and the Office for Civil Rights, they need ESL classes at the beginner and intermediate levels, and embedded ESL strategies used in instruction for advanced-level ELLs. Both federal agencies are working with the BPS to ensure that all ELLs have access to ESL classes. To meet this need, ESL-licensed teachers have been hired, and general educators within BPS have been offered trainings to ensure that their instructional strategies adhere to current best practices.

The settlement agreement, explained above, sought to remedy the social and emotional, and academic damage done from the implementation of Question 2 (also discussed later in this chapter under the Unz Initiative). In Boston in 2003, there were declines in the identification of students with limited English proficiency and programs for ELLs saw decline in their enrollments as well. These numbers rebounded somewhat in the school years that followed, but did not return fully to the values noted during the school year of 2003. During the years following Question 2, ELLs were tested and designated as needing special education services in much higher numbers than in the years prior. There was also an increase in suspensions and grade retention, as well as a rise in the drop-out rate. The participants of this study began their education in BPS after it entered into the settlement agreement. With professional development for teachers who instruct ELLs, such as SIOP<sup>4</sup> training, Category 1, 2, 3, and 4 training<sup>5</sup>, including MELA-

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<sup>4</sup> SIOP is the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol framework developed by researchers with expertise in the instruction of second language learners. General educators learn how to teach both academic content and language skills using effective approaches for English learners, and teachers hone techniques for planning and delivering lessons with all students' language needs in mind (Pearson Education, 2015).

O certification, and now with mandated RETELL courses mandated (which replaced the recommended Category trainings), the climate in which the participants of this study began BPS was entirely different from the practices in place during the years that immediately followed the implementation of Question 2. Boston Public Schools is now in a better position to ensure that all students who enroll in the BPS are able to be placed in any school they choose and will find teachers prepared to meet their cultural and linguistic needs.

### **History of the English-only Movement**

American citizens have held consistently negative attitudes toward people wishing to enter the United States, and the more recent the immigrant group, the more negative the opinion.

—Hingham, 1980 (as cited in C. Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001, p. 38)

A historical perspective is needed to understand the current state of public education for ELLs. The epigraph above argues that Americans do not care for any group of newcomers, notably the newest to the country, as the most recent arrivals are thought to be markedly unlike the American citizens whose families arrived generations earlier. With this in mind, this section presents a brief overview of the history of education that ELLs have received since the U.S. was founded. This history will shed some light on how

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<sup>5</sup> Category Training refers to four categories of training that MADESE recommended to SEI teachers who have ELLs. Category 1 was Second Language Learning and Teaching. Category 2 was Sheltering Content Instruction. Category 3 was Assessment of Speaking and Listening. Category 4 was Teaching Reading and Writing to Limited English Proficient Students. These four professional development trainings stopped being given in 2012 have been replaced with RETELL courses (MADESE, 2014).

and why newcomers, and ELLs in general, have been marginalized and viewed as an unwanted addition to academic settings. I will discuss federal and state policies as they pertain to the quality of education offered to ELLs and, lastly, will offer some criticisms of these policies.

The English-only movement has been a divisive issue for most of U.S. history. No matter which side of the issue one is on, Americans feel strongly that they know what is best for newcomers. What is clear, however, is that the founding fathers chose not to declare an official language (Heath, 1976, as cited in García, 2009). Their reasons included a belief in “tolerance for linguistic diversity within the population, the economic and social value of foreign language knowledge and citizenry, and a desire not to restrict the linguistic and cultural freedom of those living in the new country” (Lewelling, 1997, p. 2). The founders viewed the dominance of English as an advantage for the new nation, but they did not see the need to legislate it as the official language (Crawford, 2008).

From the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the First World War, there was a great diversity of languages in the United States, as well as tolerance of them. The presence of different languages was encouraged through religion, newspapers, and in both private and public schools (Baker, 2006). Immigrants settled in rural enclaves and ran their own non-English schools and were rarely subjected to language restrictions (Crawford, 2000). During this period, it should be noted, concepts such as “bilingualism” and “language minorities,” as they are known today, were not part of a “major national consciousness about language” (Baker, 2006, p. 190). In fact, the politicization of language use and U.S. language policy has been a fairly recent phenomenon in U.S. history.

**18<sup>th</sup> century.** There were exceptions of course. As far back as the 1750s, Benjamin Franklin was a major proponent of English-language schools and opposed the expansion of German culture. The prominent American boldly espoused his beliefs:

Those who come hither are generally of the most ignorant Stupid Sort of their own Nation, and as Ignorance is often attended with Credulity when Knavery would mislead it, and with Suspicion when Honesty would set it right; and as few of the English understand the German Language, and so cannot address them either from the Press or Pulpit, 'tis almost impossible to remove any prejudices they once entertain. (Franklin, 1753, as cited in Crawford, 2000, p. 11)

Franklin was condemning not only German immigrants' mother tongue but their entire identity. He devalued and marginalized newcomers who lacked power in the dominant English-speaking culture. Franklin further pondered:

Why should Pennsylvania, founded by the English, become a Colony of *Aliens*, who will shortly be so numerous as to Germanize us instead of our Anglifying them, and will never adopt our Language or Customs, any more than they can acquire our Complexion. (as cited in Crawford, 2000, p. 11)

Before the U.S. was even an independent country, Franklin believed that colonists should show no tolerance to linguistic minorities. He raised the issue of complexion, possibly for the first time in U.S. history, as something that was wrong with newcomers, including the implication that newcomers should want Anglican skin. It should come as no surprise then that Franklin established charity schools, which were used to Anglicize the Germans in Pennsylvania, foreshadowing a theme in U.S. public school education that continues to this day.



**19<sup>th</sup> century.** For all languages other than English, language policies grew steadily more restrictive in the late 1800s (García, 2009). Numerous states began enacting laws mandating English-only instruction. Wisconsin's and Illinois' teachers at public and parochial schools, for instance, were forced to provide English-only instruction to their learners in the 1880s (Crawford, 2000). The California legislature mandated English-only instruction in 1855, not to mention instituting the harsh language-suppression policies of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (García, 2009). In 1889, a U.S. Bureau of Education bulletin on Indian education set goals and policies for Indian schools, establishing that English should be the only language spoken and that only English-speaking teachers should instruct students in schools "[that are] supported wholly or in part by the Government" (Spring, 2010, p. 35). Teaching allegiance to the U.S. government also became a priority during this time. Policymakers set out to combat the cultural and linguistic "deficits" of minorities, with little thought given to measuring the effectiveness of the policies and even less attention to the discriminatory nature of these practices. White, English-only-speaking males (i.e., the dominant culture) ensured they would be kept in power for years to come.

**20<sup>th</sup> century.** Beginning in the early 1900s, politicians at every level stepped squarely into the ring as a contentious battle with educators ensued around how second language learners efficiently acquire a second language. As time progressed, local, state, and federal governments only grew more organized in their intolerance of new foreigners and indigenous people. In 1906, the Nationality Act required those who wished to be naturalized as U.S. citizens demonstrate proficiency in English. After serving as president, Theodore Roosevelt, in 1915, led the rallying cry of the 20<sup>th</sup> century:

There is no room in this country for hyphenated Americanism [...] The foreign born must talk the language of its native-born fellow-citizens [...]. We have room for but one language in this country, and that is the English language, for we intend to see that the crucible turns our people out as Americans, of American nationality, and not as dwellers in a polyglot boarding house. (as cited in García, 2009, p. 165).

The president also described perpetuating differences of language in this country as a crime. He went so far as to approximate a timeline for newcomers to adapt to their new country's rules and customs, and to become proficient in the dominant language:

Every immigrant, by day schools for the young and night schools for the adult, the chance to learn English; and if after, say, five years, he has not learned English, he should be sent back to the land from whence he came. (Roosevelt, 1917, as cited in Crawford, 2000, p. 21)

Roosevelt suggested that if immigrants knew that their time would potentially expire in their new land, they would be motivated enough to acquire English and learn U.S. customs. Furthermore, the assumption was that newcomers need a timeline to compel them to adhere to dominant cultural and linguistic standards. Roosevelt seemed to imply that the responsibilities of supporting a family and maintaining a job, for instance, were secondary to attending “night schools” in order for newcomers to acquire standard American English. Unfortunately for those who needed to learn English, things got worse before they got better.

In 1903, roughly 25% of states (14 out of 48) set regulations requiring that English be the only language of instruction (García, 2009). In 1918, Texas passed legislation that

“made it a criminal offense to use any language but English in the schools” (Spring, 2010, p. 97). Not only were linguistic minorities unwelcome, but they also ran the risk of being jailed. The Red Scare further created an air of suspicion toward non-English-speaking Americans. In the year 1919 alone, 15 states adopted English-only instruction laws, solidifying the ideological link between speaking “good English” and being a “good American” (Crawford, 2000). The period between the two World Wars marked an institutionalized intolerance to linguistic diversity. By 1923, 34 states adopted identical language-restriction measures. In 1940 and again in 1950, U.S. immigration laws were changed to require English proficiency in order for an individual to enter the country—the ultimate act of language vigilantism (Brown, 1992).

**Tolerance in the mid-20th century.** In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Brown vs. Board of Education* that segregated schools were unconstitutional, establishing the principle that “same is not equal.” This rationale was later used for how language-minority students should be educated (García, 2009). For the first time after the end of World War II, bilingual programs came into being. Carol Way Elementary School in Dade County (Miami, Florida) opened in 1963. There, Cuban teachers taught students who were both native English-speaking and native Spanish-speaking. Other bilingual schools also opened in Texas and New Mexico using this model.

The civil rights period offered some relief to victims of longstanding discrimination and oppression. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act was passed in 1964 and was largely viewed as a measure that advanced bilingual education across the country. Specifically, this act prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin. Reagan then undid the English-only instruction mandate as the governor of

California in 1967 (García, 2009). The right to bilingual education was incorporated into federal civil rights legislation, which in 1968 became Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, or the Bilingual Education Act. Senator Ralph Yarborough of Texas characterized the act as a quick way for students to learn English, though at its inception poor students were the only ones allowed to participate. Yarborough maintained,

It is not the purpose of this bill to create pockets of different languages throughout the country [...] not to stamp out the mother tongue, and not to make their mother tongue the dominant language, but just to try and make those children fully literate in English. (Crawford, 2004, as cited in García, 2009, p. 169)

Although this “right to bilingual education” was left purposely vague, it meant that Congress had to reserve funding for school districts that had significant populations of second language learners and wanted to create bilingual education programs or develop instructional materials in students’ first languages. Linguistic minorities would now be protected when they raised their concerns about their academic progress and their inequitable schooling experiences (Gandara & Contreras, 2010). Bilingual education was supposed to improve achievement by using students’ first language as a bridge to achievement in English, as is well established in research (Cummins, 2006). However, the implementation of the new legislation was overly ambiguous, leaving room for politicians to propose ways to “remedy” certain issues. Programs utilized two languages, English and the learners’ first language, and different models of bilingual education were implemented, depending on the learners’ needs and the teachers’ expertise (Urban & Wagoner, 2009).

ELLs continued to experience educational victories in the 1970s. In 1971, Massachusetts became the first state to mandate bilingual education for those who were not proficient in English (Gort, de Jong, & Cobb, 2008). In 1974, the Bilingual Education Act was reauthorized for the first time, granting eligibility to limited English proficient (LEP) students of any socioeconomic status. For the first time, a formal definition of bilingual education was adopted:

Instruction given in, and study of, English and (to the extent necessary to allow a child to progress effectively through the education system) the native language of the children of limited English speaking ability; and such instruction is given with appreciation for the cultural heritage of such children, and (with respect to elementary school instruction) such instruction shall (to the extent necessary) be in all courses or subjects of study which will allow a child to progress effectively through the educational system. (Castellanos, 1983, as cited in García, 2009, p. 169)

That same year, the Supreme Court held, in *Lau v. Nichols*, 1974, that if a student does not understand English, that student's access to American schooling is effectively foreclosed. The *Lau* ruling did not require schools to implement bilingual programs, or any methodology whatsoever; it only specified that students had to be given access to the same curriculum as their English-dominant peers. However, ELL advocates believed that bilingual education seemed the commonsense response to that challenge. By 1978, Congress mandated that "bilingual education was to be used only to the extent necessary to allow a child to achieve competence in the English language" (Gandara & Contreras, 2010, p. 127). School districts and educators could not aim to achieve literacy in the

learners' primary language, which caused many schools to back away from using primary language instruction to boost general academic skills.

How bilingual education is enacted has changed as the perspectives of politicians and educators shift in ideology and practice. The Reagan administration was generally hostile to bilingual education and did little but perpetuate falsehoods. On March 3, 1981, President Reagan stated that it is "absolutely wrong and against the American concept to have a bilingual education program that is now openly, admittedly, dedicated to preserving their native language and never getting them adequate in English so they can go out into the job market" (as cited in Baker, 2006, p. 194). Reagan mistakenly maintained that native language maintenance meant neglecting English language acquisition. Consequently, a binary relationship was created: Bilingual education programs were perceived as serving to neglect English language competence. Reagan rejected bilingual education in favor of English immersion programs because he believed that "sink or swim" worked best. It is in this context that many general educators have had their own values and core beliefs shaped either as students or as fledgling teachers in urban public schools.

One decade later, in 1996, Congress voted for the first time on, and the House of Representatives approved, H.R. 123, "The Bill Emerson English Language Empowerment Act of 1996," which would have made English the official language of the U.S. government. The bill passed in the House with a bipartisan vote of 259-169 but failed in the Senate (Crawford, 2000). Even though the bill ultimately died, the damage had been done. Americans of the dominant culture and language group proved that they

were organized and would continue to work to strip away the little ground gained by advocate groups for ELLs during the civil rights era.

Presently, 30 states have some form of an official-English law, while 48 states have entertained the notion to some extent. U.S. English, an organization advocating English-only policies, is working in several states to pass measures that will enact new official-English bills or strengthen existing legislation (U.S. English, 2011).

**Unz initiative.** There are a range of political, economic, and ideological factors that impact English language learning in the United States (Goodwin, 2002). In the late 1990s, the Unz initiative dominated the press, and reporters listened intently to Ron Unz's every word, demonstrating how bilingual education can be presented as a controversial issue in the mainstream news. In 1998, Ron Unz, a successful businessman who had aspirations for political office, seized the opportunity to make bilingual education his niche campaign issue, garnering much statewide fame, despite his lack of experience in education or knowledge of English language learners. The goal of the Unz initiative was to strip students of their right to access their native language as they acquire English in an academic setting. Outrageous assertions by Unz—such as, “most bilingual programs [do] not teach English”—went un-scrutinized by the press, which printed his allegations as though they were facts (Gandara & Contreras, 2010, p. 143-144). During one debate, Unz admitted he had never been in a bilingual classroom but instead based his ideas about the failure of bilingual education on things he had read “in junior high school.”

Somehow, little or no attention was paid to the fact that the majority of ELLs, who were thought to be failing because of bilingual education, were not enrolled in

bilingual education programs. The same currently holds true for the overwhelming majority of ELLs in Boston Public Schools; they are enrolled in monolingual schools and receive sheltered instruction in an English-only learning environment. In 1997, just before the passage of the Unz initiative in California, only 29% of English language learners were enrolled in bilingual programs, and more than 70% were in English immersion programs. Gandara and Contreras (2010) maintain that the absurdity of blaming a bilingual model of education on the educational failure of children who had never been instructed by that model was never raised during the campaign. Moreover, comparisons that should have been drawn were not. English-speaking Latinos and poor Black students, who also fared very poorly in school but were monolingual English-speaking students, were not held up by the press as counterexamples to Unz's claims.

There was in fact an estimated shortage of 27,000 bilingual teachers, and only 20% of ELLs were taught by fully certified instructors—a shortage that has also not been remedied in Massachusetts. The overwhelming majority of ELLs have been taught in settings that did not meet their academic or social needs, as determined by educational researchers. Therefore, if programs were “failing” at the time Unz was making his claims, it was more reasonable to blame English-only methodologies, an observation that eluded most reporters (Crawford, 2000). The challenges faced by ELLs in under-resourced, under-staffed settings and taught by teachers unqualified to effectively teach second language acquisition should have motivated politicians to invest in sound educational practices, not the opposite.

Indeed, ELLs are not a monolith, and their instructional needs should not be decided by the uninformed or misled. Unz won in California and succeeded in Arizona in



2000. Massachusetts, with a total ELL population of 5%, also voted 61% in favor of the Massachusetts English Language Education in Public Schools initiative, also known as Question 2 (Ballotpedia, 2012). Supporters claimed that bilingual education had been a failed experiment in Massachusetts, leaving ELLs unable to speak English after years of instruction. Opponents, on the other hand, among whom were members of the state legislature's Joint Committee on Education, Arts and Humanities, believed the law to be "overly simplistic and inflexible," making the case that the initiative disregards research indicating that there is more than one effective method of teaching English. They held that the initiative mandates all students to be taught by a single method and greatly restricts how local school districts choose to instruct ELLs (Ballotpedia, 2012). Framing the issue as an "either/or" decision benefitted Unz's campaign and placed opponents in new territory—as defenders of the status quo (Crawford, 2000). The initiative was defeated in Colorado, however, by a carefully crafted counteroffensive, paid for largely by a wealthy White parent of a child in a dual-language program (Gandara, & Contreras, 2010). It should be noted here, though, that education for ELLs in Massachusetts remains restricted, leaving districts to apply for waivers when the curriculum is modified to meet the cultural and linguistic needs of its students.

Given the current state of affairs of ELLs in Boston Public Schools, it seems ironic to look back at Massachusetts' accomplishment as the first state to approve transitional bilingual programs in public schools. More than a decade later, Boston Public Schools' ELL student population is floundering, given these restrictions. Doucet (2014) argues that "in the same way that language is a stand-in for contests over social

status in Haiti and among Haitians in the Diaspora, the English-only war is a thin disguise for xenophobia” (p. 17).

**21<sup>st</sup> century.** In 2000, President Clinton signed Executive Order 13166, which required any entity receiving federal monies to provide services to its constituents in any language. The federal government affirmed its commitment to improving the accessibility of these services to eligible LEP persons, a goal that reinforces its equally important commitment to promoting programs and activities designed to help individuals learn English (U.S. English, 2011). In 2002, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) reauthorized the Bilingual Education Act (Baker, 2006). NCLB, although controversial in its funding and implementation, holds schools and districts accountable for LEP students’ academic progress, forcing schools to subcategorize ESL students when they measure AYP. Report cards and other notices sent home from school must now be in parents’ native languages, creating a more inclusive—or at least potentially more inclusive—school community.

### **Official English Movement**

The official English movement has been part of Americans’ collective social consciousness for over 30 years, with varying degrees of prominence over time. The official English movement aims to pass constitutional amendments at the national and state levels making English the official language of the United States. These attempts have sparked a tumultuous debate, and ironically both sides feel their respective position allows for a more unified America. In 1983, U.S. Senator S.I. Hayakawa started U.S. English, an organization that lobbies to make English the official language of the United States. Since then, organizations such as ProEnglish, English First, and the American

Ethnic Coalition have all been spawned by U.S. English members. These groups have sizable membership bases and generous donors.

Official English holds that government business should be required to be conducted solely in English. This includes all public documents, records, legislation, and regulations, as well as hearings, official ceremonies, and public meetings. According to U.S. English (2011), official English legislation contains “commonsense exceptions” permitting the use of other languages for such activities as public health and safety services, judicial proceedings, foreign language instruction, and the promotion of tourism. It is worth noting that comprehensible input for ELLs in education is not deemed to be “commonsense.”

**Arguments for official English.** In 1982, Senator S. I. Hayakawa, the modern father of the official English movement, introduced an amendment in support of English as the official language of the U.S. In his speech, in which he introduced the amendment to immigration legislation (S. 2222), he argued that it is the sense of the Congress that

- (1) the English language is the official language of the United States, and
- (2) no language other than the English language is recognized as the official language of the United States. (U.S. English, 2014)

He generated the key arguments for making English the only official language of the U.S., which have been refuted by educators and linguists. Hayakawa believed that making English the official language by law would send the right signal to newcomers about the importance of learning English and would provide the necessary guidance to legislators for preserving unofficial U.S. policy of a common language. Hayakawa

thought that government had been increasingly reluctant to press immigrants to learn the English language for fear of being accused of “cultural imperialism” (Hayakawa, 1989, p. 564). Rather than insisting that it is the immigrant’s duty to learn the language of this country, Hayakawa argued, the government has acted as if it has a duty to accommodate an immigrant in his native language. Hayakawa would stop at nothing to remedy what in his view was the government’s “permissive” stance.

The major tenets of the official English movement can be broken down into a few categories. The most widely held argument is that English binds Americans together. Hayakawa (1989) held that “while it is certainly true that our love of freedom and devotion to democratic principles help to unite and give us a mutual purpose, it is English, our common language” that enables Americans to discuss views and maintain a well-informed electorate, the cornerstone of democratic government (p. 563). Secondly, in a pluralistic nation, government should foster the similarities that unite a citizenry, rather than the differences that separate them. Moreover, “unless we become serious about protecting our heritage as a unilingual society, Hayakawa maintained that we may lose a precious resource that has helped us forge a national character and identity from so many diverse elements” (Lewelling, 1997, p. 2). This last point is particularly hypocritical, given the rich multilingual heritage of U.S. society. Such arguments stoke language vigilantism; despite the fact that there is no danger of another language becoming dominant, local officials and individuals take it upon themselves to enforce discriminatory policies to “unite” Americans with a common language. Yet, nothing is more disuniting than denial of the human rights of subgroups, which includes individuals’ rights to their languages (Gandara & Contreras, 2010).

Other arguments for official English are equally value-laden in their distaste for diversity, crude in their analogies with other nations, credulous about the power of social engineering, and lacking in factual evidence (Crawford, 2000). Indeed, they are difficult to take seriously. First, English-only organizations, espousing a Eurocentric viewpoint, want others to believe that today's immigrants refuse to learn English, unlike the "good old immigrants" of the past. Yet, at no point in history were groups of people able to "just learn" a new language; such acquisition takes time, effort, and motivation on the student's part, and effective pedagogy on the part of the teacher (C. Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001).

In addition, newcomers want to learn English, but they are discouraged from doing so by scarce ESL programs (Tucker, 2006). According to official English proponents, languages are best learned in situations that force individuals to do so in a mainstream English-only classroom; research, however, has shown this claim to be false, as will be discussed further below. Second, proponents argue that language conflict, ethnic hostility, and political separatism similar to that which unfolded in Quebec will occur in the U.S., as the country will be torn apart politically (Gandara & Contreras, 2010). Unless English is the official language of the United States, English-only proponents believe the U.S. "risks being balkanized by non-English language groups" (Padilla et al., 1991, p. 121). To summarize Hayakawa's main ideas, English is key to participation in the opportunities that American life has to offer, and an immersion program without any first-language supports is the best way to educate ELLs.

**Criticisms of the English-only Movement.** James Crawford, the foremost critic of the official English movement, posits a firm argument for why making English the

official language of the U.S. would be a grave mistake. He has written prolifically on the matter and testified to Congress, maintaining that the English-only movement “ignites ethnic conflicts” and is harmful to national priorities (Crawford, 2006). Crawford makes his case with the following points. He holds that official English is unnecessary as English is already the dominant language and remains unthreatened. The danger of proliferating non-English languages is a recurrent theme in the anti-immigrant ethos of the U.S., but there has not been any evidence of a serious threat. In addition, an English-only measure is punitive because it restricts the government’s ability to communicate in other languages, which would threaten the rights and welfare of millions of people, including many American citizens. Crawford also views official English as pointless because English-only legislation does not give practical assistance to anyone who wants to learn English. Official English laws have been declared unconstitutional in state and federal courts because they violate guarantees of freedom of speech and equal protection of the laws. Lastly, Crawford maintains that English-only policies are self-defeating. They make no sense in an era of globalization, where multilingual skills are essential to economic prosperity and national security (Crawford, 2000). Social and economic opportunities abound for university-educated, multilingual individuals who are interculturally competent.

Furthermore, the U.S. government has recognized the need to channel resources to fund the learning of languages other than English that are deemed critical to national security, as evidenced by the 2006 National Security Language Initiative. However, such efforts are aimed at students who do not speak those languages. At the same time, the language resources of those bilingual Americans who already speak those languages are

not recognized or developed in schools (García, Zakharia, & Otcu, 2013); rather, these students and their languages are viewed as “foreign” in the context of English-only policies.

At the heart of English-only mandates is a mechanism of exclusion rather than assimilation (Citrin, Reingold, & Walters, 1990). Schools are fitting sites for examining this exclusion:

Schools that enforce an “English-only” policy are, willingly or not, sending students a message about the status and importance of languages other than English. In some of these schools, students are forbidden to speak their native language not only in the classroom, but even in the halls, the cafeteria, and the playground. To students who speak a language other than English, the message is clear: Your language is not welcome here; it is less important than English.

(Nieto, 2010, pp. 43-44)

Despite how well-intended English-only policy may be, or how it may have been designed with a genuine desire to foster proficient English-speaking students, the effect on students is a feeling of disapproval of their very identities.

English is a valuable economic asset, and research indicates that immigrants are anxious to learn it. M. Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, and Qin-Hilliard (2004) found that first-generation immigrants tended to learn English and pass it along to their children, who became bilingual. By the third generation, the original language was often lost. Throughout the United States, the demand for ESL training far outstrips supply, leading adult newcomers to encounter long lines and waitlists before gaining access to classes. In fact, 60% of free ESL programs in 12 states ran waiting lists spanning a few months in

Colorado and Nevada to two years at the New York Public Libraries, as well as in New Mexico and Massachusetts (Tucker, 2006, as cited in Potowski, 2010). As Tucker (2006) summarized, adult ESL classes are “substantial and increasing” (p. 1). According to census data, in 2000, there were over 21 million people in the United States—more than the population of Australia—unable to speak English “very well.” About 4.4 million households, or 11.9 million people, were “linguistically isolated from the rest of the populace” (Tucker, 2006, p. 1). Despite evidence that immigrants will learn English and become fluent, it remains unclear why immigrants must lose their own language in order to develop proficient English skills in this era of global capitalism and transnationalism (Gandara & Contreras, 2010; C. Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001).

**Additive vs. subtractive bilingualism.** The U.S. government should strive to create schools that offer learning environments in which students can add a new language—that is, academic English—rather than strip away their linguistic capital through subtractive language policies (National Research Council, 1997). Adding a second language, called additive bilingualism, is vastly different from the traditional belief that immigrants need to subtract their native language from their linguistic repertoire to accommodate their new language (Lambert, 1975, as cited in Nieto, 2010). “When children’s language identities come together in the practices they engage in at home, in school, and in their neighborhoods, students’ ability to use two languages develops in additive, recursive, or dynamic ways” (García, 2009, p. 106). The result is that children are better suited to gain the cognitive and social advantages of bilingualism.

Nieto (2010) observes that “the terrible psychic costs of abandoning one’s native language, not to mention the concurrent loss of linguistic resources to the nation, is now



being questioned. Additive bilingualism supports the notion that English *plus* other languages can make us stronger individually and as a society” (p. 125). Similarly, Padilla et al.’s (1991) work found that subtractive language policies advocated by the English-only movement can have detrimental effects on language-minority children’s identification with their groups, their selves, and U.S. society. When policies mandate that schools deny children’s skills in their home language/s, they deny the cognitive and academic competence already available through those languages, thus denying the identity and self-respect of the children themselves. Instead of building upon existing language proficiency and knowledge, the “sink or swim” approach is used to replace such language abilities (Baker, 2006; Piller, 2014). Evidencing the detriments of subtractive language policies, thousands of students in Massachusetts are left struggling each year, as their potential is undermined by the 2002 statewide referendum (i.e., Question 2), which is “increasingly out of synch with the demographic reality in Massachusetts” (García, 2013). Language subtraction research is similar to Fine’s (1986, as cited in Ladson-Billings, 1995) work that examined academically successful African American students: The students’ academic success was at the expense of their cultural and psychosocial well-being.

ELLs are part of the community and entitled to services from government, infuriating English-only advocates because of the translation of street signs or tax forms or children’s lessons, but more so because such accommodations symbolize a public recognition that may entail “special” programs and expenditures. Therefore, when the government offers bilingual assistance, the status of language minorities is elevated as the structures of power, class, and ethnicity are altered. The subsequent demand for language

restrictions therefore reinforces the existing social order and status quo for dominant culture (Crawford, 2000). Despite the overwhelming evidence of how demographics are changing and will continue to change, proponents of the official English movement work to keep the structures of power the same. American children should be able to be on par with students from other high-performing countries, in terms of their educational achievement, and viewing their linguistic capital as a resource is one way to remain highly competitive, as socioeconomic benefits have been associated with bilingualism (García, 2009). Stripping students of their native language in kindergarten just to have them acquire a foreign language in middle or high school is counterintuitive.

Proponents of the English-only movement and other educators who are willing to violate linguistic minority students' democratic rights to be educated in their own language as well as in English work primarily to "preserve a social (dis)order" (Macedo, 2000, p. 22). Macedo's (2000) criticisms of English-only are twofold:

First, if English is the most effective educational language, how can we explain why over 60 million Americans are illiterate or functionally illiterate? Second, if English-only education can guarantee linguistic minorities a better future, as educators like William Bennett [Reagan's Secretary of Education] promise, why do the majority of Black Americans, whose ancestors have been speaking English for over two hundred years, find themselves still relegated to the ghettos? (p. 16)

Policymakers must examine education reform in a broader sense, since intolerance for racial and linguistic diversity began early in this country's history. The White English-speaking settlers with power have long benefited from an inequitable learning environment for linguistic, cultural, or racial minorities. Unless legally obligated

to do so, these systems have not been questioned or challenged, let alone reformed. Blatant discriminatory practices have been the norm except where injustices could not be ignored any longer. The English-only movement seems to represent an attempt to disrespect and subordinate students while stripping them of their native language and culture (Berriz, 2006). As Nieto (2010) confirms, “simply speaking English is no guarantee that academic success will follow” (p. 147). Educational policies should be driven by pedagogical considerations and not politics (Gandara, & Contreras, 2010). At the very least, the time has come to listen to those who have immigrated recently, as their experiences are at the heart of this study. Yet other stakeholders need to weigh in as well: researchers with second language pedagogical expertise, multicultural educators, and other experienced professionals who can offer insights about how linguistic minority newcomer students learn best. Such expertise is needed to inform policymakers and stakeholders of how ELLs learn.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter presented the major themes of my study. As discussed, newcomer ELLs arrive to school with varying levels of academic competency in their native and second languages, yet they need to perform on high-stakes tests in a short amount of time. Any sort of uniform practice to socially integrate newcomer ELLs has thus far been trumped by the urgency of acquiring academic language, leaving students who are new to the U.S. to navigate their own way through forming friendships and other social nuances that can seem particularly opaque. Teachers and administrators, whose collective history impacts their professional decision-making must meet students where they are academically and work quickly, efficiently, and effectively with students to get them as

close to grade-level performance as possible. However, teachers and administrators must understand the role of students' home culture and language in learning and view these characteristics as strengths. Otherwise, teachers will not be able to form meaningful relationships with their culturally and linguistically diverse students.

In Boston Public Schools, how best to educate ELLs remains complex since the overwhelming majority of ELLs have been taught in an English-only setting since 2002, and there are limited spaces in SEI programs. Within this English-only context, my study fills a gap by exploring newcomer ELLs' transmigration experiences. Understanding how former newcomer ELLs make meaning of their experiences in an English-only context will help to inform educators about how their professional practice can be enhanced to meet ELLs' needs. This in turn will contribute to the development of more welcoming and supportive policies and practices by teachers and administrators as they receive newcomers in the future. This is significant in light of the increasing numbers of culturally and linguistically diverse students who are moving to Massachusetts and being educated in Boston Public Schools specifically.

In Chapter 2, I present the conceptual framework of this study which draws from four major areas: (1) general educators' cultural and linguistic status in contrast to the demographics of their urban students, (2) cultural relevance in urban education, (3) identity theory, and (4) school adjustment research. I will review in depth the choices I made for including certain works and authors and conclude by situating the study at the nexus of literature on immigration and education, and bilingual education.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Teaching our children well means affirming and honoring who they are, and believing that they are capable of doing great things.”

—Nieto, 2010, p. 33

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter, I present my conceptual framework in four major sections. Each of these sections contains rationales for including certain authors and specific works that helped me to understand how welcoming practices can impact newcomer ELL students in their new academic settings. The first section centers on general educators and reviews teachers’ historical and current cultural and linguistic status in contrast to urban student populations. I will show how the urban classrooms of 100 years ago do not look much different than present-day urban learning environments. Teachers’ habitus and the hidden curriculum are subareas of this section and are significant, as Stuart and Thurlow (2000) found that teachers internalized the values, beliefs, and practices that were prevalent during their own educational experiences as students.

The next section, cultural relevance in urban education, comprises aspects of culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally responsive leadership that have been shown

to be effective in engaging diverse groups of urban students. I highlight how teachers and leaders play very distinct and separate roles in newcomers' education, provide some background information about the evolution of cultural competence, and present a potential future direction by Paris (2012).

The third section unpacks the significance of identity theory, focusing on the intersection of second language learning and identity. I draw largely on research from Marcelo Suarez-Orozco and Carola Suarez-Orozco, as well as Ofelia García, Bonny Norton Peirce, Sonia Nieto, and Margaret Hawkins. I also base my rationale for this section on Suresh Canagarajah's (2005) finding that the relationship between language and identity may be more relevant today than ever, as supported by the research reviewed in the section on general educators, the foundation of the literature review. As the epigraph above suggests, teachers need to know their students well and to support them in performing to their potential. This section concludes with research on transnational identity, which builds on Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt's (1999) work and which raises the notion of identity as viewed from the perspective of immigrants in their receiving communities.

Finally, in the fourth section, I review the current research on school adjustment which includes subsections on integrative motivation in second language acquisition, student voice, social integration, and a model of acculturation in which integration is one prong. Underpinning newcomers' educational experiences is the notion that school influences students' lives in unique ways as it becomes instrumental in defining and affecting one's overall sense of community (Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007; M. Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1993). I then familiarize the reader with an orientation to

second language learning that is well established in the research: integrative motivation. Student voice and its significance to this study are discussed, followed by an expanded definition of social integration in which I argue for its benefits for the school community. The chapter concludes with John Berry's model of acculturation in which integration is one prong. Berry finds that immigrants who have integrated are the best adapted to their new environments, yet they are also able to maintain strong ties with their home language and culture.

### **General Educators and Their Urban Students**

Given the contentious battle that plays out every election cycle, general educators may get more or less support each November from voters and/or elected politicians. Regardless, urban educators are charged with boosting the academic success of ELLs, whose test scores are seen as reflections of teachers' ability to effectively instruct their students (although that represents a separate debate in and of itself). The issue, as it relates to this study, is that the U.S. teaching force is largely White, middle class, monolingual, and female, while the population of students is growing significantly more "ethnically diverse, disadvantaged, and multilingual" (Young, Madsen, & Young, 2010, p. 135). In fact, the general population is becoming more diverse while the teaching force is increasingly White (Lowenstein, 2009). Nationally, teachers are 88% to 90% European-American middle class, two-thirds are women, and less than 5% claim fluency in a language other than English (Terrill & Mark, 2000). As argued in Chapter 1, few teachers have recent immigrant backgrounds, and it has been that way for quite a while.

Looking back 100 years, nearly all of the teachers (89%) in Newark, New Jersey, in 1911 were either U.S.-born Americans of U.S.-born fathers (69%) or U.S.-born of

earlier established Irish or German settlers (20%) (Anyon, 1997). Tyack (1974) noted that some teachers in New York City and Chicago at that time were intolerant of the foreign-born children who “flooded their classrooms,” positing that students not only faced curriculum that was unfamiliar to them both culturally and linguistically, but may have also been taught by teachers who did not want to teach them (as cited in Anyon, 1997, p. 49). One teacher of Irish descent in Newark was so enraged by her “undisciplined” “foreign” students that she wrote to the *Newark Evening News* on March 24, 1923, to complain about them. She reported how Newark Public Schools had changed for the worse as massive amounts of “aliens ... [had been] borne to our shores and they, in turn, have in still greater numbers sent their offspring flooding in our schools, changing their character and making a new problem for the school authorities to solve” (as cited in Anyon, 1997, p. 49). These teachers taught a variety of Italian, Russian, Jewish, Polish, Greek, Slavic, and Lithuanian students. As discussed earlier, the newest groups met with the greatest dissonance both in their neighborhoods and in their classrooms, yet the myth that immigrants “just learned English” (without ESL classes) persists in the collective memory of many in the U.S.

Elsewhere in the United States, 43% of urban teachers were U.S.-born of immigrant parents in 1911, and almost 86% of the teachers whose families had immigrated the generation prior came from Ireland, England, Germany, or non-French-speaking Canada (U.S. Immigration Commission, 1911, as cited in Anyon, 1997). This phenomenon explains why it is often difficult for teachers to understand and appreciate the history, experiences, and culturally learned behaviors of immigrant students (Nicolas, DeSilva, & Rabenstein, 2009). Teachers’ and students’ cultural and linguistic



backgrounds are mismatched. Although the description above provides the historical context for understanding the extent of the cultural and linguistic mismatch between urban teachers and students, it does not begin to reveal the layers of complexity around how teachers and students view themselves—and what can be done at the school level to strengthen their connections.

The trend remains, however: As the teaching force gets whiter, demographics in schools continue to shift toward greater ethnic and linguistic diversity. Not only are current K-12 students likely to be “multiracial or multiethnic but they are also likely to be divided along linguistic, religious, ability, and economic lines that matter in today’s schools” (Ladson-Billings, 2001, p. 14). In 2000, nearly 14 million children were immigrants or had parents who were immigrants (Yu et al., 2003). Since then, however, figures have grown from almost one in six children under 18 living with someone foreign-born, or roughly 30 million Americans, to nearly one in four in 2008 (Tienda & Haskins, 2011). Furthermore, the population of children in immigrant families has grown by almost 50% in the past 20 years, nearly seven times faster than the population of children of U.S.-born parents. By 2050, this population is projected to make up one-third of the more than 100 million U.S. children (Passel, 2011). As such, teacher preparation programs and in-district professional development must do more to shift their practices in order to train teachers to be effective with all learners (Baldwin, Buchanan, & Rudisill, 2007). General educators, despite their content expertise, are not able to adequately meet immigrant children’s needs without specifically learning about appropriate pedagogy for immigrant students who are culturally and linguistically diverse.

Teachers become licensed without fully understanding how to effectively meet all

learners' needs. Ladson-Billings (1999, as cited in Lowenstein, 2009) found that teacher preparation programs continue to prepare teachers as if they will be teaching in homogenous, White, middle-income schools. Barnes (2006) holds that a disconnect exists in two major areas: theory to practice and curricula historically grounded in traditional Eurocentric styles of pedagogy. Pre-service teachers must engage in both of these areas as they intersect with immigrant students' needs to understand the deep marginalization and oppression that has existed—and can still be found to some extent—in urban classrooms today.

Webster and Valeo (2011) also weigh in on the issue. They maintain that teacher preparation programs fail to equip teachers with the strategies they need to simultaneously support immigrant students' academic content development and English-language growth. Teachers begin their careers

with limited cross-cultural knowledge and understanding of classroom challenges, and teachers are taught to understand diversity merely in terms of celebrations and the appreciation of differences. With limited knowledge, teachers are susceptible to misinterpreting the capabilities of ELLs, and ineffectual core courses yield low inclusion competence and low levels of ELL sensitivity, leading to premature assumptions and blinders with respect to the assets that ELLs bring to the learning of all children. (Webster & Valeo, 2011, 105-106)

Simply exposing pre-service teachers to multicultural curricula does not allow for a deep enough understanding to be internalized. The risk of reinforcing biases and providing accommodations and modifications needlessly is too great. Specific recommendations will be put forth in the final chapter regarding the systemic changes of the structure of

teacher preparation programs that must occur.

Increasing the number of minorities in the teaching force also remains a challenge. Despite the financial incentives, recruitment programs, alternative-preparation routines, and other strategies used to attract minority candidates to the teaching field, Sawchuk (2012) described the lack of diverse teaching staff as “remarkably stubborn” (p. 1). Nieto (2010) further described this gap as “problematic” since research has shown that “the higher number of teachers of color in a school—particularly African American and Hispanic—can promote the achievement of African American and Hispanic students” (Clewell, Puma, & McKay, 2001; Dee, 2000, as cited in Nieto, 2010, p. 220). Vaznis, of *The Boston Globe*, reported that there is concern all over Massachusetts about the lack of racial diversity in educator programs. He cited that school staffing is approximately 92% white across the Commonwealth. In current teacher preparation programs, where school districts ultimately look to recruit teachers, “students of color make up just 13% of the 22,000 students enrolled in public and private programs training the next generation of teachers across Massachusetts” (2014). Though the issue of who can be effective for students from an instructional standpoint is debatable, students are given little option as to whom they will learn from, and that does not seem to be changing any time soon.

To make matters worse, within the last generation, the number of African American teachers has decreased from a high of 12% in 1970 to 7% in 1998; the number of Latino and Asian/Pacific Islander American teachers increased slightly, but the percentages (5% and 1%, respectively) are still very small; and Native American teachers comprise less than 1% of the total number of teachers (Lowenstein, 2009). This is

alarming because teachers have internalized, through an apprenticeship of observation, many of the values, beliefs, and practices of their own teachers (Stuart & Thurlow, 2000). As Anyon (1997) has argued, this is particularly troubling since the mostly White, middle-class, female educators were taught by women from backgrounds just like theirs.

**Habitus.** In a very real sense, the actions, perceptions, and attitudes teachers bring with them are consistent with the conditions in which they were educated. This concept, known as habitus, is defined by Bordieu as

a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as *matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions* and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks, thanks to analogical transfers of schemes permitting the solution of similarly shaped problems. (as cited in Swartz, 1997, p. 100)

Habitus results from early socialization experiences in which “external structures are internalized” (Swartz, 1997, p. 103) and directly impacts teachers’ ability, or lack thereof, to form meaningful relationships with their students. It is formed through a variety of insignificant modalities of practices—“ways of looking, sitting, standing, keeping silent, or even of speaking” (Bordieu, 1991, p. 51)—which are loaded with powerful restrictions that are hard to resist precisely because they are subtle, persistent, and shrewd. Teachers frequently do not understand the significance of examining their habitus. As a result, this phenomenon is fairly resistant to change given the weight that one’s primary socialization has on one’s internal dispositions. In this sense, teachers’ cultural-deficit models further contribute to educational inequality, whereby teacher habitus is mismatched with student habitus; that is, teachers, in the position of power, hold students accountable for their

habitus, not the students'. However, teacher preparation programs can work to remedy this mismatch for pre-service teachers, and as part of their training, in-service teachers can be accountable for "recognizing and capitalizing upon [the] linguistic and cultural diversity" of their [immigrant] students (Luke, 2009, p. 299). By exploring topics such as culturally relevant pedagogy, habitus, and identity theory, in addition to how to shelter content-specific courses, pre-service teachers can enter the teaching field equipped with additional lenses through which to view themselves as teachers, and in-service teachers have an opportunity to improve their instructional methods.

Lowenstein (2009) argued that teacher candidates need to reflect on their beliefs and values because a teacher's ability to

bridge the cultures of school and home, allowing cultural elements that are relevant to students to enter the classroom in a pluralist or additive approach, is critical to fostering academic excellence and cultural integrity or to maintaining the cultures and languages of students. (p. 176)

Teachers are responsible for a great deal more than academic content, especially when confronted with the task of integrating newcomers into their classrooms, as this study illustrates. Before teachers can begin utilizing the curriculum, they must be able to create a safe space for learning to occur. Until trust is established, immigrant students feel welcomed, and an appropriate level of comfort is attained in the classroom, students will not be responsive to the learning environment.

**The hidden curriculum.** During the 19th century, it was argued that the increasing diversity of political, social, and cultural attributes and structures "pushed educators to resume with renewed vigor the language of social control and

homogenization that had dominated educational rhetoric from the earliest colonial period” (Apple & King, 2004, p. 46)—otherwise known as the “hidden curriculum.” Yet, to be certain, the hidden curriculum was not hidden at all but was instead the overt institutional function of schools from the onset of public education, when Benjamin Franklin sought conformity to Anglo mores. Schooling was viewed strictly to “Americanize” and prepare children for their future roles in a democratic society. Students learned how to promote the common societal good, acquire the commitment to perpetuate the then-current societal values, and develop skills needed to move society forward.

Through their education, children today, as in the 1800s, are acculturated. Teachers model for students how to act and think in ways that transmit cultural norms, cognitive patterns, communication styles, and belief systems (Sheets, 2005). This process ensures that the dominant culture is perpetuated.

The hidden curriculum, a well-noted area of urban education research, is significant to this study because newcomers by definition are from elsewhere, places which have different mores and languages, and are thus vulnerable to misunderstanding the social and cultural nuances transmitted by their teachers and peers alike. Originally put forth by in his *Life in Classrooms*, Philip Jackson (1968) argued for the need to understand education as a socialization process. The notion of the hidden curriculum implies that teachers and administrators must be aware of how norms and values are conveyed to increasing numbers of students whose home cultures may have norms and values that differ from the school’s. Newcomers in particular, and ELLs generally, are vulnerable to misunderstanding the unstated norms of an academic setting that is

linguistically and culturally different from their home and former educational environments.

General educators need to explicitly instruct students to adhere to expectations at school; otherwise, much of the curriculum will remain hidden. Schools have “universal and particular hidden aspects” that foster an unequal learning environment for students (Lynch, 1989, as cited in Kentli, 2009, p. 84). Similar to exploring the mismatch of teacher habitus and student habitus, the hidden curriculum, defined as the implicit teaching of social and economic norms and expectations to students in schools, is a concept that explains how schools not only provide instruction but also transmit unstated, embedded norms, values, and beliefs to students through the underlying rules that structure the routines and social relationships in school and classrooms (Giroux, 2001, as cited in Apple, 2004).

The hidden curriculum is based on the assumption that students “tacitly acquire certain identifiable social norms during the daily exchanges and tasks of classroom life” (Apple, 2004, p. 81). Social reproduction thus occurs with the inclusion of the social organization of the school and the relationships of authority between teachers and students. Said another way, schools function as institutions of cultural preservation that “create and recreate forms of consciousness” that permit dominant groups to exert social control without resorting to “overt methods of domination” (Apple, 2004, p. 2). Some examples of the hidden curriculum found in any school include: learning to wait quietly, exercising restraint, trying, completing work, keeping busy, cooperating, showing respect to both teachers and peers, being neat and punctual, and conducting oneself courteously (Kentli 2009, p. 87). Wallace (1973) categorized these traits as training in obedience and

docility, political socialization, perpetuation of traditional class structure—functions that are considered forms of social control. Kentli (2009) maintained that these behaviors can be obtuse and troublesome for ELLs. Norms for ELL students in their home cultures can vary greatly from norms they must conform with at school in order to be successful.

### **Cultural Relevance in Urban Education**

For the past 30 years, researchers have been actively trying to understand the role of teacher as bridge-builder and how teachers' behaviors affect students. In this section, I present a brief overview of how the terminology used to describe cultural competence in urban education has evolved. At the core of this literature is the idea that to be an effective facilitator of student learning, “culturally competent teachers, regardless of race, can learn enough of the child’s home community and cultural context to be able to properly interpret behavior and structure curriculum” (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011, p. 68). Then, in a section on culturally relevant pedagogy, I highlight the golden age of resource pedagogy research, which marks the period when teaching and learning transitioned away from the deficit approaches that had dominated previously (Paris, 2012). Finally, I describe the crucial role for effective school administrators in newcomers’ academic and social success. Teachers and school leaders play very distinct and separate roles in newcomers’ education. Teachers instruct and influence at the classroom level, while administrators supply a vision for a school that will inspire its staff and cultivate the appropriate conditions to ensure that goals are reached (Cox, 2001, as cited in Young, Madsen, & Young, 2010). As a researcher and practitioner, I believe fully that teachers can and do take on leadership responsibilities within a school and that leaders can have meaningful interactions with groups of students, much like a teacher



does. However, in the following two sections these roles are distinct as they relate to newcomer ELLs' social integration experiences.

**Culture: Who said it when?** Au and Jordan (1981) are credited with being two of the first researchers to explore the role of culture in urban education pedagogy, as well as coining the term “culturally appropriate” (as cited in Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Esposito & Swain, 2009). This was followed by Mohatt and Erickson’s (1981) work incorporating the term “culturally congruent” in their investigation of the pedagogy employed by Native American teachers (as cited in Esposito & Swain, 2009). Cazden and Leggett (1981) advanced this area of research with the term “culturally responsive” teaching (Erickson & Mohatt, 1982, as cited in Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). “Culturally compatible” came next and was first used by researchers to describe the relevance of culture in educating diverse urban students; its use is credited to Jordan (1985) and Vogt, Jordan, and Tharp (1987) (as cited in Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). Skutnabb-Kangas (1987) proposed the idea of “cultural competence” as an added dimension to communicative competence (as cited in García, 2009). Ladson-Billings (1995) used the term “culturally relevant” to describe the pedagogy of teachers who effectively educated African American students (as cited in Esposito & Swain, 2009). In 1995, Ladson-Billings also developed the term “culturally relevant pedagogy” to emphasize “the needs of students from various cultures committed to collective, not only individual, empowerment” (as cited in Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011, p. 67). The following section explores the significance of culturally relevant pedagogy in newcomers’ social integration experiences.

**Culturally relevant pedagogy.** Culturally relevant pedagogy, according to Ladson-Billings (1995), is designed to “problematize teaching and encourage teachers to ask about the nature of the student-teacher relationship, the curriculum, schooling, and society” (p. 220). This type of pedagogy does not imply that all school practices need be completely congruent with home cultural practices or that they must closely match or agree with them. The essence of instructing in a culturally compatible manner is that the home culture is utilized when teachers select educational materials to ensure that academically desired behaviors are produced and undesired behaviors are avoided (Jordan, 1987, as cited in Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 202). Culturally relevant pedagogy provides a way for students to “maintain their cultural integrity while succeeding academically” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 212). When utilizing this pedagogical tool, educational practices align with the students’ home culture in ways that foster academically important behaviors and leave students wanting to contribute to the classroom community.

Educators move beyond their monocultural experiences when they are able to effectively create educational settings that respond to the diverse needs of urban students (Nieto, 1992, as cited in Taliaferro, 2012, p. 18). This is one way to promote social and, ultimately, academic success for newcomer ELLs. Ladson-Billings (1995) held that this pedagogy not only “addresses student achievement but also helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools perpetuate” (p. 204). Utilizing culturally relevant pedagogy in their practice gives teachers a way to learn who their students are and what their core

values are. This approach also allows teachers to simultaneously build their cultural competence.

Culturally relevant pedagogy contains three major elements: “students must experience academic success; develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and hone a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the social order” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, as cited in Johnson, 2007, p. 50). Teachers using this approach not only encourage academic success and cultural competence among both their students and colleagues, they raise students’ awareness of and ability to understand and critique current social inequities. Teachers themselves, it is assumed, recognize social inequities and their causes and therefore have a heavy responsibility to ensure that others not only gain these understandings but are also able to foster an environment in their own classrooms that promotes social equity. This perspective is necessary to combat the growing disparity between the racial, ethnic, and cultural characteristics of teachers and students, not to mention the persistent academic failure of African American, Native American, and Latino students (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Murphy, 2010). Although Ladson-Billings (1995) did not originally include ELLs or newcomers in her discussion, teachers of these students as well are in critical need of attaining this understanding. Teaching with this theoretical model in mind requires an “attitude adjustment. Culturally sensitive teachers recognize that culture is not only central to learning but that cultural conventions affect the approach to teaching and the student’s approach to learning” (Colbert, 2010, p. 22). The attitudes that teachers possess about their students’ ability to learn greatly impacts how teaching and learning are experienced by both teachers and students in the classroom.

Through the lens of culturally relevant pedagogy, the roles of the teacher are those of a cultural accommodator, mediator, and bridge-builder, all of which are fundamental in promoting student learning (Nieto, 1999; Villegas & Lucas, 2007). As such, teachers who prioritize social integration instruct in a way that fosters a setting where all students are capable of academic success, pedagogy is viewed as an art form, teachers are members of a community of learners, teaching is a way of giving back to the community, and Freire's concept of "teaching as mining" or pulling knowledge out' is employed (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 215). Teachers are able to draw from students' lived experiences and involve their parents to heighten learning and engagement from all students, and to strengthen the home-school connection while learning about students' home life, immigration history, hobbies, and concerns (Villegas & Lucas, 2007). By facilitating classroom discussions about students' aspirations and becoming familiar with their community, teachers will help to create learning environments in which students will feel safe to share important aspects of their identity and be able to make positive contributions to the school community.

**Beyond Culturally Relevant Pedagogy.** As discussed earlier, the characterization of the role of culture in pedagogy has gone through several transformations since the 1980s. Two recent approaches to cultural relevance in urban education are worth highlighting here. Villegas and Lucas (2007) used the term "sociocultural consciousness" to frame their work on culturally and linguistically responsive teachers. Sociocultural consciousness in urban education is thought of as an "awareness that a person's worldview is not universal but is profoundly influenced by life experiences, as mediated by a variety of factors, including race, ethnicity, gender, and

social class” (Nieto, 1996, as cited in Villegas & Lucas, 2007). Culturally responsive teachers are both “responsive for and capable of bringing about educational change that will make schooling more responsive to diverse groups of students” (Villegas & Lucas, 2002, as cited in Colbert, 2010, p. 16). These educators possess constructivist views of teaching and learning, are knowledgeable about students’ prior educational experiences and beliefs, and create learning experiences to enhance what students already know.

Sociocultural consciousness is pertinent to this study because unless teachers utilize this framework, they are dependent on their own schema (consciously or not) to understand their students, which may result in misunderstandings and miscommunication between them and their students. In order to develop sociocultural consciousness, teachers must understand the inequities that exist in society and the role they may play at the school level in giving rise to differential access to power (Villegas & Lucas, 2007). Although some degree of misunderstanding and miscommunication is inevitable between teachers and students, by actively acknowledging and celebrating the diversity of students, the inequities that exist outside of school will have less of a presence in students’ relationships with peers and their teachers at school.

In 2012, Paris introduced the notion of culturally sustaining pedagogy. He explained that the difference between this concept and ways of enacting culture that were used in the past is that culturally sustaining pedagogy “seeks to perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democracy of schooling” (p. 93). He argued that teachers and administrators may not uphold the meaningful work done by Au, Gay, Ladson-Billings, and others over time. Paris’ work moved the thinking about the “languages and literacies and other cultural practices of communities

marginalized by systemic inequalities [further] to ensure the valuing and maintenance of our multiethnic and multilingual society” (p. 93). According to Paris, teaching solely from a viewpoint that is culturally relevant, appropriate, or congruent is not enough to make lasting changes in the way diverse students are educated. He stressed that this shift in pedagogy must be sustainable to make a real difference in ELLs’ educational experiences.

**Culturally responsive leadership.**

The principal sets the tone for a school. The principal’s behavior has a significant influence on the culture of the school.

—Tschannen-Moran, 2007, p. 101

As mentioned in previous sections, American society has never been more diverse in multiple ways—linguistically, culturally, religiously, ethnically, and racially (Prewitt, 2002, as cited in Johnson, 2007). Just as teachers can develop inclusive practice, school leaders play a critical role in fostering a culture in the school where diversity is embraced, as the epigraph above denotes (Dimmock & Walker, 2005, as cited in Magno & Schiff, 2010, p. 87; M. Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, & Qin-Hilliard, 2004). The principal’s tenor matters a great deal as does the principal’s power, be it informal or formal, to encourage staff to be a more inclusive team of professionals to their learners’ unique needs.

Building on Geneva Gay’s (2010) principles of culturally responsive teaching, Taliaferro and Seigler (2012) argued that culturally responsive leadership encompasses eight core beliefs: “leaders lead with a sense of self, leadership is validating,

comprehensive, multidimensional, empowering, comprehensive, transformative, and emancipatory” (p. 412). Embedded in this leadership approach is the notion that leaders lead with an understanding of who they are and what leadership traits they bring to a school administrator position. This style also meshes with Sergiovanni’s (1992) principles of self-awareness, validation, and empowerment. Self-awareness entails awareness of one’s own biases and how one makes decisions. Validation in this case is understood as a leader’s ability to validate the diverse experiences of staff and students. Finally, empowerment speaks to the type of environment that leaders create, one that is safe for students and teachers socially and emotionally (Taliaferro & Seigler, 2012).

School leaders are integral to the academic and social lives of newcomer ELLs. Here, I refer very specifically to culturally responsive leadership, as I believe this approach serves newcomer ELLs exceptionally well when leaders fully embrace its approach. Magno and Schiff (2010) examined one high school principal’s approach to improving his school’s culture and the socio-educational experience of all students. The principal created a diversity office that served the purpose of a “comfort zone” for the schools’ immigrant students. During students’ free periods, they could chat with each other informally and gather information to strengthen their cultural capital. As the school’s leader, the principal placed newly arrived students with a ‘buddy,’ who had typically gone through the ELL program (the equivalent of being a FLEP student in Massachusetts) and was able to mentor the newcomer. In addition to drawing from a practice of culturally responsive leadership, the principal’s actions, according to Reicher et al. (2005), exemplified those of a skilled entrepreneur of identity (as cited in Reicher, Spears, & Haslam, 2010). The principal attended trainings pertinent to English language

learners, worked with general educators to modify assignments and grading for these students, and opened all elective classes to immigrant students. The researchers also noted that students were empowered: They translated materials for their parents and organized an annual diversity leadership conference, which highlighted students' identities, heritages, and lived experiences in such a way that it added to a positive school climate.

Magno and Schiff's (2010) study demonstrated that school leaders can rework organizational roadblocks that create conflict for teachers and students, as evidenced by the principal's proactive approach to an inclusive school environment (Thomas, 2008, as cited in Young, Madsen, & Young, 2010). Madsen and Mabokela (2005) and Thomas (2008) also found that school administrators must have this ability to "create a culture of inclusion," in which adaptability, flexibility, and the ability to value diversity are necessary elements (as cited in Young, Madsen, & Young, 2010, p. 136). School administrators must be able to view operational and organizational problems from both the macro and micro levels; however, culturally responsive leaders also need to understand and effectively remedy cultural and linguistic issues that add another layer of complexity to managing a school. When building an inclusive culture, leaders need to set boundaries, frame the process, and value and pursue diversity, all while promoting an equitable learning environment (Young, Madsen, & Young, 2010).

By creating safe learning environments—conceptually and physically—culturally responsive leaders can support their diverse student body and value their families (Taliaferro & Seigler, 2012). Familiarizing oneself with the histories and heritages of one's students and knowing how those backgrounds influence the ways in which students



view themselves in the school environment is another way that culturally responsive leaders are able to make authentic connections with their students and staff (Taliaferro & Seigler, 2012). In a learning environment where administrators are committed to culturally responsive leadership, teachers can feel confident in how they implement their lessons and the creativity they bring to their role. At the same time, students can trust that their classroom is a safe space for taking risks and sharing what they know.

Cultural differences are inevitable among staff and students from diverse backgrounds. The key to leading in such an environment lies in understanding how those differences may affect the ways in which relationships among staff and students are negotiated and maintained, as this will “reduce intergroup conflict and promote the cultural identity of individuals” (Young, Madsen, & Young, 2010, p. 138). Culturally responsive leaders, along with teachers who employ culturally responsive pedagogy, are equipped with the tools to enact cultural competence in themselves, and their students are empowered to combat the marginalization by systemic inequalities they face in urban public schools. With this leadership approach, staff will recognize that their administrators have high expectations for their instructional performance, particularly as it relates to building teacher-student relationships and fostering a sense of belonging among newcomers. In a school with this type of leader, there is little room for allowing immigrant students to disengage, fail, or drop out in this setting.

### **Identity**

Identity is one of the most important principles when teaching language minority students (Cummins, 2000; 2006). Educators must be aware of the different and

complex links between language and identity and the ways in which students' language practices construct and perform multiple identities.

—García, 2009, p. 83

Identity theory is significant to this study because how the stakeholders—that is, newcomer ELLs—view themselves and their roles underpinned their actions. At its core, identity theory is defined as “the categorization of the self as an occupant of a role, and the incorporation, into the self, of the meanings and expectations associated with that role and its performance” (Stets & Burke, 2000, p. 225). Understanding how one’s identity impacts his or her educational experience and role in society is at the center of one’s perception of how a learner integrates socially. Identity is also a major factor in acquiring a second language; this is directly relevant to my study, as participants made sense of who they were as students before they left their home countries and how they have changed during transmigration (M.A. Suarez-Orozco et al., 2011). This section focuses primarily on the intersection of second language learning and identity but also touches upon social identity theory and transnational identity to explore how these ideas can help educators to understand how individuals are connected to society.

Identities are formed by experiences, behaviors, values, and ways of engaging in language and literacy practices. How these practices align with practices that are privileged in schools, as well as how students conceptualize the notion of school and who students imagine they can be in that academic setting are also all integral to the shaping of a newcomer ELL’s identity (Hawkins, 2005). Developing an identity is thought to be an ongoing negotiation between the individual and the social context or environment.

Similarly, identity investment is a central component of learning. It is worth noting that the school setting, perhaps more than any other social institution, is an environment in which many of the issues that first- and second-generation immigrants face are played out (M. Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1993). For a student, acquiring an identity related to learning is essential since children acquire other identities in different contexts and environments outside of school, and they may compete against each other.

Immigrant children in particular have attempted to resolve identity issues by immersing themselves in a wholesale identification with mainstream American values. For other newcomers, adapting to American culture leads to a “subculture of cultural transition” (M. Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1993, p. 119). How students negotiate these identities is a primary determinant of whether they will engage cognitively in an academic setting or struggle, which speaks to the core of this study (Nyati-Ramahobo, 2006). Research shows that there is a great deal of overlap between identity theory and social identity theory (discussed below). In both theories, the self is “reflexive,” meaning that it can categorize, classify, or “name itself” in relation to other social categories or classifications; this is referred to as “self-categorization” in social identity theory and “identification” in identity theory (Stets & Burke, 2000, p. 224).

### **Second language learners and identity.**

Language, as constructed, is not only a simple identity marker, but is capable of generating imagined communities and of constructing particular loyalties (Anderson, 1983). Language, then, has much more than a *semiotic* and *symbolic* function; it also has a *rhetorical* function, used to discursively construct identity and solidarity.

Children's day-to-day lives span very different worlds—home and school life—and through an immersion process in each, children form identities vis-à-vis their experiences in those communities. A multiple identity is constructed by engaging in different social networks, allowing children to develop in a broad sense, as they will have vast perspectives from which to draw (García, 2009). Students whose home languages differ from the dominant language in school may have identities that vary from monolingual, U.S.-born children's ways of viewing themselves.

Canagarajah (2005) claimed that the relationship between language and identity may be more relevant today than ever, as transnational displacements interrupt the taken-for-granted cultural schemas and social practices that structure belonging and membership within in-groups or out-groups (M. A. Suarez-Orozco et al., 2011). Language is intimately bound with identity, and whose language is used in the public sphere not only relates to political power, but also to how much one belongs. Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985) showed how individual and social identity are mediated by language, with speakers creating speech acts as *acts of projection* in which “the individual of the group or groups with which from time to time he wishes to be identified, or so as to be unlike those from whom he wishes to be distinguished” (as cited in García, 2009, p. 83). Another way to understand the issue is that language and identity play reciprocal roles. The language one uses influences how a group constructs its identity, while at the same time the identity of the group shapes the patterns of attitudes and language uses (Liebkind, 1999, as cited in García & Zakharia, 2010).

In theory, accepting one's language implies that the speaker of the language is also accepted. Richard Rodriguez (1982) has argued that the "problem" of limited English proficiency is, in fact, a social construction. When the condition of limited proficiency is thought of as a "language problem," policy shifts toward transitioning these students as quickly as possible from their native language into English. The Unz Initiative, for instance, was approved to eradicate a socially constructed problem. Rather than viewing language from a deficit perspective, schools must value language as a resource, and the primary language should be utilized as such. More political support is needed in Massachusetts and nationally, and greater emphasis on academic achievement, not just the acquisition of English, for ELLs must prevail. Language education—in this case the acquisition of academic English—should not lead to the eradication of a student's native language along with the transformation of his or her identity.

Immigrants who attempt to shed all traces of their native language and culture are likely to feel a lack of identity within any group. C. Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco (2001) caution that "to see language as a mere tool for communication is to miss its deep affective roots"; furthermore, when one loses competence in his or her home language, the immigrant child can also lose much of the support previously provided by the child's native culture (p. 106). Indeed, language is not the only form of communication first-generation students must learn. Social interactions, which are culturally constructed, must also be mastered in order to fit in with the dominant group (C. Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001, p. 73). Incomplete acquisition in both languages is often the cost, with the result being the potential loss of one's identity; lacking any strong identification with the

host culture to replace it, the individual often feels marginalized. I discuss this concern at greater length at the end of this chapter.

**Social identity theory.** Social identity theory explains how individuals are connected to the social world by establishing the link between the individual and society. Henri Tajfel and his colleagues developed the social identity approach in social psychology in the 1970s with their work on intergroup processes. The three main areas of social identity theory include: “defining who we are as a function of our similarities and differences with others, sharing with others provides a basis for shared social action, and one’s collective history and the present are the result of one’s social identity” (Reicher, Spears, & Haslam, 2010, p. 45). Along the same lines, Tajfel (1972) explained social identity as “the individual’s knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him of this group membership” (as cited in Haslam, 2004, p. 21). Social identity theory deals with intergroup relations—that is, how people come to see themselves as members of one group/category (the in-group) in comparison with another (the out-group), and the consequences of this categorization (Turner et al., 1987, as cited in Stets & Burke, 2000).

This theory of how one sees oneself through the groups in which one belongs is relevant to this study because former newcomer ELLs may view themselves as members of multiple groups simultaneously, and those groups can have norms that vary greatly. Each person is a member of a distinct combination of social categories; in other words, one’s blending of social identities that comprise one’s self-concept is unique (Stets & Burke, 2000). Social identity theory explains intergroup relations and social conflict in that a person has not one “personal self” but several selves that correspond to widening

circles of group membership. Former newcomer ELLs belong to their peer group (who, like them, have lived in Boston for approximately one – three years), their grade-level group, their home language and culture group, and their family. Other school-level groups that exist include the ones that educators and school leaders comprise, which may overlap, but each stakeholder holds entirely different roles within the school community and may or may not be knowledgeable about the home language and culture of their students.

By comparing oneself to others socially, those who are similar to oneself are categorized and receive the label of in-group, while those who are different from the self are labeled as part of an out-group (Stets & Burke, 2000). People are motivated to maintain a positive self-concept, which originates mostly from identifying with a group, and people establish positive social identities by favorably contrasting their in-group to an out-group (Operario & Fiske, 1999, as cited in Padilla & Perez, 2003). English language learners work to achieve a positive social identity to increase their self-esteem. To determine if their group provides them with a positive social identity, the individuals will make social comparisons between their own group and relevant out-groups. If a former newcomer ELL enjoys the way he or she feels when spending social time with peers who speak the same first language, he or she will continue to invest more time in those friendships.

Social identity theory also maintains that when an individual does not develop a positive identity with one group, they will seek out an alternate group (Lalonde & Moghaddam, 1987). For example, if immigrant students notice that their home language and culture have low status in their school, they might be motivated to associate with a

different social group of students in order to maintain a positive social identity. Former newcomers are apt to acquire social language as quickly as possible to allow them greater opportunities to mingle with various social groups rather than being limited to a group that speaks one's home language, regardless of other attributes or personality traits they may or may not have in common.

Extending this notion, Heller (1987) has shown that language is not only a way to communicate ideas but also an instrument of identity negotiation, which facilitates or restricts access to powerful social networks. This complements a theory of ethnolinguistic identity developed by Giles and Byrne (1982) that views language as a "salient marker of ethnic identity and group membership" (as cited in Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004, p. 4). Additionally, Bonny Norton Peirce's (2000) assertion that "language is constitutive of and constituted by a speaker's identity" (as cited in García, 2009, p. 106) furthers our understanding of this issue. Norton Peirce (1995), who provided great insight into the theory of social identity as it relates to second language learning, posited that power relations play a crucial role in social interactions between language learners and target language speakers. Thus a learner's own social identity is invested in the target language, which is constantly changing across time and space. People think, feel, and act as members of collective groups, institutions, and cultures, reinforcing social identity theory's idea that individuals' social cognitions are socially constructed depending on their group or collective frames of reference.

At the same time, social identity theory holds that if newcomers believe their social identity lacks value, the strategies used in the acculturation process will be affected, possibly resulting in modified cultural competences with one or more groups.



Three ways that newcomers can enact their agency when the dominant group fails to positively recognize their social identity include: leaving the heritage group physically or reducing how they identify with their heritage group; reinterpreting their group attributes to justify the negative stigma or to make it acceptable; or engaging in social action to promote desirable changes both inside and outside the heritage group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). A consideration of Tajfel and Turner's work raises several questions: What does it mean for one to leave his or her heritage group? Is this even possible? And how would the dominant group (in a school) know if a former newcomer left a heritage group, since how the student presented him or herself would largely seem the same from the perspective of someone less familiar with the student? In all likelihood, however, if students feel marginalized at school by their peers, teachers, or administrators, they may not invest as much of their identity or commit themselves to being bilingual/bicultural as they might have otherwise. Newcomer ELLs are still in the midst of forming their identities when they arrive to the school, which makes exploring how these students perceive strong welcoming practices in their schools and classrooms all the more necessary and urgent.

In other words, the social constructs that comprise the social categories in which individuals label themselves are parts of a "structured society and exist only in relation to other contrasting categories" (Stets & Burke, 2000, p. 225). The amount of power each group has, as well as their prestige and status, is determined by this structure. These social categories precede individuals who are born into a structured society; however, within this structure, there is room for students, teachers, and administrators to enact their agency to bring about social change. Students choose to belong to suitable social groups

that best capture how they view themselves, according to the role their home languages and cultures play for them. Teachers and administrators also enact their individual agency. These professionals determine how and to what extent they will identify with the collective history of general educators and maintain the status quo of adhering to one dominant language and culture, or use their agency to foster cultural competence within their roles at school.

**Transnational identity.** Migrants immerse themselves simultaneously in multiple sites and aspects of the transnational social fields in which they live (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007). Navigation between two worlds—the homeland and the host country—is at the heart of transnationalism, as both countries shape one’s identity. Thus, a transnational identity emerges when individuals hold themselves to be a reflection of two or more cultures (Pedraza, 2006, as cited in Orbe & Drummond, p. 1692; Levitt & Schiller, 2004). For the purpose of this study, transnationalism, as described by Vertovec (1999), is the range of “intensity and simultaneity of current long-distance, cross-border activities [that] provide the recently emergent, distinctive and, in some contexts, now normative social structures and activities” (p. 448). Within migration studies (i.e., the academic field that explores how humans migrate) one specialization investigates transnationalism and transnational identity, which moves scholarship beyond the concept that identity comprises a “consistent, unidimensional core” needed for one to possess a “productive self-concept” (Falicov, 2005, as cited in Orbe & Drummond, 2011, p. 1692). Transnational identity is pertinent to this study because it offers a means for understanding how identity is viewed from the perspectives of immigrants within the receiving communities.

The history of transnationalism in the United States dates back to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when immigrants of non-Anglo-Saxon origin arrived in large numbers in search of better opportunities (Portes, Guarnizo, & Landolt, 1999). However, some scholars argue that immigrants have always “practiced transnationalism, to some extent.... [E]xisting literature has not always acknowledged the implicit and explicit ways in which immigrants have remained connected to their nation of origins while also assimilating to new cultural homes” (Baia, 1999, as cited in Orbe & Drummond, 2011, p. 1691). Upon these newcomers’ arrival to the United States, Americans feared the unfamiliar ways of life they possessed and were concerned that these new groups were impoverished and unable to speak English. Consequently, the notion that these new migrants would find it difficult to assimilate in the new society was perpetuated. It was then that the new concept of transnationalism and transnational identity emerged, reflecting America’s unprecedented cultural and linguistic diversity (Bradatan, Popan, & Melton, 2010, p. 3). Transnationalism, from this perspective, relates to keeping strong ties to the origin country, while maintaining a distinctive profile within the host country. Although transnationals have ties to both the origin and host countries, there has been more research done on the relationships with the origin country, while connections with the host country (except for physical residency) are not usually discussed in much detail. This study contributes to the literature related to transnationalism in that it explored students’ ideas about and understanding of assimilation and identity in their host country.

## **School Adjustment**

Economic opportunities and neighborhood characteristics—including the quality of schools where immigrants settle, racial and class segregation, neighborhood decay, and violence—all contribute significantly to the adaptation process.

—C. Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2011, p. 5-6

In Chapter 1, I argued that newcomer ELLs' needs may go beyond the needs of students who are monolingual and U.S.-born. I also stressed that teachers and administrators must demonstrate intercultural competence in an effort to support students through the social integration process. This section discusses the specific role school adjustment plays in newcomers' lives. Many students have difficulty "fitting in" at school; however, ELLs face additional challenges during their adjustment, such as cultural and language differences, and discrimination (Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007). As the epigraph above notes, school can uniquely impact the lives of newcomers as it becomes a core part of defining and affecting one's overall sense of community (Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007; M. Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1993). Here, I discuss four distinct ways to understand the adjustment process as a newcomer enters school for the first time in the U.S. I first introduce an orientation of motivation to acquire a second language—that is, integrative motivation. I then explore social integration in depth, as well as the role of student voice, and then review acculturation as it relates to newcomers' social integration. These four sections are framed by recent literature on how newcomers adjust to their unfamiliar school settings.

School adjustment is understood as the "degree of school acculturation required

or adaptations necessitated, maximizing the educational fit between the student's qualities and the multidimensional character and requirements of learning environments" (Spencer, 1999, p. 43). Students from diverse backgrounds who begin school in the U.S. require different types of adaptations that schools must provide. Schools are "one of the first and most influential service systems" for newcomer ELLs, and as Kia-Keating and Ellis (2007) found in their study of school belonging and psychosocial adjustment of Somali adolescents, "a greater sense of school belonging was associated with lower depression and higher self-efficacy, regardless of the level of past exposure to adversities," and "more than a quarter of the variation in self-efficacy was explained uniquely by a sense of school belonging" (p. 29). These powerful findings illuminate the profound importance of schools having well-established welcoming practices and well-trained staff who can facilitate a smooth transition at a daunting time for students. Similarly, Marcus and Sanders-Reio (2001) found that students who feel they had teachers who were supportive and caring were less likely to drop out of school. Of core importance is the fact that students who feel valued and recognized for their strengths will work with teachers and administrators in a bidirectional adjustment process as they adapt to new circumstances at school.

### **Integrative motivation in second language acquisition.**

Throughout human history, immigrants have been driven by twin forces: powerful socioeconomic factors as well as individual agency and motivation.

— C. Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2011, p. 20

Theories of motivation in second language acquisition are grounded in research

that explains how one acquires a first language. In fact, motivation is essential to learning a second language: “[All] other factors involved in second language acquisition presuppose the effects of motivation to some extent” (Samad, Etemadzadeh, & Far, 2012, p. 432). The effect of motivation on language learning can be traced back to Mowrer’s work on first language acquisition in the 1950s. Two types of motivating factors have been identified as influencing one’s experience in learning a new language: instrumental motivation and integrative motivation. Instrumental motivation, considered a more functional reason to learn a second language, is present when one’s goal is to gain a social or economic reward through achievement in the second language. The current study focused on integrative motivation, as greater overall success has been found in second language learners with integrative motivation who will become bilingual in their new settings as well as develop bicultural competency over time, compared to those with instrumental motivation (Norris-Holt, 2001). Instrumental motivation dominates when language learners are not given the opportunity to engage with speakers in the target language. The participants in my study, however, were uprooted from their home countries where their first languages are spoken, and were immersed in their second language communities both socially and academically. Thus, instrumental motivation was not a useful construct for my study.

In their landmark research, Gardner and Lambert (1972) posited that integrative orientation is a “sincere and personal interest in the people and culture represented by the other group” (p. 132). With this in mind, the second language learner “must be willing to identify with members of another ethnolinguistic group and take on very subtle aspects of their behavior” (p. 135). In the nearly 40 years since integrative and instrumental

motivation were introduced, one conclusion has become certain: The setting in which one learns a second language matters tremendously. Consider the following example. Two people want to study Italian. One is a retiree of Korean descent living in Korea. She has a desire to learn Italian because she likes cooking Italian food. The other is an elementary-aged student of Moroccan descent who just immigrated to Italy. These two individuals have vastly different motives. The retiree is taking Italian purely as a hobby two times a month, while the child is immersed in the Italian language and culture daily, desperately wanting to make friends and understand her teacher. In this situation, researchers would assert that because the Moroccan child has the opportunity to be immersed in the Italian language and culture, her integrative motivation is stronger than the Korean retiree's hobby (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Samad, Etemadzadeh, & Far, 2012). The child has the added benefit of learning from the second language community as well. All second language learners are motivated by a desire to identify and have contact with members of the target language community. However, as demonstrated in the example above, the setting where the interaction occurs impacts the level of investment one makes in acquiring the second language.

**Student voice.** Understanding the significance of student voice and determining how to draw on it were essential elements to this study. By building upon what has been established in literature about student voice, students shared their thinking about their unique transmigration experiences, empowering themselves and their peers in the process. In a practical sense, student voice represents more than physical vocalizations. Researchers and teachers alike consider student voice to be demonstrated in any activity in which students exercise a degree of control as they communicate their feelings

(Johnson, 1991). Over time, however, student voice has come to be associated with empowerment, meaning that students have the opportunity to provide input into decisions affecting their education. Creation of school councils or other formal school-based groups in which the students give their input and feedback regarding decisions that impact their educational experience are examples of student voice (Richardson, 2001, p. 7). Student voice is exercised in any type of activity in which students have the ability to determine aspects of the learning. As a multi-layered concept, voice encompasses both ability and participation. Students who have been in school for only a short time, or even a couple of years, may be hesitant to participate, even though they are able to do so. Thus, my study addressed participants' ability to engage in class discussions as well as their willingness to communicate. Yet, regardless of how able and willing former newcomer ELLs are to share their thinking, issues related to student voice emerge around how decisions are made, who gets to speak, and whose ideas are accepted and acted upon (Wilbur, 2009). In this sense, teachers need to create a space in their classrooms for all students to share their ideas, while modifying content (if necessary) to ensure that all students have access to the lesson. If these considerations are not made on behalf of newcomer ELLs, these students' voices are denied in that academic setting.

**Social integration.** Social integration and how students experience it comprise the heart of this study. The matter of identities in school is not limited to personally crafted selfhood relative to academic engagement and achievement; it also suggests larger processes of social integration (M. A. Suarez-Orozco et al., 2011). Social integration, building on the definition outlined earlier, is the degree to which immigrants interact positively with U.S.-born peers and the school community as a whole (Lasso &



Soto, 2005; U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2003, as cited in Kandel & Cromartie, 2003). This type of integration involves the welcoming and inclusion of newcomer students into the school community.

Schools that implement social integration policies and procedures support immigrants as they adjust to their new environment. When students of differing cultural or ethnic backgrounds choose to engage with one another in social settings, such as during free play, they are being included into the school community. The reality, however, is that it is more common for schools not to recognize the unique needs of immigrant students; schools have been shown to disregard their unique emotional experiences, treating them instead in the same way they would a monolingual, U.S.-born student who is new to the school. Newcomer students are often left to themselves to negotiate the educational environment, which only further contributes to their academic difficulties. When schools neglect to establish a practice to integrate newcomers, they are at least partly responsible for the problems that arise (Lasso & Soto, 2005).

Ladd (2000) maintained that social adjustment, not cognitive ability and educational experience, is the best “predictor of attitudes ...[S]ocial factors are the ‘glue’ holding the school experience together. For newcomer ELLs, it is social adjustment, not academic achievement that most strongly predicts whether students feel good about being in school and participating in class” (as cited in Marcus & Sanders-Reio, 2001, p. 436). Other studies have found that social integration fosters “persistence in schooling” and contributes positively to students feeling connected to their schools (Langenkamp, 2009, p. 70). Based on these findings, it troubles me that most urban school districts, including Boston Public Schools, do not have any sort of formal practices established at the school

level for socially integrating newcomers.

Education plays a major role in nurturing unity in diversity and social cohesion (Nyati-Ramahobo, 2006). Social integration can be achieved through acknowledgement of a multilingual and multicultural student body and the development of a curriculum that draws from students' diverse experiences. Research has shown that the ways in which newcomers adapt academically and socially to their lives in their new country may determine their educational attainment, which is linked to upward mobility in the U.S. (Nicolas, DeSilva, & Rabenstein, 2009). Similarly, Langenkamp (2009) looked at how teacher bonding, popularity, and extracurricular participation played a role in students' academic achievement as they transitioned from middle school to high school. The study found that students who had developed social relationships at school were found to have greater academic success and that those social relationships with teachers and peers were able to guide students as they navigated major school transitions. These findings were explored in the current study in relation to how former newcomer ELLs perceived social integration.

Additive bilingual skills, namely English language skills, open avenues to better paying jobs and increase opportunities to build social networks as discussed in Chapter 1. Research also correlates fluency in English with upward mobility and attainment of economic, social, and cultural capital; immigrants who are not able to communicate in English cannot fully represent themselves in an English-dominant society (Gozdziak & Martin, 2005). Therefore, it is critical that newcomers integrate into their social settings in such a way that they are welcomed and valued members of their new community, and that once settled they are able to thrive academically (Gandara & Hopkins, 2010).

Successfully integrating newcomer students into the classroom is a bi-directional process in which both the teachers and the students develop mutual respect and understanding of the other's cultures, values, and beliefs (Trueba & Bartolome, 2000). Students bring their cultural and linguistic capital and are able to share these within the learning environment. However, unless general educators and their administrators possess the skills necessary to engage with an ethnically diverse student body, teachers working with diverse immigrant populations will not understand that educational strategies that work for some students simply are not effective for others (Nicolas, DeSilva, & Rabenstein, 2009). As discussed earlier in the section on culturally relevant pedagogy, some effective strategies for teaching immigrant children include: developing the children's first language, learning about the children's culture, acknowledging children's strengths, and allowing children to practice language skills (Lasso & Soto, 2005). Along with these strategies, social integration can be facilitated through participation in extracurricular activities, which provide newcomers a safe environment for integrating socially with their peers and teachers (Langenkamp, 2009). If teachers utilize these strategies, students' transitions into U.S. schools will be less intimidating, as newcomers will get to know their peers and teachers, and as the peers and teachers get to know them.

### **Acculturation.**

Young people who come to a new country as children, or who are born to immigrants, face the challenge of developing a cultural identity based on both their family's culture of origin and the culture of the society in which they reside.

—Berry et al., 2006, p. 5

John Berry first introduced acculturation strategies in 1980 when he expanded on his earlier work of acculturation attitudes, in which he characterized integration as one prong (Berry, 1980; 2006). This notion is one way to understand how groups and individuals seek to acculturate and contains two overarching dimensions: the degree of preservation of one's heritage culture and the extent to which adaptation to the host society is displayed, which the researcher terms "cultural maintenance" and "contact-participation," respectively. Cultural maintenance is thought to be the extent to which individuals value and wish to maintain their cultural identity, while contact participation is considered to be the extent to which individuals value and seek out contact with those outside their own group or groups and wish to participate in the daily life of the larger society. This model provides an orderly framework for understanding acculturating individuals, who can orient themselves to their traditional culture, the broader society, to both of these, or opt for neither.

Berry's acculturation model was significant to this study because integration is found to be the most adaptive acculturation strategy and the most conducive to immigrants' well-being, whereas marginalization is the least. Integration, according to Berry (2007), involves the best possible learning environment and retention for students, with minimal shedding or forgetting of one's ways of living in their home country. Berry's work holds that positive psychological outcomes for immigrants are expected when individuals are integrated, since there tends to be a strong identification with both their ethnic group and the larger society. Berry's four categories are as follows: integrated individuals—those who want to maintain their identity with their home culture but also want to take on some characteristics of the new culture; assimilated individuals—people

who do not want to keep their identity from their home culture but would rather take on all of the characteristics of the new culture; separated individuals—those who wish to separate themselves from the dominant culture; and marginalized individuals—people who don't want anything to do with either the new or the old culture.

In contrast to Berry's work, researchers have shown that the "relationship between individuals' multiple identities and second language learning outcomes is infinitely more complex than portrayed in the sociopsychological paradigm and cannot be reduced to a few essentialized variables" (McKay & Wong, 1996; Norton Peirce, 1995, 2000; Pavlenko, 2000, 2002, and cited in Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004, p. 6). These studies problematize the very idea that distinct categories are appropriate and necessary for understanding how second language learners acquire their second language. Though Berry is considered a pioneer in acculturation research, Ward (2008) questioned how well Berry's model applies to identity, acculturation, and intercultural relations when a language learner does not fit into Berry's orderly framework. Ward asserted that as much as Berry's work has been instrumental in categorizing acculturating groups, the frameworks and models may constrain one's understanding of these orientations. Furthermore, Ward questioned how individuals who are acculturating can "orient themselves to their traditional culture, the wider society, to both or to neither," as well as the ambiguity that surrounds how individuals come to these orientations, and if they change over time (p. 107). Ward posited that in going "beyond the Berry boxes," an emerging line of research, the motivation for ethno-cultural continuity, had begun.

Other seminal researchers have published extensively on students' transmigration experiences with an emphasis on children's acculturation process. Portes and Rumbaut

(2006) argued that students who are encouraged to retain close ties to their ethnic cultures while adapting to mainstream U.S. culture are not only more academically successful but also more emotionally secure (as cited in Nieto, 2010, p. 31). In large part, this finding supports Berry's work on integrated individuals, those who feel comfortable in both worlds. Portes and Rumbaut (1996, 2001) also coined the term "selective acculturation" to describe the positive relationship between upward mobility and bilingualism, in which immigrants consciously make choices about their language use as they try to adapt to a new life (as cited in García, 2009, p. 98).

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I reviewed the literature from four major areas of research that were pertinent to my study: general educators and their urban students, cultural relevance in urban education, identity, and school adjustment. I presented the research demonstrating that the overwhelming majority of U.S. teachers are White, middle-class, monolingual, and female, while their students have continued to become more ethnically, economically, and linguistically diverse. I then discussed habitus—the notion that the ways in which teachers are socialized early in their lives impacts how teachers build or do not build relationships with their students—and the "hidden curriculum"—the idea that school norms must be explicitly taught to students as their home values are vastly different—two important concepts that support the need to explore the educational mismatch amongst teachers and students.

The second section of the chapter examined the importance of culturally competent teachers learning about their students' lives outside of the classroom as a way to understand students' behavior and structure their curriculum. From there, I walked the

reader through the various iterations of the way culture has been discussed in urban education. I explained how culture in this context has evolved into a term called sociocultural consciousness. Villegas and Lucas (2007) argued that teachers may misunderstand or miscommunicate with their students as they rely on their own schema (consciously or not) to understand their students. In the next subsection, I maintained the significant role that culturally responsive leaders play when they support their diverse student population and keep their families in high regard by conceptually and physically creating safe learning environments.

In the third section, I explained how identities are formed by experiences, behaviors, values, and ways of engaging in language and literacy practices. Identity theory was significant to this study, and the way former newcomer ELLs and their teachers and administrators view themselves and their roles has implications on how they view their transmigration experiences. I discussed the intersection of language and identity and how it continues to gain relevance in urban education, followed by a description of how individuals are connected to the social world, which was relevant to this study because the way that former newcomers develop their social identity and transnational identity impact the strategies they use in the acculturation process. Cultural competence with one or more groups is affected by the connection that newcomers make with others.

The final section of the literature review encompassed essential elements of my study, namely that school is a unique setting that impacts the lives of newcomers by shaping their sense of community. I also argued that the setting in which one learns a second language can determine how much one is willing to invest in acquiring that

language. The next subsection raised the issue of empowerment for students at both the classroom and school levels. This section detailed the power and importance of student voice in decision-making that affects students' education. A description of social integration—the degree to which immigrants interact positively with U.S.-born peers and the school community as a whole—then followed, serving as a way for the reader to understand that social adjustment, not academic achievement, is a stronger predictor of how students will fare in their education. John Berry's acculturation model concluded this section. This model comprises two main ideas: cultural maintenance and contact-participation. Undoubtedly, former newcomer ELLs will have ideas about how their culture should be maintained and whom they wish to socialize with based on their experiences, which will vary among each of them.



## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### **Introduction**

Newcomer ELLs' social integration can be directly linked to their educational attainment (Gozdziak & Martin, 2005). As such, I wanted to explore what positive transmigration experiences entailed for immigrant students as they adjusted to life in a new setting. My work was influenced by a study conducted by Berta Berriz (2002) that examined the emergent cultural identity of third-grade Puerto Rican and Dominican students. Her semi-structured interview approach captured students' thoughts on how they saw themselves. This shaped the way in which I learned about students' sense-making regarding their transmigration experiences in U.S. urban schools in the context of an English-only setting. The difference, however, was that I facilitated high school students as they interviewed each other, as well as whole group interviews, and the participants then produced digital stories about their experiences.

My study drew from the major concepts presented in Chapter 2, which provides historical and current perspectives on how teachers and administrators build relationships with students, and how identity formation intersects with learning in schools. The participants in this study were former newcomers, who by definition are students who

have moved within the past three years to the United States and have various educational, linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Thus, the participants brought with them their unique perspective of what it means to be educated, both in their native country and in Boston Public Schools.

The purpose of my study was to understand how former newcomer ELLs in Boston Public Schools made sense of their transmigration experiences through a digital storytelling project using Photovoice. The transmigration experiences I explored with students included: prior educational history; circumstances surrounding their move, including the people with whom students moved and what advance notice they were given; feelings regarding reception upon arrival; and social integration at school. Each participant shared his or her story with a partner and the whole group, and once the digital stories were completed, they were shared among the participants in a celebratory viewing.

In this chapter, I provide the rationale for my research design and data collection methods. I describe the research questions, how I selected the research site, recruited participants, and pedagogical activities. I provide justification for employing qualitative methods and then present each data collection method I used: interviews, participant observation, photography, digital storytelling, memos, and student work. I then discuss my methods of data management and analysis, including how I categorized and coded my data, as well as the type of consent I obtained to conduct my study. I defend the validity and reliability for my study and conclude by outlining the timeline of the research. The results will provide a more complete way of understanding newcomers' transmigration experiences in a new capacity.

## Research Design

In this section, I describe the overall research design of my interpretive, qualitative study, which drew on ethnographic methods and digital storytelling, and which was produced over a 12-session period at a community center with high school former newcomer ELLs.

**Research questions.** The overarching research question that guided the study was, how do former newcomer ELLs make sense of their transmigration experiences through a digital storytelling project using Photovoice? To examine this research question, I posed the following sub-questions: (1) How do students understand the circumstances around their move? (2) What types of initial interactions do students recall having in their new schools? (3) How do students make sense of social integration in their schools in the context of an English-only education? (4) How can a digital storytelling project using Photovoice facilitate student meaning-making of their transmigration experiences? In order to answer these questions, I explored several areas or themes with the participants. These themes emerged from the literature review and are summarized in Table 1.

The first sub-question allowed me to capture students' recollections and perceptions regarding their migration to the U.S. It also took into account that what and how students perceive their migration experience depends on how much time they have had to process the changes they have endured. The second sub-question focused on students' recollections of how they spent their first few days and weeks in their new school. They considered the extent to which their schools, teachers, administrators, and peers made them feel welcome upon arrival. The third sub-question considered how

students perceived their social integration experiences. They were asked to recount some of the teacher and school efforts that demonstrated respect for and understanding of their cultures, languages, values, and beliefs. The final sub-question pertains to the methodology of the study. Students were asked about their perceptions of Photovoice and of using student voice throughout the digital storytelling project (see Table 1).

Table 1

*Research Questions*

<b>Overarching Research Question:</b>		
<i>How do former newcomer ELLs make sense of their transmigration experiences through a digital storytelling project that uses Photovoice?</i>		
<b><i>Sub-questions</i></b>	<b><i>Areas to Explore / Themes</i></b>	<b><i>Selected Literature</i></b>
<i>1. How do students understand the circumstances around their move?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• educational history of the student</li> <li>• family / community questions—family who remained in home country, access to education, type of schools attended</li> <li>• time and notice given</li> <li>• lived with upon arrival</li> <li>• people or organizations who helped with move</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Canagarajah, 2005</li> <li>• García, 2009</li> <li>• Kia-Keating &amp; Ellis, 2007</li> <li>• Spencer, 1999</li> <li>• M. Suarez-Orozco &amp; Suarez-Orozco, 1993</li> <li>• M. A Suarez-Orozco, Darbes, Dias, &amp; Sutin, 2011</li> </ul>
<i>2. What types of initial interactions do students recall having in their schools?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• school welcoming practices</li> <li>• school adjustment</li> <li>• role of teacher, leaders, personnel in making students feel welcome</li> <li>• role of peers in making students feel welcome</li> <li>• language issues and supports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brown-Jeffy &amp; Cooper, 2011</li> <li>• Colbert, 2010</li> <li>• García, 2009</li> <li>• Nieto, 2010</li> <li>• Villegas &amp; Lucas, 2007</li> <li>• Young, Madsen, &amp; Young, 2010</li> </ul>
<i>3. How do students make sense of social integration in their schools in the context of an English-only education?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pedagogy—teacher and school efforts to integrate</li> <li>• interact with U.S.-born peers during learning and free time while at school</li> <li>• diversity and social cohesion nurtured</li> <li>• language issues and supports</li> <li>• bi-directional process where students develop respect and understanding of cultures, values, and beliefs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gandara &amp; Hopkins, 2010</li> <li>• Gozdziaik &amp; Martin, 2005</li> <li>• Langenkamp, 2009</li> <li>• Lasso &amp; Soto, 2005</li> <li>• Marcus &amp; Sanders-Reio, 2001</li> <li>• Nicolas, DeSilva, &amp; Rabenstein, 2009</li> <li>• Nyati-Ramahobo, 2006</li> <li>• Sheets, 2005</li> <li>• Trueba &amp; Bartolome, 2000</li> </ul>
<i>4. How can a digital storytelling project using Photovoice facilitate student meaning-making of their transmigration experiences?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• methods</li> <li>• student voice</li> <li>• visual literacy</li> <li>• Photovoice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ajayi, 2009</li> <li>• Berg, 2004</li> <li>• Iseke, 2011</li> <li>• Johnson, 1991</li> <li>• Lambert, 2010</li> </ul>

**Methodological paradigm.** All research has a particular slant. Researchers have particular worldviews or perspectives they hold to be true, and these inform the type of study they choose to conduct. These perspectives determine the way one views the world, interprets what is seen, and thus determines what is real, valid, and important to document (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010). This study fits best in the interpretivist/constructivist paradigm since I relied upon the participants' views of their situation and drew from their backgrounds and experiences where relevant. Constructivists believe that "reality is a 'social construction,' meaning that what people know and believe to be true about the world is *constructed or created and reinforced and supported* as people interact with one another over time in specific social settings" (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010, p. 67). Constructivists do not typically begin with a theory (unlike with positivists); instead, theories are developed as the research process progresses. My study was guided by the theories discussed in the second chapter, although I remained open to exploring my participants' transmigration experiences without any preconceived ideas as to what they conveyed during our sessions.

Cresswell and Miller (2000) would argue that my constructivist-oriented, methodological choices were based on a belief in "pluralistic, interpretive, open-ended and contextualized perspectives toward reality" (p. 126); in fact, the longer researchers stay in the field, the more pluralistic perspectives will be examined and the greater the understanding of the context of participants' views. As a constructivist researcher, I relied on qualitative data collection methods and analysis. Throughout my data collection, participants spoke for themselves and shared their unique experiences of leaving one country and starting their social and academic experiences in the United States.

Participants made meaning of their experiences and represented their perspectives through their engagement in a facilitated digital storytelling project. Their perspectives were presented both as individuals and collectively.

**Pedagogical methodology for the study.** My approach to this study was qualitative in nature. Qualitative research is an effective approach when the researcher does not know the important variables to examine or, in my case, chooses to wait to let the important variables present themselves once the data collection is underway. Some of the artifacts that I developed, collected, and analyzed for themes during the study included: lesson plans and/or agendas for each of our meetings, memos of participants' interactions with peers and myself, digital recordings of the interactions, artifacts that include drafts of a script read on iMovie and photographic images that document participants' experiences, as well as other photographs and notes that participants took capturing their perceptions and experiences. Emerging methods, text, and image analysis of audio-visual data, along with document analysis to interpret themes and patterns, also added to the qualitative nature of this study.

The study drew on ethnographic methods to elicit emergent themes and data that were rich in description. In this type of research, templates do not guide a study from start to finish; rather, the structure is flexible, and ambiguity can be expected along the way, requiring a great deal of adaptability on the part of the researcher (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010, p. 48-49). Using flexible methods, I gathered information rather than make assumptions from the start (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010, p. 39). Along the same lines, the data collection strategies I anticipated using needed to be adapted as a result of unexpected events or conversations that went "off-track" during our sessions. Therefore,

I needed to understand what research participants' behaviors meant to them when taking an ethnographic approach, as opposed to drawing my own conclusions as an outsider observing participant behaviors. I am drawn to this type of approach and its potential for helping to develop and foster educational strategies that can benefit personal, family, and community structures and behaviors (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010).

**Researcher positionality.** This interpretive study drew on ethnographic methods to examine the transmigration experiences of former newcomer students and how those experiences impacted their adjustment to their new school settings. This type of study speaks to who I am professionally and personally for two reasons. First, I moved to Japan to teach English in my 20s without prior knowledge of the Japanese language and culture. Living in a rural area, I was unsure how local residents would receive me. To my delight, I was welcomed by them and soon felt I was part of the community. During this time, I took Japanese lessons but also had the advantage of getting to “practice” my new language skills as I ran my errands each day. It was not long before I formed friendships and felt socially integrated into my community. As a linguistic and cultural outsider, I felt supported as I began to speak Japanese and question the local culture and norms; as a result, I spent five years in Japan, passed the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT), and explored the country from the northernmost to the southernmost islands with friends. Had I not felt welcome to share my ideas and experiences with my colleagues, neighbors, and friends, I am certain that I would not have felt so at home there as I continued to learn new aspects of Japanese language and culture. In essence, partaking in the positive transmigration experiences mentioned kept me residing in, exploring, and enjoying Japan for five years. The decision to return home to the Boston area to attend graduate school



was a very difficult one.

Second, I have been an urban educator in the U.S. for the past six years. As a pull-out ESL teacher to elementary-aged newcomers, I have picked up and dropped off students to their general education classrooms countless times. I have observed how ELLs can be marginalized: Newcomer ELLs have not been given linguistic access to lessons, rendering the content inaccessible; they have been left out of whole-class discussions; and they have not been included in the class community, particularly when no one else speaks their language. I care deeply about the types of relationships that develop between teachers and students; thus, I am interested in how these relationships are cultivated and maintained to allow for a positive social integration experience and to ultimately result in academic success and/or career readiness for students, particularly when teachers' and students' home languages and cultures differ. I discussed this investment and interest in sound teacher-student relationships with my student-participants and sought to understand participants' views on the role that the teacher plays (or played) when new students arrive.

My deep commitment to newcomers' experiences is informed by the personal experiences described above and may have influenced the study data. Being welcomed mattered a great deal to me in terms of how much time I spent learning the language and culture in a completely unfamiliar place. I address this particular bias in greater detail in the validity section of this chapter.

Newcomers look to their teachers and their community at large to facilitate identity formation students. Regardless of the type of schooling ELL students experienced before moving to the U.S., their surroundings and expectations will likely have changed

dramatically, as well as the linguistic demands of their schools and society more generally. Popkewitz (1999) maintains that “to be educated has meant to ... assume identities normalized through discursive practices” (p. 28). Teachers have a great responsibility regarding their students’ ability to be successful in their content area, and embedded in their relationship-building approach is the belief that one language is not privileged over another.

Apart from the type of academic programming (e.g., SEI, general education, dual language, etc.), urban teachers must be adept at drawing on students’ home languages and cultures to the extent practicable. At no point should students be made to feel that because they are developing their academic language skills in English that their ideas and ability to participate are any less worthy than their peers’. “Language systems should focus on encounters that do not impose norms that privilege one set of people over another set” (Popkewitz, 1999, p. 34). For newcomers to begin to feel acclimated to their new social and academic surroundings, they will need time to use their dominant language as a bridge to access new knowledge in their developing second language. However, regarding the work participants engaged in for my study, they honed their visual literacy skills by working on their ability to express themselves through still and moving images. The activities also served as a bridge to new understandings of their experiences.

**Setting.** In July 2014, I conducted my study at a community center in an urban setting in the Boston area. The community center was an appropriate study site for many reasons. The organization offers youth development programs and social responsibility programs to students of all ages. It also houses a teen center that provides a range of

services, such as employment assistance and credit-recovery support for teenagers who have dropped out of high school and would like to earn a GED. My rationale for choosing this locale was because the participants hailed from multiple Boston Public Schools and therefore yielded a wider sample of diverse experiences that students met with upon arrival. By selecting an offsite community center rather than limiting the study to one specific school I was able to gain a broader understanding of the issues I wanted to explore from students who attended multiple schools within Boston Public Schools. I also wanted students to feel some separation from the schools themselves, so they could reflect on their experiences in a community space rather than the school. To allow the participants time and space to process their own journeys and transmigration stories, I conducted my research outside of school hours with a small group of former newcomer ELLs. As a facilitator, I engaged with the students to gain an understanding of how they perceived their own social integration in their new settings.

Boston Public Schools has many different types of ESL programs, and research from the Gaston Institute describes the types of programs that have been shown to be successful academically. My study, however, took a different approach. Rather than examining the effectiveness of a particular program at one school, I asked students to share their unique experiences about their education in their home countries and in different academic programs in Boston Public Schools, and reflect upon what worked well in their own voice. The community center already offered many types of programs for students—athletic, academic, and social—and therefore the research required in this type of study complemented the different courses being offered around academic enrichment work.

**Participant selection.** This study captured the transmigration experiences of ELL students who were former newcomers in Boston, Massachusetts. With the assistance of the teen program director of the community center, I recruited former newcomer ELLs who had arrived in the U.S. and begun their schooling one to three years ago to participate in an extracurricular group that I facilitated over a 12-session period. I recruited six high school students who attended the community center and who were able to commit to the 12-session timeframe in July 2014 (see Table 2). In my convenience sample, participants who lived in the United States for one to three years were selected based on their ability to attend all the sessions. By partnering with the community center for the digital storytelling project (which comprised my fieldwork), I had access to certain individuals who were otherwise difficult to contact (Bryan, 2001). The participants were also willing and able to share their experiences leaving their home countries and their initial impressions upon arrival.

When designing my study, in order to achieve diverse responses, my preference was to recruit culturally and linguistically diverse students, students from different places of origin, and students who attended different schools within the Boston Public Schools district. As it turned out, however, the teen program director at the community center screened for individuals who met the criteria in terms of availability to participate and length of time in the U.S., as well as students who possessed an interest in learning about photography and completing a digital storytelling project. All participants came from the same country of origin, spoke the same first language, and shared similar cultural traits. They were however, students of three different high schools.

Participant compensation came in a few forms. I provided academic enrichment for

participants who participated in the digital storytelling project. Participants were also exposed to a variety of tools for creating a digital story on a MacBook—for instance, iMovie, iPhoto, Safari, Google Drive, and Word documents—and completed the project with far more computer skills than when they started. The participants were able to reflect on and understand their experiences in new ways through critical discussions. They also received individualized assistance with their academic writing in English.

Financial compensation was also provided through a grant from a nonprofit organization that connects business, the Boston Public Schools, and community organizations, allowing the teenagers to engage in an opportunity to work at the community center during the summer. The teen program director oversaw how the group spent its six weeks during July and August, and he determined that the academic writing and topics I planned in my three-week study were relevant and beneficial for the selected participants, as they were all immigrants who had lived in Boston for one to three years. Therefore, the director determined that in partial fulfillment of their grant, they would spend time engaging in the creation of a digital story. Participants were selected for the grant regardless of my study taking place. In the interest of full transparency, the participants completed 30 hours per week for six weeks at the center and earned \$8 per hour. When the participants were not participating in my project, they were interning with a camp director, performing tasks such as filing paperwork and organizing papers as requested, and helping with a small summer camp group for elementary-aged children on and off-site.

Table 2

*The Participants*

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Grade completed as of July 2014</b>	<b>Arrival in U.S.</b>	<b>Home Language</b>
Diane	20	Roosevelt	12	March 2011	Haitian Creole
Steven	19	Sunny Hill	10	August 2012	Haitian Creole
Jacqueline	19	Roosevelt	10	January 2013	Haitian Creole
Margaret	17	Roosevelt	10	July 2013	Haitian Creole
Sarah	20	Forrest Academy	11	October 2012	Haitian Creole
Tonya	20	Forrest Academy	11	September 2013	Haitian Creole

All of the participants hailed from Haiti, and the majority had lived in the capital, Port-au-Prince, before moving to Boston after the devastating earthquake that leveled their home city in January 2010. At the beginning of the project, participants were paired with partners. Since everyone's home language was Haitian Creole, I tried to create pairs that were diverse in their ability to engage in academic writing and technology.

**Diane.** Diane (Figure 1) was the most outspoken participant of the group. From the initial meeting onward, her personality was gregarious and outgoing. She expressed the greatest amount of enthusiasm for my project, and asked thoughtful questions in her effort to understand what was being asked of her. Arriving in the U.S. in March 2011, she had lived in the country longer than the other participants. Twenty years old, Diane was the only high school graduate of the group. During the fieldwork, she was still reeling from the excitement of fulfilling her dream of earning her diploma, in June 2014, from Roosevelt High School, a school known for its Haitian Creole SEI program. For this reason, she was regarded as a leader in the group.



*Figure 1.* Portrait of Diane. Reprinted with permission.

**Steven.** Steven, 19 years old, was the only male in the group (Figure 2). He was also the only participant who attended Sunny Hill High School, a small high school with programming for newcomers. Having arrived in the U.S. in August 2012, Steven had just completed the tenth grade. Steven and I spent the most time together during the three-

week project. He usually showed up early because he was the only participant who worked at a different program in the mornings. He usually arrived around 3 p.m., when I would get there to set up for the day and review the activities I was about to facilitate.

At the onset, he did not make eye contact. He kept his head down, shoulders slumped, and barely talked. He wore headphones regularly and stared at the floor, which gave me the impression that he did not care to make small talk. However, Steven proved to be an attentive and helpful member of the group. In each session, after I would introduce the task, Steven would get to work independently and produce the work I expected. While the female participants talked (usually in Creole to clarify what we would be doing for the night), Steven would begin the assignment and thus would usually be the first one done. This could have been a product of his having facility with English.



*Figure 2.* Portrait of Steven. Reprinted with permission.



**Jacqueline.** At the time of the study, Jacqueline, 19 years old, had just completed the tenth grade at Roosevelt High School (Figure 3). She struck me as reserved and mature when we met. Arriving in the U.S. in January 2013, she presented herself as a quiet listener who made every effort to be attentive to the requirements of the project. Throughout the course of the project, Jacqueline worked hard to produce the written work in each session, while her oral language production was developing. It seemed to me that she preferred to communicate in writing as she developed her social language skills in English.



*Figure 3.* Portrait of Jacqueline. Reprinted with permission.

**Margaret.** Margaret (Figure 4) held the distinction of being the youngest of the study participants. At 17 years old, Margaret had just completed the tenth grade in Roosevelt High School's Haitian Creole SEI Program. Margaret arrived in Boston in July 2013, just one year before the fieldwork began. Margaret made friends easily using her home language with the female participants. She was interested in creating a digital story

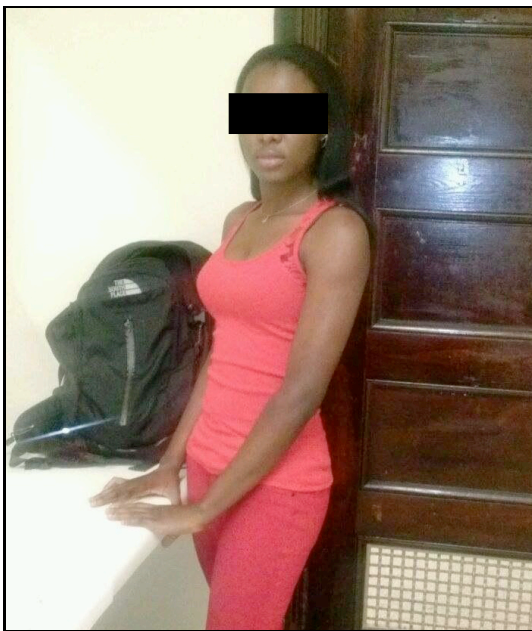
and frequently asked clarifying questions in Haitian Creole. At the time of the project, Margaret's ability to use social language in English to both listen and converse with the participants was developing.



*Figure 4.* Portrait of Margaret. Reprinted with permission.

***Sarah.*** Sarah (Figure 5) was 20 years old and had just completed the eleventh grade at the time of the study. She was a quiet, respectful participant. She actively listened and produced a great deal of writing. Sarah attended Forrest Academy, a small high school known for its ability to place students in internship roles and provide school-to-career opportunities. Sarah arrived in the U.S. in October 2012. She expressed motivation to improve her ability to both listen and speak in English, but she also seemed quite reserved during whole-group meetings. I made it a point to check in with Sarah to ensure she stayed on track. As one example, I worked directly with Sarah on ordering her

pictures based on the events in her script. In doing this, she was able to accurately identify images she still needed to find as she read through her words. She was able to add about half of the total images she already had—pictures of the Miami airport, Haitian school children, her grandfather in a garden in Haiti, Haitian beaches—and made a solid list of the other pictures she wanted to find. Sarah shared that some of her responsibilities included doing all of the housework for her bother and father, which took up much of her time. Being separated from her mother (who remained in Haiti), she was the female head of her household.



*Figure 5.* Portrait of Sarah. Reprinted with permission.

**Tonya.** Tonya (Figure 6) seemed to present herself as mature, if reserved from the group. At 20 years old, she had just completed the eleventh grade at Forrest Academy. Tonya arrived in Boston in September 2013, making her the participant who

had been here the least amount of time. At the information session held before the digital story project began, I informed Tonya (and everyone) about the topics we would be discussing and writing about during our time together. The second time we met, I spoke one-on-one with Tonya, and she told me that her mother passed away in the earthquake. She gave such a strong first impression that she was willing and interested in sharing her experiences that I was taken aback when I read drafts of her script and learned that she did not want to include this part of her transmigration narrative. None of the pictures she selected either hinted that she had lost her mother or suffered in any way at all.



Figure 6. Portrait of Tonya. Reprinted with permission.

**Participants' schools.** Participants attended three different high schools within the BPS, which has 21 high schools. Roosevelt High School is the largest school out of

the three that participants attended. The school educates 1015 students in grades 6–12, 27% of whom are ELL. This school has a sheltered English immersion program (SEI) for Haitian Creole speakers, with Haitian Creole speaking teachers instructing them. Technology plays a vital role in students' learning, which is integrated throughout their content areas. The school boasts an after-school program for all students to provide additional academic support where needed, along with summer enrichment opportunities.

Forrest Academy is a small, college preparatory high school dedicated to preparing students for post-secondary studies and professions in the science and health fields. In their mission statement, they emphasize student voice, calling it “critical in the development, implementation, and review of our practices.” The 400-student school, with 34.5% ELL, has an early college access program and internships for its students, along with extended day for academic enrichment. They also have a Haitian Creole SEI program that reflects the larger Haitian community in the neighborhood.

Sunny Hill offers a college preparatory curriculum to its 345 students, 89.9% ELL, that is designed to simultaneously teach high school students academic English and rigorous content. This school has a special admission process and students get assigned to Sunny Hill based on their English language placement test. As such, it houses a program for newcomers and staff teachers who reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of the students and to be able to communicate with both the students and their families effectively. They have a multilingual strand of SEI and a SIFE program specifically for Haitian Creole speakers. This school also offers after-school and Saturday programs to give academic support in their content areas of need.

**Teaching assistant.** I foresaw that I would need an extra set of hands to ensure that participants would be able to maximize their engagement with the technology we used for the project. For this reason, I hired a teaching assistant, Jill, to help me manage students' time on task during the sessions. Jill was primarily responsible for troubleshooting students' issues with the laptops as they arose and was not expected to lead lessons or to conduct any research. The role was designed to assist students in utilizing the photography and iMovie software, and, as I hoped, it allowed students to work more efficiently, since they weren't held up waiting for me to assist them. I selected someone with public school teaching experience in an urban setting and an interest in engaging students in the use of technology. Participants were able to keep focused on their work as the teaching assistant helped them download images, drag their images into iMovie, etc., while I was able to work with other students on the same tasks and oversaw the entire session.

**Pedagogical activities.** With the location and participants selected, I was able to concentrate on researching and planning activities for each session. After careful consideration with my dissertation committee, it was decided that the project would be three weeks long, with 12 sessions total, meeting Monday through Thursday for 2.5 hours each session. I knew this schedule would be demanding on the participants, particularly in the summer, but I also knew that dragging the project out too long ran the risk of exhausting participants' interest. To help hold their attention, I wanted to have engaging lessons and hands-on graphic organizers prepared to motivate them from the first session.

I wanted to learn about the extent to which former newcomer ELL students had adjusted to their new settings in the context of an English-only education by finding out

what kinds of welcoming practices existed for students and how their learning environments impacted how they saw themselves as students. For example, I asked the participants if they had received a school tour that included all the essential locations the student needed to travel to on their own, or if a classmate had been formally or informally assigned to them as a “buddy” to help them navigate the building for the first few days, or if it had been implied that the new student was expected to quietly observe classroom practices and master the routines, schedule, and hidden curriculum on their own. The idea of welcoming practices was left open for students to consider and share their own examples, but for the purposes of getting the conversation started, I offered some examples as well.

When working with the participants, I focused on specific issues; I did not plan to capture everything that occurred at a particular site (Hays, 2004). Before the July sessions began, I met with participants in early July to inform them of the research study, the commitment required, and the expectations of the digital storytelling project. At that time, I discussed how I needed the participants to give their consent and assent, and I asked for their signatures on the required forms. During this introductory meeting, I presented an overview of the agenda and answered participants’ questions about engaging in the research. I explained to participants that in the work we were to do, I would ask them to share their transmigration experiences to the extent they felt comfortable doing so. I informed them that I would provide cameras if they did not have a smartphone or access to a digital camera in order for them to tell their stories visually but that they could also bring in pictures and other artifacts from home that represented the themes we unpacked in our sessions. I also described to the participants how I would

teach them to put together their story using their pictures and words on a MacBook, and that during this time I would record discussions and collect some of the work that was done in class (unless students asked me not to collect their work). Please see Appendix D for more details about the information session.

Over the 12 sessions during which I met with the participants, we worked toward our goal of creating a digital story of their transmigration experience. At first, I worked hard to get to know each participant as an individual, as I was fully aware that each participant's transmigration experience was unique. Through separate conversations, I developed a solid rapport with each participant, and participants also spent time engaging each other in community-building activities. As we became better acquainted, I laid out the groundwork for the project, slowly introducing each task and ensuring that participants were able to complete the work before they engaged in the activity.

One of the first activities was to outline some key moments that captured participants' experiences of leaving their home country and moving to a new and unfamiliar place where the language, culture, and school system were unfamiliar. The aim of starting this way was to get a chronology established and to have students consider significant moments that they might like to expand upon in their digital story. I then instructed participants on photography as an art form, focusing on the importance of the composition of a frame as well as some influential street photographers, which served as a history of photography lesson. We then reviewed some digital story projects that have been completed, as a way for students to have a model (or models) for their own projects. I selected digital stories that dealt with complimentary themes such as resiliency, migration, and education. The participants were greatly motivated by these powerful



examples and referred to the content and stylistic choices when creating their own stories. From there, I provided the group some background instruction on the software that the participants would ultimately use to tell their stories (iMovie and iPhoto). Participants began the project with a wide range of abilities for engaging with these tools. During parts of each session, participants created and refined a script, which became their narration of the images they selected. Toward the end of our time together, the participants used the photographs they either took themselves or selected on Google image to build their own digital storytelling projects in Photovoice. Table 3 explains the trajectory of how our time was spent engaging in the project.

Table 3

*Digital Story Project Agenda*

<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Agenda</b>	<b>Areas to Explore / Themes (from Table 1)</b>
<b>Session 1</b>	<p><b>Introduction</b> I engaged in rapport-building conversations and provided overview of the project. We discussed the amount of participation (both oral and written) required. Participants introduced themselves and began to use an interview guide.</p> <p><b>Goals of project</b> I presented the rubric that served as a checklist with a description of the criteria of quality that characterized each level of accomplishment for the digital story, which served as the product of the project.</p> <p><b>Activities</b> Taught a brief history of street photography and facilitated a discussion on photography skills.</p> <p>Took pictures of their partners and created self-portraits.</p> <p><b>Interview</b> Participants interviewed their partners. Began to talk about the key moments of their transmigration experiences. Students were provided a graphic organizer to aid in organizing their narrative arc. Determined key moments that occurred before arrival to Boston.</p> <p><b>Homework</b> Gathered old photos, mementos to photograph and annotate that spoke to their experiences.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational history of the student</li> <li>• Family / community questions—family who remained in home country, access to education, type of schools attended</li> <li>• Time and notice given</li> <li>• Living arrangements upon arrival</li> <li>• People or organizations who helped with move</li> </ul>

Timeline	Agenda	Areas to Explore / Themes (from Table 1)
Session 2	<p><b>Activities</b> Participants shared key moments that captured transmigration experiences and artifacts / mementos that captured experiences.</p> <p><b>Interview</b> Participants interviewed their partners. Topic: Students initial interactions in Boston Public Schools. Participants drafted the middle part of their storyboard by recalling their experiences entering Boston Public Schools upon arrival.</p> <p>Guided students in partner feedback with questions (on a graphic organizer).</p> <p>Showed digital story project exemplars. Students took notes with a graphic organizer as they viewed them. We discussed the narrative arc and theme of each exemplar. Prompted students to look for a narrative arc in their partner's story (with graphic organizer).</p> <p>Discussed the pictures participants had selected thus far. Participants added their images to folders on a flash drive and I put them on the laptops they used.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School welcoming practices</li> <li>• School adjustment</li> <li>• Role of teacher, leaders, personnel in making students feel welcome</li> <li>• Role of peers in making students feel welcome</li> <li>• Language issues and supports</li> </ul>
Sessions 3 - 4	<p>Whole Class Discussion—Topic: Participants made sense of how they experienced social integration in their schools. Participants completed a graphic organizer that organized their thoughts on this theme.</p> <p><b>Activities</b> Practiced storytelling with partner. Students chose a few photographs and practiced explaining the significance of these images in their transmigration experience.</p> <p>Whole group discussion on their participation in the project thus far.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher and school efforts to integrate students</li> <li>• Interact with U.S.-born peers during learning and free time while at school</li> <li>• Diversity and social cohesion nurtured</li> <li>• Language issues and supports</li> <li>• Bi-directional process for students to develop respect and understanding of cultures, values, and beliefs</li> </ul>

<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Agenda</b>	<b>Areas to Explore / Themes (from Table 1)</b>
<b>Sessions 5 – 6</b>	<p><b>Script Work</b> Students wrote and edited their script that told the story of their images. They selected the text that described their key moments and highlights of the process that they included in their interview guide. I answered questions that lingered for students about assembling a digital story.</p> <p><b>Build an iMovie</b> I showed students how to assemble a digital story. I modeled how to upload still images, create transitional slides, and add text.</p> <p><b>Photographs</b> Determined if participant/s needed to gather more images to tell their stories. Selected photographs that would otherwise capture students' ideas.</p>	Themes of the first three sessions were raised as students wrote their script.
<b>Sessions 7 –10</b>	<p><b>Assemble digital stories</b> Created transition slides, titles, and effects on iMovie. Photographs were adjusted and reworked to tell a story. Participants provided an update on their work up to this point.</p>	Themes of the first three sessions were raised.
<b>Session 11</b>	<p><b>Evaluation and Narration</b> Participants completed a self-evaluation, peer evaluation, and facilitator evaluation. They also recorded their voices over their digital stories and gave the final approval that their digital story was complete.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Methods</li> <li>• Student voice</li> <li>• Visual literacy</li> <li>• Photovoice</li> </ul>
<b>Session 12</b>	<p><b>Presentations</b> Participants talked about the process of creating their digital story and presented their work. Provided feedback to the group one last time on their finished products.</p>	

Participants honed their ability to speak in small groups during our sessions. They introduced themselves, talked about how long they had lived in Boston, and discussed the circumstances around their move. The others listened in earnest, since doing so helped in

the crafting of their own narratives. As we discussed the questions in the interview guide, we carefully considered the following questions: What types of classroom activities did newcomers experience on their first few days in a new learning environment? How did former newcomers recall feeling in school upon their arrival? How could schools improve in helping newcomers feel welcome in their new setting? Also, in what ways did participants think schools could anticipate and plan for newcomers' specific social needs? As we became more familiar with each other, we explored students' emerging cultural identity. I asked questions to capture their sense of belonging to one place or another, how they self-labeled, their language use and their perceptions of that language, their positive and negative attitudes toward their culture of origin, and their thoughts regarding the dominant culture.

Students refined their visual literacy skills throughout the project. They worked with their images early on and built the capacity to evaluate their own work as well as their others' progress toward completion. In an effort to represent their ideas about the topics discussed in the group, they were given an envelope for gathering photographs and other mementos, and each participant also took photographs to capture his or her neighborhood, friends, family, and daily life in Boston. They continued to give feedback on how their pacing, pictures, and text were able to represent their ideas (which are included in the "Areas to Explore/Themes" column in Table 1).

### **Data Collection Methods**

I used a combination of methods to examine students' transmigration experiences: interviews, participant observations, photography, digital storytelling, and analysis of student work. Throughout the study, my intent was for student participants to have a

voice in the research as I conveyed the details about the data collection. Participants shared, in their own words, what they held to be the most important aspects of their adjustment period. For this purpose, I considered our sessions on creating the digital stories to be paramount to capturing students' voices, as I ensured that participants knew how to engage in each task before the work began in each session. Once the work with the participants concluded, I wrote memos about what had transpired. Interviews, which are prime data-collecting tools in qualitative research, played a role in the study, and observations were used in conjunction with interviews to provide additional meaning to the phenomena observed during the project.

The nature of the study required me to be attentive to my focus and roles as I shifted between facilitating the group and observing participants as they engaged in activities and with each other. To help maximize my efficiency in each role, my teaching assistant worked with students to ensure that they stayed on task. I carefully reviewed the agenda with participants at the beginning of each session. During this preview of our time together, I made clear when I was expecting to have everyone's attention (in order to direct them in some activity) and when participants would be working independently, at which time my role shifted to that of participant observer.

**Interviews.** I planned for each participant to be interviewed by his or her partner and designed activities in which participants interviewed each other. These interviews were digitally recorded. I wrote memos about the content of each recording, and portions of each recording were transcribed. The length of the interviews varied depending on the topics and the depth of the recalled experiences of the interviewee. During the planning stages, I intended for participants to be able to engage fully in asking and answering a

certain number of questions in pairs for a portion of each session for the first week. However, the participants were still developing their English language production skills and responded to the open-ended questions briefly, often with just a few words. That left me concerned that because participants were using only English in their interviews (and knew their conversations were being digitally recorded) I would potentially miss some valuable information about their transmigration experiences. For that reason, I decided to modify the sessions. I asked the questions from the interview guide to the whole group, and the participants shared their experiences aloud and wrote their own responses in the graphic organizers. We would pause at the questions that generated more conversation and move beyond the questions that did not resonate with the group.

I opted to use interviews as a data collection method because I wanted to capture the interior experiences of former newcomers, as well as their perceptions of their adjustment period. In asking participants to share applicable background information, I had hoped to capture the multidimensionality of their experiences. As a qualitative researcher, I am interested “not just in *what* people say but also in the *way* that they say it” (Bryan, 2001, p. 321). As such, I wrote memos that described participants’ body postures, hand gestures, voice tones, pauses, etc., and then provided a possible interpretation of these. When I wrote memos after each session, I noted what participants shared with the group and their demeanor and attitude regarding the topic.

The interview is probably the most widely employed method in qualitative research. According to Krathwohl (1998), the major purposes for using interviews in research are to explore, probe, and search to determine the significance of a person or situation. In this study, one area of significance lay in the unique English-only context in

which newcomers interact with teachers and administrators for the first time in the U.S. Other purposes for choosing interviews included determining how individuals perceived their situations and finding explanations for the discrepancies between the observed and expected effect, and for deviations from common behaviors by individuals or subgroups. Such potential discrepancies are important, as participants can potentially subscribe to a particular belief about themselves, but after processing the idea with peers, they may realize they do not behave that way in practice.

The interviewer has a great amount of responsibility toward the interviewee to accurately represent his or her beliefs and experiences. As the facilitator, I designed activities in which participants interviewed each other about their experiences, providing structure to the digital stories as their responses became a guide for the scripts they each wrote.

I developed questions that honed newcomers' ideas about how their prior educational experiences (and/or other events related to being a student) had affected their thoughts and feelings about their identity as students in the Boston Public Schools. I created the interview guide for participants to learn each other's background information; the guide also contained subtopics with questions regarding participants' initial impressions of school in the U.S.

However, in no way were these guides meant to serve as a standard protocol for each interview. Each qualitative interview experience was unique: Questions were tailored, omitted, or expanded upon to "fit" the experience of each interviewee, as there are some types of qualitative interviews that enable the participant to guide the discussion more than others (Krathwohl, 1998). Participants also had the option of adding questions



to an interview script based on their familiarity with the topic. From the beginning of this qualitative study, I worked toward building and maintaining rapport with the participants, while developing activities to ascertain their perspective (deMarrais, 2004). Most of the interviews were semi-structured, as the conversations between peers and myself were more meaningful with the potential questions and their order determined beforehand. I did, however, leave room for exploring particular topics in more depth if the interviewees elaborated on an idea that seemed particularly pressing, thus supporting the ontological authenticity of my study. (See Appendix C for the interview guide.)

**Participant observation.** As the researcher, I needed to rely on my memory and dutifully and thoroughly write down my observations as soon as each session ended. Writing down everything that was (or could have been) significant to my study while at the same time engaging with and observing participants was no small feat. For this reason, as discussed earlier, I brought on a teaching assistant to engage the students in their work. The teaching assistant was able to clarify interview questions and troubleshoot software issues as they arose, which kept participants' work flowing smoothly even if they got hung up trying to do something independently. They did not need to wait for me to give them an answer to a small question or show them how to utilize the technology.

Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, and Namey (2005) argued that participant observation is a qualitative method with roots in traditional ethnographic research, the objective of which is to help researchers learn the perspectives held by those being observed. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) posited that all social research is a form of participant observation: Researchers "cannot study the social world without being part of

it.... [Participant observation] is not a particular research technique but a mode of being-in-the-world characteristic of researchers” (as cited in Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994, p. 249). In fact the

epistemology of participant observation rests on the principle of interaction and the “reciprocity of perspectives” between social actors. The rhetoric is thus egalitarian: observer and observed as inhabitants of a shared social and cultural field, their respective cultures different but equal, and capable of mutual recognition by virtue of a shared humanity. (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994, p. 256)

Thus, researchers are participant observers when they act as interviewers or focus group facilitators. In such cases, researchers are guided by cultural understanding, which allows them to distinguish subtle differences between and among participant responses.

“Knowing what these culturally specific cues mean allows the researcher to ask more appropriate follow-up questions and probes” (Bernard, 1994, as cited in Kawulich, 2005, p. 16).

Qualitative researchers value the multiple perspectives of participants within any given community. For this reason, participant observers aim to learn what those diverse perspectives are in order to better understand the interplay among them. To accomplish this objective, my research took place in a community setting—that is, the community center—allowing me to respond fully to the research questions. Researchers will carefully and objectively record accounts of every session together as field notes, traditionally in a field notebook (although I used my laptop). In addition to writing down what I saw, I recorded, in as much detail as possible, informal conversations and

interactions, which are also essential elements of participant observation (Mack et al., 2005). Usually the data are textual, though they can also include maps, diagrams, and other organizational charts.

Through participant observation, I was able to gain an understanding of the physical, social, cultural, and economic contexts in which the participants lived; the relationships among and between the participants themselves; the relationships among and between participants and their families, contexts, ideas, norms, and events; and behaviors and activities—what they did, how frequently, and with whom. As the analyses progressed, data collected through participant observation served as ways to triangulate participants' subjective reporting of what they have shared (Mack et al., 2005). Session after session, I gained a better understanding of who the participants were and what kinds of experiences they had had, and I observed and memoed to the extent possible as the interviews took place.

Students worked on group-based activities: getting to know each other, learning about photography, writing their responses in their interview guide, and creating their digital stories together using iMovie. As they spent more time together, I observed students engaging with their peers. This proved to be another important source of information in my research; as Hays (2004) held, case studies that involve the interaction of individuals cannot be understood without observation. One of the major objectives of the study was to let the interactions between participants, and participants and myself, unfold “naturally,” so it was critical that I did not disrupt their interactions as they spontaneously arose.

**Photography.** One major aspect of this study was to have students engage in photography as a way of visually representing their transmigration experiences. According to Metros (2008), visual literacy is understood as the “ability to decode and interpret visual messages and also to be able to encode and compose meaningful visual communications, which includes: visualizing internally, communicating visually, and reading and interpreting visual images” (p. 103). In our sessions, students developed ways to make sense and process visual images, and to critique visual information. Overall though, I thought that all the participants possessed and would be able to use images or mementos that would be easy to photograph and use to assist in the telling of their transmigration experiences. However, besides Diane and Steven, who brought in photographs they already had or took pictures of their daily life that were appropriate to use, participants relied on Google image to find photographs of Haiti, schools both in Haiti and Boston, and images that represented family members in their stories.

As discussed in the first chapter, students in Boston Public Schools enter with diverse language abilities, varied cultural identities, and multiple perspectives. English language learners represent a range of backgrounds and demonstrate a multitude of learning strategies. Among these preferred ways of learning are visual methods such as photography (Ajayi, 2009). Using photography in this project enhanced my own understanding of former newcomers’ experiences, but, more importantly, utilizing that particular methodology allowed participants to hone their visual literacy skills.

The “immediacy of the visual image creates evidence and promotes a vivid participatory means of sharing expertise and knowledge” (Wang, 2003, as cited in Paiewonsky, 2005, p. 36). Participants took photographs of each other in the community,

and they had complete control over what they photographed. They were able to decide what images best captured their ideas as they pertained to the stories they set out to tell. By discussing their photographs with others, participants used the power of the visual image to convey their perceptions of their transmigration experiences. Participants were also able to share their concerns in an alternative way, benefitting those who were not yet proficient in their second language. With minimal instruction, most high-school-aged students can use a digital camera or a camera-equipped smartphone, as photography does not require literacy in any particular language. Berg (2004) noted that using photography in a digital storytelling project goes along with the

current trend among some action researchers in using photographs as a way to enable me, as the principal investigator, to gain perceptual access to the world from the viewpoint of individuals who have not traditionally held control over the means of imaging the world. (p. 205)

This “trend” has come to be known as Photovoice, a method developed by the public health researchers Wang and Burris (1997, as cited in Paiewonsky, 2005; Berg, 2004). It is a process by which people can identify, represent, and enhance their community. The term “Photovoice” to describe students’ work replaced the previously used term “photo novella,” commonly used to describe the process of using photographs to tell a story or to teach language and literacy (Wang & Burris, 1997). The researchers described their work as being “more social action based rather than as a story telling or literacy building tool” (Paiewonsky, 2005, pp. 31-32). Photovoice’s ground-up approach literally and figuratively offers students an alternative form of voice—photographs as communication—that allows for greater engagement (Chio & Fandt, 2007).

During the digital storytelling project, I wanted students to capture moments that were important and representative of social integration, adaptation, and adjustment in their new surroundings according to them. During an initial meeting, the participants and I looked at photographs of people and examined the emotions that a person's facial expression and body language can convey. Photovoice and its application stem from Paulo Friere's (1970) work that grew out of critical education, feminist theory, and a participatory approach to documentary photography. Freire's problem-posing education starts with issues that people see as central to their lives and then enables them to identify common themes through dialog (as cited in Paiewonsky, 2005). As in the case of my work with the study participants, students and teachers become critical co-investigators in dialog with each other. In this sense, I guided participants as I explained that what they chose to photograph would be a reflection of what they perceived a visual representation of social integration to be, and that their ability to select images that expressed their perceptions of particular issues was critical to their digital story. As a teaching tool, Photovoice offered the opportunity to foster a more participatory learning environment and a more reflective and self-aware learning opportunity (Chio & Fandt, 2007). The goals of Photovoice, according to Berg (2004), are to understand the phenomena that allow students to think critically about their personal and community concerns, to encourage a dialogue and transfer knowledge and information about personal and community issues through discussions about photographs among participants, and to empower students who may not feel in control of various issues and convey this information to those who are in control (in this case, teachers, administrators, district leaders, etc.).

**Digital storytelling.** In much the same way that photography and Photovoice were viable methodologies for the former newcomer ELL participants of my study, digital storytelling has come to be a vehicle for cultural analysis. Rossiter and Garcian (2010) maintained that use of digital stories has been proposed as an alternative to more traditional methods of capturing students' ideas or beliefs, such as surveys or written essays. Similar to other narrative methods, digital storytelling leads us into the constructive, interpretive, and contextual nature of narrative.

Digital storytelling was a term first used in the 1980s when Dana Atchley experimented with the "use of multimedia elements in storytelling performances" (Rossiter, & Garcian, 2010, pp. 37-38). By interweaving images, audio, and video into short vignettes, digital technology is utilized to tell personal stories—and the technology has become more advanced and much easier to use over the past 30 years.

Relevant to this study, digital storytelling creates space for former newcomer ELLs to affirm their identity and become agents of social change (Iseke, 2011). Not simply a regurgitation of facts, a story cannot be boiled down to a formula to be memorized. Instead, a story is creative and both represents and invites the construction of meaning (Lambert, 2010). Digital stories are thought to be well-made when they are expressed from the heart, begin with a story or script, are concise, use readily available source materials, and include universal story elements such as transformation (Salpeter, 2005). Images—either still or moving—drive the story and explain the relationship between the narrator and the audience. The storyteller carefully selects images as he or she refines the message to be conveyed. Lambert (2010) maintained that digital storytelling has a history of providing a space for reflection, empowerment, and learning.

While using digital storytelling in one's research, Iseke (2011) cautioned that researchers must be respectful as they create an environment where participants will feel comfortable and thus be able to participate meaningfully. Participants need to be able to trust that their worlds will be acknowledged as they view them and know that their affiliations with their first language and home culture will be honored (Iseke, 2011). During the sessions, participants discussed their cultural and linguistic backgrounds with each other and decided which images they would use in their digital stories.

Researchers who utilize ethnographic methods create contexts in which participants are given the time and space to reflect, with the benefit of hindsight, on an experience and describe it to the interviewer using as much detail as possible. As participants learned more about our digital storytelling project as well as each other's transmigration experiences, they also found that their ability to reflect on their own experiences yielded a new lens through which to consider how their lives have changed since leaving their home countries. Moustakas (1994) explained that the aim of this type of research is to determine what an experience means for the persons who have had the experience and to provide a comprehensive description of it. From the "individual descriptions, general or universal meanings are derived, in other words the essences or structures of the experience" (as cited in deMarrais, 2004, p. 57).

In order to create the digital story, students were given their own MacBook on which they could store their existing photographs and download ones to use. We utilized iMovie, video editing software licensed by Apple, Inc., for the Mac and iOS. Using this software, students were able to import video and photo files from a hard drive, create text



and transition slides, determine the order in which their story would be told, and record their voice to play over their images and text.

**Student work.** Student work was both a process and a product (the digital story). I observed and analyzed both as well as other artifacts of the process. Each participant had a notebook for jotting down their ideas, in text or image, about their digital story as we worked together. They also created a draft of their scripts and reworked it based on the feedback of the group and myself. As the facilitator of the group, I kept the notebooks and laptops secure between sessions, and I reviewed how students interpreted the work we had done together to ascertain how they perceived their progress as we learned about photography, took pictures, interviewed partners, and created their scripts. At the beginning of the project, some of the participants were not able to elaborate beyond two- or three-word utterances to express their ideas, but as we all worked together to build their digital stories (and talked it out occasionally in Haitian Creole) participants were able to write more and more about the changes they experienced in the few years prior.

### **Data Management and Analysis**

In this section, I discuss how I managed, analyzed, memoed, categorized, and coded all of the data I collected throughout the study. I also discuss how the digital story was analyzed once participants completed the course.

**Data management.** Through the study, I worked to prevent any type of confusion by creating and maintaining a sound practice to manage my data. I strived to record data that were both high-quality and accessible to other practitioners who wish to facilitate a similar digital storytelling project in the future by thoroughly documenting meetings with participants as the work was underway and later by recording the steps I

took to analyze the work students had done.

I followed eight steps, adapted from McLellan, MacQueen, and Neidig (2003), in managing my data. (1) Copies of important information were maintained and preserved after the study ended. (2) Data were also stored and backed up on my external hard drive as data preparation and analysis proceeded. (3) Field notes were typed up after each session and organized in a chronological order. Events or activities that took place on the same date were labeled in a folder on my personal computer's hard drive. (4) Students conducted interviews with each other, and the digital recordings of these were titled and saved in separate folders within the digital storytelling project's folder. Highlights of these interviews were transcribed and key findings in students' original notebooks were also scanned. (5) All documents and artifacts were catalogued on a master list that I actively maintained as I collected data. (6) All materials, student notebooks, folders for their photographs, and any other documents were stored safely in a locked file cabinet in my home office. (7) I ensured that all of the data were accounted for and that none of the data were misplaced during the study. (8) I created a process for reading and reviewing text, which I described in the following subsection. Documentation of data activity is essential to maintaining data integrity and facilitating efficient write-ups during analysis. A competent system for tracking, processing, and managing data is key to the successful and timely completion of a research study (McLellan, MacQueen, & Neidig, 2003).

**Data analysis.** As I began to analyze my data, I read over all of the documents to get a sense of the study as a whole. While reviewing students' notes from their interviews, as well as my transcribed recordings, memos, and field notes, I found myself paying careful attention to the particular impressions I recorded in earlier memos and

identified any new impressions of the project were written in a new memo. At the end of every week of the three-week (12-session) project, I reviewed the previous memos and noted key themes as they emerged. I continued to create memos after each session until the end of the project. Once the project was completed, I reread my data and coded the areas in which my interpretations in the original memo were supported or challenged. I organized memos based on their relationship to one another and their connection to my research questions. I then drafted a summary of the data collected up to that point and reviewed my interpretations. Finally, I wrote an updated summary and identified portions of my text that supported my interpretations (Hatch, 2002).

In interpretive research, data analysis follows an inductive process that emerges in an open-ended fashion, though there are predetermined steps, which I describe below (Lofland & Lofland, 2006, p. 181). I sifted through all of the data and looked for patterns that resembled how the participants perceived their transmigration experiences.

Determining the most important patterns from the data provided me with a new way to explain these perceptions (LeCompte, 2000, p. 150). Data were examined in “relation to potential resolutions to the questions or problems identified during the first stage of the research process” (Berg, 2004, p. 199). Adhering to Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995), my goal was to create a coherent, well-articulated analysis of the digital storytelling project that I facilitated and observed, one that would be comprehensible to readers who are not familiar with digital stories or Photovoice (p. 142). As such, I identified some of the major themes of the participants’ transmigration stories. Patterns were assembled that corroborated or triangulated with patterns that confirmed other pieces of data (LeCompte, 2000, p. 151). Thus, my research questions were answered through a variety of methods.

As the analyst, I determined appropriate ways to share the results with newcomers, their teachers, and administrators (Lofland & Lofland, 2006). As I engaged in the analysis phase, I remained aware that one intended outcome of this study was to propose future directions for research around the ways in which general educators and administrators can enhance their professional practice of meeting ELLs' needs. Though I knew neither who the participants were nor what they would say before the project began, I kept in mind that whatever they shared with their peers and myself would be coded, analyzed, and put forth as a recommendation in some format for educators to consider.

**Memos.** Memos are a particular type of written record that qualitative researchers utilize in analyses of their work (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Memos allow the researcher access to a dataset in which he or she can review, re-experience, and reexamine everything that has been written down (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p. 144). Memos are considered to be the “written-out counterpart or explanation and elaboration of the coding categories” that strike analysts while they code (Lofland & Lofland, 2006, p. 193). Miles and Huberman (1994) argued that memos do more than report the data; “they tie together different pieces of data into a recognizable cluster, often to show that those data are instances of a general concept,” and thus they comprise one of the most “useful and powerful sense-making tools at hand” (as cited in Lofland & Lofland, 2006, p. 193). They move the analysis forward and are considered to be as important as the data gathering itself in one’s research. Memos capture “complex and cumulative thinking” that otherwise would be very difficult to include and use for coding later on in qualitative analysis. Strauss (1987, as cited in Krathwohl, 1998) made the case that memoing should receive a higher priority over coding or data recording so that the

ideas will be captured. Without memos, retracing the process that researchers take to arrive at their findings would be quite challenging (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 119).

After each session, I wrote a memo using Microsoft Word on my personal computer that detailed the topics discussed in that session, the contributions each participant made, and other reactions. These memos detailed how participants communicated their experiences and noted how participants were progressing in the development of their digital story project after each session. Participant interactions and oral, written, and visual texts were all noted, as was the use of languages (i.e., Haitian Creole or English) as participants engaged in the work. Memo length varied from a few sentences to a few pages. I titled my work and put considerable thought into the coding of each entry. Although there were times during the sessions when students were engaged in the activities, and I was able to jot some notes down, the majority of the memos were written at the conclusion of each session. Therefore, I wrote these memos from memory. At the end of every session, I set aside as much time as needed to record everything that could be of significance that had just occurred. Though the majority of the memos were written retrospectively (which is a limitation), they were composed, in most cases, immediately following each session, and thus the interactions were fresh in my mind.

I dated each entry in the title of the document and labeled the meeting number (e.g., “Session 1, July 14”). As the sessions built upon each other, I read through the memos line-by-line to check for emerging themes and to consider additional codes until no new themes or ideas were generated. As the analysis progressed, I developed a clearer sense of the themes that arose in my meetings with participants (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p. 143). I also reviewed and created memos about participants’ work, which was

stored on laptops (used only by them for the three-week project) and contained in notebooks that I secured between meetings.

**Categorizing and coding.** As a sociolinguist—someone who studies how language and social factors intersect—I sought to understand how “meaning is constructed in everyday social settings, then frame[d] my analyses tightly around specific individual utterances,” called codes (Hatch, 2002, p. 163). In this study, coding began the process of categorizing and sorting data, by using a word (or short set of words) to represent an item of data. Codes then served as shorthand devices to label, separate, compile, and organize data. They were also used when summarizing, synthesizing, and sorting many observations. By providing the pivotal link between the data collection and its conceptual rendering, coding became the fundamental means of developing my analysis (Charmaz, 1983, as cited in Lofland & Lofland, 2006, p. 186).

I needed to develop a deep understanding of the phenomenon being studied, which made my research somewhat recursive. Lofland and Lofland (2006) argued that “coding” and “memoing” are the primary activities researchers engage in as they develop their analysis (p. 186). Before the fieldwork began, I was not committed to a specific way of reporting the results, but both uninterrupted student quotes from my memos and participants’ ideas grouped by certain themes were used. I wanted to ensure that when I reported the findings the participants’ voices were able to speak for themselves in order to minimize the risk of misinterpreting their ideas and messages. As the codes emerged, the ontological authenticity of my study was maintained. Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) argued that codes “take a specific event, incident, or feature and relate it to other events, incidents, or features, implicitly distinguishing this one from others” (p. 149).

Often, this can be done by determining the category a specific event belongs to or by figuring out how it is dissimilar from the codes already established. The ultimate goal, though, is to “produce a coherent, focused analysis of some aspect of the social life that has been observed and recorded, an analysis that is comprehensible to readers who are not directly acquainted with the social world at issue” (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p. 149).

As stated earlier in this chapter, I did not pre-establish categories; instead, I sought to identify events described during the meetings that could become categories. As Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) suggested, I looked to create as many codes as possible to describe my data, without considering possible “relevance either to established concepts ... or to a theoretical focus for organizing” the study. Integration of categories came later, and I did not “ignore or disregard codings because they suggest no obvious prospects for integration within a major focus or with other emerging categories” as Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995, p. 159) cautioned.

Coding was inductive, since my understanding of my data started from the specific and worked toward the general, as I began with particular pieces of evidence then pulled them together to create a meaningful whole. Inductive data analysis comprises a search for patterns of meaning in data so that general statements about phenomena under investigation can be made (Hatch, 2002, p. 161). Using this type of analysis is advantageous in its ability to help make meaning from complex data. This approach has more of a general focus on processing large amounts of data in ways that are representative of the social situations being examined and/or the perspectives of participants being studied. It provided a way to analyze data that can be adapted for use

in a wide variety of studies within any of the research paradigms. During the coding process, once the main themes of the data were identified, I sorted my field notes into smaller, more manageable sets to determine what the most essential elements of those themes were (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p. 159).

**Digital story analysis.** The framework for completing the project had three major components, with a view to informing one or more of my research questions (Robin, 2014). (1) Each participant evaluated him or herself once the project was completed. Using a rubric (see Table 4), participants also evaluated themselves on their own progress toward completing a digital story project. (2) Participants also evaluated the group's work on a separate form and provided feedback on the drafting process and the overall experience of working together. (3) As the facilitator, I considered each participant's engagement in the planning process by reviewing the script the participant wrote, the scripts that participants created, edited, and revised throughout the process, and the artifacts and photographs selected, as well as the assembly of the digital story on the iMovie software.

I conducted a content analysis of participants' works, including notebooks, storyboards, and scripts to determine the existence of certain words or concepts. I analyzed these words and concepts, and made inferences about the relationships between the texts, the writer, and the program. Specifically, by conducting a thematic content analysis, I was able to determine what participants focused on and was able to connect their texts back to thematic areas that we explored in our weekly meetings to determine the linguistic, social, and cultural significance (Berg, 2001; Mayring, 2000).



Table 4

*Digital Storytelling Rubric (Barrett, 2005)*

<i>Category</i>	<i>Excellent</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Satisfactory</i>	<i>Needs Improvement</i>
Point of View: Purpose	Maintains a clear focus throughout.	Maintains focus for most of the presentation.	Few lapses in focus.	Difficult to figure out the purpose.
Point of View: Awareness of Audience	Strong awareness of audience in the design. Students can clearly explain why they felt the vocabulary, audio, and graphics chosen fit the target audience.	Some awareness of audience in the design. Students can partially explain why they felt the vocabulary, audio and graphics chosen fit the target audience.	Some awareness of audience in the design. Students find it difficult to explain how the vocabulary, audio and graphics chosen fit the target audience.	Limited awareness of the needs and interests of the target audience.
Voice: Consistency	Voice quality is clear and consistently audible throughout the presentation.	Voice quality is clear and consistently audible throughout the majority (85- 95%) of the presentation.	Voice quality is clear and consistently audible through some (70- 84%) of the presentation.	Voice quality needs more attention.
Images	Images create a distinct atmosphere or tone that matches different parts of the story.	Images create an atmosphere or tone that matches some parts of the story.	An attempt was made to use images to create an atmosphere /tone but it needed more work.	Little or no attempt to use images to create an appropriate atmosphere/tone.
Narrative Arc	The story is told with exactly the right amount of detail throughout.	The story composition is typically good, but needs slightly more detail in one or two sections.	The story seems to need more editing.	The story needs extensive editing. It is too long or too short.
Duration of Presentation	Length of presentation was 3 minutes.	Length of presentation was 2 minutes.	Length of presentation was 1 minute.	Presentation was less than 1 minute long OR more than 3 minutes.

Participants engaged in whole group discussions and numerous interview activities with their partners and with me, and recorded their own progress toward their

script writing in their journals. I connected the themes that resonated with participants to what I learned from participant observations because it was possible that in class they masked or highlighted certain experiences. I looked for elements of the narrative synced with certain themes. Since a digital story is a performance, by the end of the project, I was able to assess how active participants were in the process and how they engaged in their work and their partner's story as well. To the extent applicable, I looked for peer coaching elements in participants' work and their use of higher-level thinking questions to evaluate, apply, and synthesize the ideas of others in the process, which served as a partial answer to the fourth sub-question I sought to answer, as it was concerned with methodology (Teehan, 2008).

Related to the analysis of the final product, participants used a rubric (see Table 4) containing guidelines regarding the quality of set criteria (see Table 3). Participants had access to this rubric from the onset of the project, and I addressed what each element referred to and clarified how participants could score an "excellent" in each category for the purposes of showing participants how the quality of their digital story would be discussed. On the last day, participants evaluated themselves using this rubric, and later I used the same rubric to score their final products.

Throughout the 12 sessions, I assessed how participants' work, as both a process and a product, was aligned to each of the research questions. Participants shared a great deal of themselves with the group over the course of the three weeks. My hope was that I had framed the project in such a way that participants were encouraged to provide thoughtful and meaningful feedback to themselves, their peers, and myself, and as a researcher I noted some thoughtful and insightful remarks in their comments.

## **Consent**

Before beginning my digital storytelling project, I went through the institutional review board (IRB) process at the University of Massachusetts Boston. To protect the rights of the participants in this study, I needed to obtain their consent—and their caregivers' consent if the participants were under 18 years of age—to be involved in the study. During the recruiting stage, I discovered that only one participant was under 18 years of age, so a parent of that individual signed a consent form. The participant who was a minor was also presented an assent form that she was required to sign as well. The rest of the participants were able to give their own consent. Both of these forms were available in families' home languages as well as English. I provided a description of the project and carefully explained what was being asked of them, namely to complete a three-week digital storytelling project in 12 sessions. I explained the potential risks or discomforts to participants as well as the benefits of participating in the study.

Participants understood that they had the ability to choose the artifacts, photographs, and texts that would be used to represent themselves. They also knew that they could decide not to share their stories, or parts of their stories, for the purposes of the research. I also ensured participants' confidentiality throughout this process and reminded participants that their participation in this study was voluntary. See Appendix A for copies of the consent and assent forms for students and their caregivers (Porter, 2013).

## **Validity and Reliability**

Cresswell and Miller (2000) defined validity as how accurately a description represents participants' realities of the social phenomena being studied. Similarly, Maxwell (1996) held that in research design, validity is understood to consist of the

strategies one uses to rule out threats. In both cases, the researcher has a duty to accurately and fairly represent his or her participants. Furthering Maxwell's assertion, Cresswell and Miller (2000) maintained that validity procedures that researchers choose are determined by two points of view: "the paradigm the study is based in and the assumptions that foster that type of paradigm" (p. 124). Unlike positivist research, in which there is a definitive answer to an empirical test, interpretive research assumes that reality is socially constructed; therefore, reality is what participants perceive it to be. Researchers that hold this viewpoint advocate for checking in to ensure that their participants' realities have been represented in the study (Cresswell & Miller, 2000, p. 125).

I established validity in my study by corroborating evidence collected through multiple methods, such as digital recordings, photography, observations, interviews, and documents, which contained both broad and narrow themes. As is the case with any research, there were threats to maintaining validity in my study. Serious validity threats included editing students' voices in such a way that could potentially misrepresent their ideas, and overlooking themes that the participants expressed in favor of other themes when coding. To reduce the risks of finding alternative explanations, however, I kept students' voices intact to ensure that they represented themselves. In addition, I involved participants in conversations regarding common themes that emerged during the creation of the digital stories, in an effort not to be mistaken about the themes that arose from this work. Anticipating these risks in the planning phase minimized the threats during data collection.

In qualitative research, validity can be established by having participants view the

study data in a process known as member checking (Cresswell & Miller, 2000). As I worked with the participants, I verified students' ideas and encouraged them to verify others' thinking as well. In seeking clarification from participants, I paraphrased what I thought the participant expressed and asked the participant to confirm that my paraphrasing was indeed representative of his or her thinking. Having participants clarify their words and ideas firsthand kept researcher bias in check.

**Credibility.** One aspect of internal validity is credibility. Maxwell (1996) urged researchers to create deliberate and methodical checks to learn how participants make sense of their experiences and ideas rather than label their words and actions in an inaccurate manner. In this study, credibility was established by working with the participants over a period of time and by being embedded in the context. As a researcher, the reality I focused on was well documented and included thick descriptions of who the participants were, where they were from, what their educational experiences were like before arriving in the Boston Public Schools, who they were living with in their home countries, and who they lived with at the time of the study, in addition to other aspects of the participants' lives that were unique to each of them. Furthermore, I described the setting where the sessions took place, the program from which the students were recruited, the procedures for working together, and the details of our interactions together.

Member checking—having the participants verify the results, as I perceived them to be—was another element of credibility that I employed in my work. Member checking allowed participants an opportunity to develop an understanding of how I made sense of their transmigration experiences. To audit dependability, a member of my dissertation

committee went through the data with me to further validate the results. These steps to minimize the possibility of errors in my analysis proved helpful in authenticating the results.

**Transferability.** Transferability works in conjunction with generalizability. As discussed earlier in this section, I provided an “extensive and careful description of the time, the place, the context, and culture” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 241) of the study. Though the results of the study are not able to be generalized, researchers will be able to transfer the knowledge gained from the study—through the strong case I built, the rich description I offered, and the depth of analysis I presented—to a similar setting, methodology, or other research.

**Dependability.** Dependability is concerned with the “stability of the data over time” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 242). In the type of research I conducted, methodological changes occurred—and were expected. However, the changes that I made were trackable. In other words, I can show that the changes and shifts in my methodology were necessary as I conducted my study. The adjustments are telltale indicators that my study was a “maturing—and successful—inquiry” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 242). Through explaining the process in which I made decisions to modify aspects of the methodology, readers can gain a clear understanding of the context that led me to adjust my inquiry, as my reasons are expressed in a logical and culturally competent manner.

**Confirmability.** Similar to having objectivity, Guba and Lincoln (1989) use the term “confirmability” to explain how the findings in a study must be grounded in the actual data and not simply made up by the researcher. This can be done a number of ways, such as by making a claim by quoting from more than one place and by including memos,

student work, and other relevant data in the appendices. At confirmability's core, "logic is used when interpreting data into structurally coherent and corroborating wholes that are both explicit and implicit in the narrative of a case study" (p. 243). In other words, I was able to confirm the authenticity of the data by citing from clear sources in the actual data.

### **Authenticity Criteria**

Authenticity criteria for constructivist research were developed by Guba and Lincoln (1989) to attend to case-study-specific issues that can arise when utilizing a constructivist paradigm. The following criteria are discussed in this sub-section: fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, catalytic authenticity, and tactical authenticity.

**Fairness.** Fairness holds that individuals will come to talk about what they know about their own experiences naturally. In this study, through our conversations, it was apparent that everyone had something valuable to bring to our discussions regarding sense-making of their transmigration experiences. As an additional element of fairness, claims and concerns that were not resolved were given priority by negotiating these issues from roughly equal positions of power. Participants' voices were heard and their ideas were all valued.

**Ontological authenticity.** Guba and Lincoln (1989) described ontological authenticity as the degree to which participants' "emic constructions [are] improved, matured, expanded, and elaborated" (p. 248). In actively engaging in the process of making sense of their transmigration experiences, participants reflected on how they viewed those transitions. Through the process of meeting regularly to discuss experiences of social integration, the participants developed a greater awareness of their own experiences and were able to view their own way of understanding differently.

**Educative authenticity.** This criterion is concerned with how participants understand each other as individuals by engaging in the study. In the project sessions, participants discussed and learned from others about their ideas toward different people while developing an appreciation of others' viewpoints. This authenticity was achieved, for instance, when the participants and I talked about being monolingual, bilingual, or multilingual and how that helped or hindered their initial days of school in Boston. I hoped participants would be able to develop a new sense of who their American-born peers and educators were based on how easy or challenging it was to address each other at the beginning of the project.

**Catalytic authenticity.** My research was also evaluated based on the degree to which the study fuels others to take some sort of action. The extent to which it sparked students to take action is the measure of its catalytic authenticity. Prior to starting my study, I wanted to think that the participants, upon completion of the digital storytelling project, would be inspired to help peers in some capacity, either newcomers to feel welcomed or American-born peers to gain a better understanding of the major changes that takes place when one is uprooted. After the fieldwork was completed, I saw evidence that participants' perceptions had shifted in terms of their understandings of those they came in contact with when they arrived.

**Tactical authenticity.** The final criterion by which my study was measured was tactical authenticity, which is the extent to which students feel empowered to act. Upon completion of the study, participants were asked about the role they played in the research, and how they felt they were able to influence the shape of the group.



## Timeline of the Research

The research was conducted according to the timeline in Table 5.

Table 5

### *Timeline of the Research*

Spring 2014	Secured IRB approval at UMass Boston
Summer 2014	Conducted digital story project and collected data; began data analysis
Fall 2014 – Fall 2015	Analyzed data; wrote up findings
Spring 2016	Completed and defended dissertation

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented the research design of my interpretive, qualitative study, which drew on ethnographic methods and utilized a digital storytelling project produced over a 12-session period at a community center with former newcomer ELLs. The main question I sought to answer was, how do former newcomer ELLs make sense of their transmigration experiences through a digital storytelling project that uses Photovoice? Three sub-questions were also examined. Using an interpretivist/constructivist design, the study explored participants' perspectives on their experiences as they engaged in a facilitated digital storytelling project. Lesson plans, agendas, memos of participants' interactions, digital recordings, storyboard artifacts, and

iPhoto images, as well as other photographs, were all developed, collected, and analyzed for themes during and after the study was completed.

Each of the first four sessions with participants focused on specific themes. At the beginning of the project, I worked with students to build rapport and helped them understand the goals of the project. Participants then interviewed each other about their educational history and their family background to learn about whom they left behind and about their access to education before they left. From the first meeting, participants began their first draft of their transmigration experiences. In the following session, their perceptions of school welcoming practice and the role of teachers, school leaders, and peers were explored through semi-structured interviews. Script work and digital story assembly took up the bulk of the time in the remaining sessions. For the final session, students presented their work and completed a self-evaluation, peer evaluation, and facilitator evaluation, at which point the themes of student voice, visual literacy, and Photovoice were explored.

My data collection methods included interviews, participant observations, photography, digital storytelling, and analysis of student work. During the sessions, my role shifted among facilitating the group, observing, and interviewing participants. I managed and analyzed the data by writing memos, coding, and analyzing the digital story products once the sessions had ended. I developed a competent system for tracking and processing the data. I sorted through the data to determine what patterns emerged and how they were similar to the ways in which the participants perceived their transmigration experiences.

Validity and reliability were established in the study by gathering evidence via

multiple methods, such as recordings, photography, observations, interviews, and documents. Participants viewed the data and were able to clarify their ideas and confirm their thinking. Credibility was gained by working with the participants over time, providing a rich description of the procedures I developed for working with the participants, and detailing our interactions together, which also lent transferability to the study. This study also possessed dependability—since the process in which I worked with participants was thoroughly explained—and confirmability, as the findings were grounded in data. Lastly, my study met Guba and Lincoln’s (1989) authenticity criteria.

Ultimately, my study contributes to the ways in which Boston Public Schools and office of English language learners (OELL) departments in other urban districts receive and welcome newcomers, whether or not teachers and administrators are bound to restrictive language policies, such as Question 2 in Massachusetts. I hope that teachers’ and administrators’ practices will be impacted by the digital stories and recognize that newcomers bring with them needs that go beyond their monolingual, U.S.-born peers.

To date, little work has been done on former newcomer ELLs’ transmigration experiences at the high school level, particularly from the perspectives of the students themselves, as well as in settings where districts are restricted by the type of language pedagogies employed. This study adds to the body of literature on immigration and education, and bilingual education, pertinent to how newcomers fare socially and academically in an urban setting and proposes future directions of research on how general educators and administrators can enhance their professional practice of meeting ELLs’ needs as they adjust to their new setting.

## CHAPTER 4

### HAITI AND HAITIANS IN THE U.S.

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter, I situate the participants in a transnational context. I provide an overview of the history of Haiti, its economic context and social structure, the demography and diversity that exists on the island, and the languages that are spoken there. I then discuss Haiti in the context of the major earthquake that occurred on the island in January 2010, and the state of education there, both before and after the natural disaster. The chapter then examines Haitian migration to the U.S. and to Boston in particular, followed by a section on identity formation.

I had not expected to conduct this study solely with former newcomers of Haitian descent. As discussed in Chapter 3, in working with the community center to recruit participants, I had expected to draw students from BPS representing many diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, such as learners from the Latino diaspora, as well as Haitian students, and possibly other students from additional cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Therefore, I did not research the history of Haiti, its educational system, or background information about Haitians' migration to Boston before the study began. However, when I started the analysis phase of my research, I realized that I could not

move forward without a deeper understanding of the country of Haiti, its people, languages, and culture, as well as its state of education.

### **History of Haiti**

Haiti is located 600 miles from Florida in the Caribbean Sea. It shares the island of Hispaniola with the Dominican Republic. Upon Christopher Columbus' arrival in 1492, the island slowly became settled by Spanish colonists who established an economy based on sugar cane production. They enslaved the Taíno/Arawak people to work the sugar cane plantation, only to later have to replace them as the native population perished due to maltreatment. The Spanish then turned to the Atlantic slave trade for people to work on the plantations. French traders and planters also settled on the island, which led to dueling claims between the French and Spanish for control of the island. In 1697, the island was divided. The Western part (modern-day Haiti) came under French rule and was renamed Saint Domingue and eventually became France's wealthiest colony, producing fully two-thirds of her overseas trade (WHO/PAHO, 2010).

Haiti became the first Black republic. It was also the first country where slaves fought their colonial masters. Haitians declared their independence in 1804, an event that still brings "hope, pride, encouragement, and motivation to Haitians" (WHO/PAHO, 2010, p. 2). In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Haiti grew and flourished. However, forces from within and abroad, which will be addressed later in the chapter, combined during the last century to diminish some of Haiti's hard-earned freedoms (WHO/PAHO, 2010).

### **Economic Context and Social Structure**

Haiti is ranked 154<sup>th</sup> out of 177 countries on the United Nations' Human Development Index and is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. In 2008, the

estimated per capita GDP was \$717. Income inequality is extremely high, as is the unemployment rate, which reached 49% in metropolitan areas, 37% in semi-urban areas, and 36% in rural areas (WHO/PAHO, 2010).

### **Demography and Diversity**

Slightly smaller geographically than Maryland, Haiti has a population of more than 9 million people and is growing at a rate of 2.2% per year. Nearly 60% of the population lives in rural areas. Approximately 50% of Haitians are under 20 years of age; 51% of the population is single, while 44% of people are either married or cohabiting (WHO/PAHO, 2010). Haitian life expectancy at birth is 60.78 years, a full 18 years younger than Americans (at 78.11 years). After the earthquake that devastated the country in January 2010, 80% of the population in Haiti lives below the poverty line. Only half of the people living in the capital city of Port-au-Prince have access to latrines, and only one-third have access to tap water (Disasters Emergency Committee, 2013). Most Haitians live on less than \$2 a day. More than two-thirds of those eligible to work do not have formal jobs (Fox News Networks, 2010).

### **Languages**

Haiti has two official languages: Creole and French. Creole emerged from contact between African slaves and the French settlers, and since colonial times fluency in French has been seen as a marker of social class (Pichard, 2006). French is the language of the elite of Haiti and is written, spoken, and understood by approximately 10% (Pichard, 2006) to 20% (WHO/PAHO, 2010) of the population. Nearly everyone speaks Haitian Creole (Kreyol) as their first language. Creole derives mostly from 18<sup>th</sup>-century French, though its two grammars are very different, with its lexicon also including words

originating in African and Arawakan languages, Portuguese Spanish, and increasingly, English (Bonenfant, 2011; WHO/PAHO, 2010).

## **Education**

Haiti's public education system has been beset with several types of systemic problems that began long before the 2010 earthquake (Luzincourt & Gulbrandson, 2010). Education remains free of cost for Haitians, though it is largely out of reach for the families who are unable to supply their children with the materials they need to learn, such as school uniforms, pencils, notebooks, and ancillary school fees. Adding to this hardship is the resistant stance many have taken toward efforts to make Haitian Creole the official language of instruction (Pichard, 2006).

Haiti's class hierarchy, which greatly impacts every aspect of Haitian life, is based on education, language, and economic background. In this regard, the French language has acted primarily as a "social filter" in Haiti, denying non-French speakers access to spaces of political, economic and social power (WHO/PAHO, 2010). Despite the strong emphasis on French as the language of instruction, 85% of Haitians do not speak it, due to either not being able to attend school for financial reasons or because they did not acquire French well enough to be able to learn in that language alone (Pichard, 2006).

Nearly three-quarters (72%) of Haitians have only a primary school education, with only 1% of the population earning a university degree. Low levels of literacy are pervasive in Haiti. The literacy rate in Haiti is approximately 53%—well below the 90% average literacy rate for Latin American and Caribbean countries (Haitian Alliance, 2015). Over three-quarters of people living in rural areas and half of those in urban metropolises are unable to read French. In addition, high drop-out rates and low

enrollment rates have been documented in Haitian public schools (a situation made worse by the earthquake) (Luzincourt & Gulbrandson, 2010). Compounding this, the state takes a hands-off approach to education, though the limited number of state-run schools are thought to provide a better education than private ones. As such, 92% of schools are non-state schools, and about 82% of primary and secondary school-age students attend poor-quality private schools (Disasters Emergency Committee, 2013). The best schools in Haiti are elite private schools, which are affordable only to a tiny segment of the population.

It is worth mentioning here that these deficiencies are not indicative of a devaluing of education; rather, it is solely a consequence of limited family income and limited systemic supports for education (Cone et al., 2014). When able to do so, children attend school because parents make these expectations clear; for instance, it is highly desirable and well-regarded, even by one's peers, to wear one's school uniform every day around his or her community. Parents' values about school attendance were evident in the findings of this study (see Chapter 5), whereby participants noted their not being allowed to take sick days because of their family's high regard for attendance. While attending school may be highly regarded, little thought is given to what transpires during the school day. Honing early literacy skills is unusual in Haitian family life, regardless of parents' own reading abilities (Ballenger, 1999). However, the majority of Haitian parents have a very limited education themselves and cannot articulate and advocate for the role of a student in a school setting, let alone the responsibilities of a student (Pichard, 2006).



## **Earthquake**

On January 12, 2010, the strongest earthquake to hit the area since 1770, measuring 7.0 magnitude on the Richter scale, struck Haiti near Port-au-Prince. Haiti was completely unprepared for this disaster, and the result was devastating. More than 230,000 people were killed, with some reports estimating as many as 316,000 deaths. Three hundred thousand people were injured and an additional 1.5 million were left homeless. Roughly one-quarter of schools, or approximately 4,992, were also affected by the earthquake (CNN Library, 2015). In Port-au-Prince alone, 80% of schools were destroyed (Disasters Emergency Committee, 2013).

Many of the most significant government buildings, hospitals, and roads were also destroyed. Haiti's infrastructure was irreparably damaged. Despite being built along a major fault line, Haiti had no building codes and therefore no way to ensure buildings would be safe from earthquakes (Borgen Project, 2014; Fox News Networks, 2010). In fact, 86% of people in Port-au-Prince were living in slum-like dwellings that were mostly tightly-packed, poorly-built concrete buildings (Disasters Emergency Committee, 2013). The earthquake damaged over 188,383 houses and destroyed an additional 105,000.

### **Impact of Earthquake: Trauma and Loss**

The Haitian earthquake left massive numbers of Haitians vulnerable to trauma and loss. Many people lost loved ones, such as Tonya, a study participant, whose mother died in the disaster. Houses, businesses, and livelihoods were destroyed (WHO/PAHO, 2010). Others witnessed death and serious injury during and after the earthquake. Compounding the devastation was the civil violence that erupted post-earthquake. Such severely traumatic events are likely to stay with those affected, in many cases significantly

impacting their mental health (WHO/PAHO, 2010).

### **Five Years Later**

Five years after the quake, 85,432 people were still displaced in 123 sites and makeshift shelters in Port-au-Prince. Reconstruction efforts have slowed, hampered by “donor fatigue, corruption, and political instability caused by delayed legislative elections and anti-government protests” (Thomson Reuters, 2015, para. 6). Tropical storms, including Hurricane Isaac in August 2012 and Hurricane Sandy in November 2012 have also slowed the rebuilding process (Thomson Reuters, 2015).

### **The Challenges in Haiti**

Violent experiences like those endured by many Haitians can significantly affect the psychological development of children. “Delays in development, social difficulties, affective disorders, behavioral problems, or educational difficulties” are all possible manifestations of surviving the earthquake (WHO/PAHO, 2010). Haitians, however, remain hopeful and certain that attaining an education will be their opportunity out of poverty.

Unfortunately, access to quality education in Haiti is insufficient for improving the country’s social and economic development (USAID, 2015). Haitians who are 25 years and older have an average of only 4.9 years of education, and only 29% attended secondary school, meaning that an entire generation of Haitian youth is not likely to have the necessary knowledge and basic skills to succeed in the labor force and contribute to the continued development of the country. Most schools still receive minimal government support, lack qualified instructors, and are relatively expensive, which creates a significant financial burden for low-income families. Half of public school teachers in

Haiti do not meet basic qualifications, and almost 80% of teachers have not received any pre-service training. (USAID, 2015). Cone et al. (2014) attributes this to a combination of political instability, violent conflicts, low salaries, and emigration of the better-trained teachers. These challenges influenced this study's participants' families' decisions to migrate to Boston. Even though each participant faced family separation, the sacrifice families chose to make provided access to education and additional opportunities for their children. Families weighed their options and determined that the risk of moving to an unfamiliar place was worth it.

### **Haitian Migration to the U.S.**

Haitian migration to the United States generally is thought to have occurred in two waves,

the first during the 1950s and 1960s, under the dictatorship of François Duvalier, and the second one starting in the 1980s during the dictatorship of Jean-Claude Duvalier and through the period of coup d'états that first dismantled his reign and then created an economically and politically untenable situation for the majority of the population. (Doucet, 2011)

The Haitian diaspora recalls these waves occurring in the United States during distinctly different times. For the most part, the first wave included middle-class educated professionals, whereas the less educated and poor political and economic refugees moved in large numbers during the second wave. Therefore, the Haitian population of Boston (and also New York) was drawn to the urban area for its educational opportunities. Migrating subsequently led to the reunification of families, in addition to the economic pursuit of opportunities that could not be found in Haiti (Doucet, 2011). However, unlike

the refugee status granted to Cuban immigrants, the Haitian “boat people” were discriminated against and considered unwanted guests (Miller, 1984).

First-generation Haitians generally arrive in the United States expecting an “economic, social, and political situation that is significantly better than what they left behind in Haiti” (Cone et al., 2014). Newcomers, however, are quick to figure out that conditions in their new country may not be as idealistic as they imagined. Upon arrival, life for many Haitians begins with a sharp decrease in the social status they left behind. This is manifested in the types of jobs that new Haitians acquire. It is not unusual for Haitians who were professionals prior to moving—educators, accountants, or government bureaucrats—to take on employment as taxi drivers, nannies, or custodians, at least upon arrival (Cone et al., 2014).

### **Haitian Migration to Boston**

Although Haitian-Creole-speaking ELLs do not make up a large percentage of the overall ELL student population nationally, in Boston, New York, and South Florida, the Haitian population is quite sizable (Cone et al., 2014). According to recent data, there are an estimated 41,000 Haitian-born immigrants living in the city of Boston, with Haitians comprising the second largest share of immigrants in the city (8.5%), behind China (8.6%) and ahead of the Dominican Republic (7.9%) (Boston Redevelopment Authority, 2009). This number has increased dramatically in the aftermath of the devastating 2010 earthquake but has not been accurately counted. Thus, fostering a successful educational experience for Haitian children is both an ongoing and particularly timely issue of concern in the major metropolitan areas of Boston (and New York City and South Florida) where a majority of Haitians have settled (Cone et al., 2014).

Massachusetts has the third largest Haitian community in the United States (Kitchen, 2010). Many Haitians settled in Boston during the 1970s, but during the housing boom of the 1980s and the early 1990s, they relocated to the suburbs. Boston's Haitian-born immigrants settled all around Boston, though the highest concentrations of Haitians live Mattapan, along Blue Hill Avenue, as well as Roxbury, Dorchester, and Hyde Park—all neighborhoods where the study participants resided.

The Boston Redevelopment Authority (2009) maintains that for the past thirty years, Haitians have actively engaged in the social, cultural, and economic life of Massachusetts. Haitians participate in their churches and have founded or become part of the various civic, social, or health organizations around Boston. This type of status in the community gives newcomers some role models they can identify with and aspire to be like. There are also more than 20 radio and television programs, and one print media outlet, that offer educational programs and political news in Creole, French, and English. With so many options to stay in touch with current events in Haiti, study participants could also feel connected to home.

In Massachusetts, Haitians hold a variety of professional positions in academia, the police force, the health and public health fields, banking, and law. Haitians are represented throughout the Greater Boston communities in these fields. Over the past 20 years, Haitians have also gained a foothold in the political landscape of Massachusetts, advocating for voter education as well as other highly valued causes. To date, there are two Haitian-American state representatives who have been elected to the Massachusetts legislature since 2000, and more Haitians are actively pursuing elected offices in various other states (Boston Redevelopment Authority, 2009). Haitians have lived in Boston long

enough that they range from a 70-year-old man who arrived in the late 1950s, to a newly arrived 8-year-old, to a third-generation child who has never been to Haiti and has barely been exposed to Haitian Creole (Boston Redevelopment Authority, 2009). In all likelihood, the study participants had classmates who were second- or possibly third-generation Haitian American, with varying degrees of proficiency in Haitian Creole.

### **Haitian Families in the U.S.**

According to the Boston Redevelopment Authority (2009), there are fewer Haitians in the middle class (only 21.5%) compared to Boston's native-born population (38%) and total foreign-born population (25%). Thus, the participants and their Haitian newcomer peers were less likely to be in the middle class than their classmates. Research from an interdisciplinary and comparative study designed by M. Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, and Qin-Hilliard (2004) of the Harvard Immigration Project to document educational attitudes, academic engagement, and outcomes among recently arrived immigrant youth, found that a high number of children, 85%, of whom Haitians were one group, were separated from one or both parents during the transmigration process. This study, set in Boston, also found that 35% of immigrant children experienced separation from their fathers for more than five years. Since we know that 20% of children are growing up in homes with at least one immigrant parent, this means that family separation affects a significant number of children (Goodwin, 2002).

Nearly half (49%) of the respondents in the Harvard Immigration Project's study of immigrant children experienced separation from both parents at some point during migration. Separation from both parents was most likely to occur among the Haitian families (59% of cases). Chances were high that the Haitian participants in the current

study spent time away from one or both parents as well). A staggering 86% of Haitian respondents had experienced a separation from their fathers during migration, while 69% of Haitian children lived apart from their mothers for a time. When separation from the father occurred during family migration, the researchers found that it was usually a very lengthy or permanent one, which occurred for Haitians 71% of the time. As these statistics confirm, it was not uncommon for some of the study participants to not know when they would see their mothers or fathers again.

### **Haitian Families and Schooling**

Haitian immigrant families, as a whole, strongly value education and take deliberate steps to move up the economic ladder in society, as evidenced by comments from this study's participants. Parents set high expectations for educational attainment for children, and many Haitian parents believe they can positively influence their first-generation children's education (Nicolas, DeSilva, and Rabenstein, 2009). However, Haitian children quickly encounter teaching and learning differences in the American classroom, and it does not take long before Haitian immigrants have to confront cultural misunderstandings as well as feelings of cultural and linguistic isolation.

Haitian families' perceptions of their role within their child's school is constructed in the context of their experiences of receiving an education, or not, in Haiti, where teachers are thought to have the final say in teaching children in a collectivistic culture (Cone et al., 2014). It is understandable then that some Haitian parents question the expertise of some American teachers who adopt a constructivist approach to building a relationship with students' families in an effort to better serve those students. Similarly, the disciplinary code and how it is enforced can also be interpreted by Haitian parents as

a lack of discipline. Teachers can come across as being too nosy or pushy to Haitian parents, who would rather keep their personal lives very private for a variety of reasons—fear of judgment of or concern over their own immigration status, to name only two.

Compounding matters is the fact that the academic skills some Haitians bring to their new American schools are generally held in little regard. Those children with educations bring with them educational capital that is not valued. Specifically, the ability to memorize large chunks of information is highly valued in Haiti, whereas in American schools, greater emphasis is placed on students' ability to think critically and engage in inquiry-based learning in groups. Haitian students or parents misunderstand these differences (Cone et al., 2014). This is why it is all the more remarkable that Diane, a participant in this study who entered school at a late age, was able to graduate high school (as discussed further in Chapter 5). When a dramatic shift in pedagogy is coupled with poor communication to express the types of learning that are valued, Haitian students and parents feel marginalized by the very structures they want to access.

Doucet (2011) espouses a different view than Cone et al. (2014). She argues that that immigrant families deliberately maintain a level of distance between the worlds of home and school because of their “ambivalent feelings about U.S. culture and their fears of ‘losing their children’ to Americanization” (Doucet, 2011, p. 2707). This way of thinking also challenges the assumption that all immigrants want a bridge between the home and school environment; rather, some immigrant families prefer to keep distinct boundaries for the purpose of self-protection (Boston Redevelopment Authority, 2009).

**Boston Public Schools’ response to increase in Haitian students post earthquake.** When Haiti was struck by the largest earthquake it had had in over two



hundred years in January 2010, the country was sent into crisis mode. According to Eric Johnson, the Director of Newcomers Academy at that time, families in Boston sought to have their extended and distant relatives join them (Nicas, 2010). Separate from that, other Haitians made their way to Boston, known for its firmly established community of Haitians (Kitchen, 2010). For the next few years, there was an influx in Haitian students entering the BPS. From January 2010 until the end of that school year in June, 159 students moved to Boston and enrolled in BPS (Merrigan, 2010). Although the exact total number for the years following is difficult to disaggregate, as Haitians are classified as African American, Haitians entered schools throughout the school year and most often with little notice to their new teachers that they were coming. Upon arrival, students found established Haitian Creole SEI and SIFE programs staffed with Haitian Creole speaking teachers (Merrigan, 2010). Transitional bilingual education programs, where students could use their native language as a bridge to English, were not available due to the policy restrictions from Question 2, however, many of the newcomers found themselves in Haitian Creole speaking communities within their schools. The specific educational programming they needed was already established in the neighborhoods where Haitians settled and the groundwork was in place to receive them.

One issue though was that the specific linguistic programs that these newcomers needed could get maxed out due to over enrollment at a particular school. Although Governor Deval Patrick declared that “step[ping] up and step[ping] forward and look[ing] out for each other in times of trial and trauma” was acting as “full human beings”, districts such as Somerville, Randolph, Brockton, and Boston did not see any increase in budget to assist with this humanitarian crisis (Nicas, 2010; Corcoran, 2010).

Mayor Menino avowed, “as a city, we will come together to support the Haitian community both here in Boston and abroad in any way possible” (Kitchen, 2010). The reality though was that Boston Public Schools did not allocate additional resources or funds. However, additional Haitian Creole-speaking staff had to be hired at some schools, new classes had to be opened, and crisis counselors had to be available to add extra sessions on to their schedules at several schools with large populations of Haitian immigrants and Haitian-American students and faculty (Corcoran, 2010). These types of strains affected entire school communities, not only the Haitians within them.

After the shift in policy post-Question 2, there was a loss of parent councils and other formal arrangements that served to advocate for Haitian youth. School-based leaders and teachers stepped up to help these newcomers deal with the trauma they faced. Elie Jean-Louis, principal of the Taylor Elementary School in Mattapan, where at least 25 Haitian students enrolled in the months following the earthquake, explained that the newcomers “may not understand what they have been through and don’t know what emotions they are carrying inside” (Corcoran, 2010). Staff mobilized and supported students in concrete ways. These educators partnered with community organizations to assist these new families as they became settled and connected them with resources in the community who could respond to the trauma they had endured. For example, a Haitian Creole-speaking guidance counselor put students in contact with organizations in their neighborhood in order for the students’ families to receive counseling. Local Haitian agencies, such as community centers and churches, were called upon to assist with wrap around services, childcare, tutoring, job placement, and other interventions that families who were impacted by the earthquake needed.

## **Identity Formation**

As discussed in Chapter 2, identity is partially formed by how one is perceived by others. Haitians are often seen as African Americans, despite their different cultural history from African Americans in the United States, and often find it difficult to identify with African Americans, at least when they first arrive. Bryce-Laporte (1972) noted several decades ago, “Haitians are seen as Blacks by Whites and as foreigners by native-born Blacks” (as cited in Cone et al., 2014, p. 54). This is problematic because Haitian newcomers are more likely to enroll in urban schools that have a large percentage of African American students and are located in high-poverty neighborhoods. Facing prejudice from American society at large and from staff and classmates at school, Haitian immigrants are

frequently subject to negative peer critiques of their school identities, both by African American students and by other Haitian students who have been in the United States longer and have become more “Americanized”. These critiques include traditional Haitian style of dress, speech patterns, and work habits, all of which can have profound implications for academic success and social mobility or social reproduction. (Cone et al., 2014, p. 287)

School settings also shape student identity. When Haitian immigrants receive these negative implicit messages (language policies) and explicit messages (slurs or discriminatory practices) about who they are and who they will become, it will then negatively impact their perception of being a student (Doucet, 2014). Cone et al. (2014) described this phenomena as a confusing mix of pride and shame. Haitian immigrants, then, may choose to define their identity through role models who are representative of

economically disadvantaged cultural groups and who question the economic, social, and linguistic value of education in the intellectually underserved schools to which they are assigned. Haitian students may start to question the value of education as well, as they are marginalized from an education system that promotes social advancement, in place of social reproduction that sets up urban students for working-class jobs or no job at all.

Despite recommendations from researchers and education scholars, many school systems in poorer neighborhoods have not adapted educational curricula or teaching styles that support immigrants in their educational pursuits (Contreras, 2002). Haitian children who are new to the U.S. want to do well in school, but unfortunately their socioeconomic status will largely predict their educational attainment more so than their academic aspirations. Immigrant children are vulnerable settling in low-income neighborhoods and becoming students in an educational system that is unable to meet their unique academic, social, and linguistic needs. Therefore, as Nicolas, DeSilva, and Rabenstein (2009) urged, the time has come for society to stop blaming the social construct of race for the achievement gap that exists amongst racial groups. Instead, the researchers maintain that the context in which immigrant students are educated as well as the current policies that influence the way these schools instruct may be inhibiting the educational attainment of immigrant children in the United States. These are some of the reasons that exploring newcomers' transmigration experiences in Boston Public Schools is both timely and valuable.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter provided both background and context that are of critical importance for understanding participants and their upbringings. Massachusetts has the third highest

concentration of Haitians in the country, and many chose to move to the Boston area to provide their families with a good education. Though they have an established presence, in the private and public sectors, particularly in Mattapan and Dorchester, as a group they continue to struggle to gain entry into the middle class. Family separation, both during and for prolonged periods after migration, simply makes their attempt to improve their socioeconomic standing more challenging. Literature also holds that schooling can have mixed results for Haitian families. Parents have fallen into two categories in the literature. They either expect the teachers to do all the teaching, and largely stay out of schools, literally and figuratively, or they misunderstand the constructivist approach used by some teachers as a way to build a strong home-school connection, thus viewing teachers as lacking in expertise. Newcomers bring with them their collective histories, and the participants in my study are no different. By gaining insight into the language, schooling, and economy of Haiti, and the group's experiences in Boston, I developed a more informed understanding of Haitian identity and migration patterns, which helped inform my understanding of participants' transmigration experiences.

## CHAPTER 5

### REFLECTING ON PROCESS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter, I detail the process of conducting the digital story project. As the project was underway, I realized something quite unexpected. I thought that I was prepared to facilitate and research this project in every sense, but that was not the case at all.

Theoretically, I had read scores of articles to gain a deeper understanding of what the literature maintains for white middle class teachers working with newcomer ELLs. I was aware of the collective history of teachers and students having mismatched cultural and linguistic backgrounds and how that can impact students' educational experiences. Conceptually, I had framed and reframed the type of study that I wanted to conduct, as I wrote and edited my dissertation proposal with the help of my dissertation committee. I narrowed my focus and worked with my committee to troubleshoot potential aspects that could be challenging as a researcher.

In addition, I had over 10 years experience as an ESL teacher, having taught students of various ages and cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and with a range of prior educational experiences. I met all the qualifications of being a “highly qualified teacher” (HQT) according to the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (2002). Boe, Shin,

and Cook (2007) cite that the two key requirements that define HQTs are “full state certification and a high level of content knowledge” (p. 159). Nearly all teachers meet the third requirement, which is obtaining a bachelor’s degree. I am also certified to teach English as a Second Language (ESL) in grades pre-K-12 in Massachusetts and have become Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) endorsed.<sup>6</sup> Lastly, I have a Post Masters of Arts degree in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) from the Multicultural Multilingual Studies’ department within the Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development at New York University, a top-rated college.

Logistically, I had planned out every session, created rubrics and graphic organizers, purchased digital recorders to catch the meaningful conversation that were not written down as we went through our interview guides. Yet, with all these ways that I was seemingly ready, meaning that I was able to conduct this study and facilitate the work that needed to be done, I was unprepared for some of what transpired over the course of the three-week project.

In this chapter, I recount the working relationship I built with the staff at the community center, the participants, and the teaching assistant. I also explain the different phases of the project. My descriptions include participants’ own words from whole group discussions, and the scripts they wrote themselves, as well as photographs that they used as still images in their digital stories. In describing and examining the process of conducting the digital storytelling project, I demonstrate some of the unexpected issues

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<sup>6</sup> Core academic teachers who teach ELLs have until 2016 to become endorsed. These include teachers who teach students with moderate disabilities; teachers of students with severe disabilities; subject-area teachers in English, reading or language arts; mathematics, science; civics and government, economics, history, and geography; and early childhood and elementary teachers who teach such content. Retrieved on May 3, 2015 from <http://www.doe.mass.edu/news/news.aspx?id=7612>

that arose in the process. These issues, I argue, point to the ways that I was simultaneously prepared and unprepared to undertake the pedagogical aspects of the research project. Taken together, the emergent issues I tease out in this chapter suggest some of the ways that teachers working with newcomer ELLs in urban public schools may be both prepared and simultaneously unprepared to undertake such work.

Drawing on the terms preparation and preparedness to distinguish between some of the different ways that teachers may be prepared to undertake pedagogical work with newcomer ELLs, I argue that current teacher preparation may not be sufficient. Rather, working with newcomer ELLs may require an element of preparedness. School districts should make their expectations clear around how newcomers should be welcomed at the school and classroom level. This way, newcomers, regardless of their grade level or specific school that they enter, will all have one or more peers or educators to assist them as they become familiar with the layout of the school, their schedule, and other matters that may arise as they get settled. I attempt to describe what those elements might be and their implications for how we prepare and support teachers, as they anticipate and plan for newcomers in urban public schools.

### **Preparation Prior to Start of the Project—Relationship Building**

In order for the project to come to fruition, I needed to invest some time building a relationship with my contacts from the community center, and in particular with Don, the teen program director. We had to become familiar with each other enough to work together for three weeks at an intense pace.

**Partnering with Don and the community center.** About four months prior to the study, through my colleague at Boston Public Schools, I was introduced to two people



who work with middle- and high-school students at a community center, including students who are relatively new to the United States. First, I met Dave, the executive director of a community center branch in Boston. Later that week, I met Don, the teen program director at another branch from the same community center. At both meetings, I explained my dissertation proposal, offered an overview of my project, the timeframe, and the constraints regarding the types of participants I was hoping to find. From the outset, Dave and Don were enthusiastic and certain that their branch wanted to host this project. However, as the date to begin fieldwork approached, Dave's site did not have participants who met the criteria; therefore, Don agreed to find all of the participants from his site and host the project at his teen center.

**Information session.** Ten days before the project officially began, I scheduled an information session for potential participants. I brought bagels and some fruit, agendas to distribute, as well as an information sheet with demographic information, 11" x 14" size envelopes, and consent/assent forms. I was prepared. However, by the scheduled start time of 10:00 a.m., only three of the participants had arrived.

As we waited for the others to arrive, Don informed me that all of the students were 18 years old or older except for one student. Until that point, I had prepared to work with middle-school-aged students, as described in my proposal. I was surprised by this but wanted to make sure that the participants did not pick up on how surprised I was by this announcement. I knew that I could make the age difference work; however, the change in ages meant additional preparation for me as the researcher and facilitator.

During the information session, I gave the participants an overview of how they would be engaged in the work during the three-week project. I prepared handouts about

the project for them, as well as an agenda for the work (see Appendix D). I intentionally paused to ask students what the terms “confidential” and “minimal risks” meant. I looked for nods of understanding and went over all the points slowly. It was readily apparent that some of the participants had a limited understanding of the terms I used. I referred to the pictures in the consent/assent forms to guide their processing of this information. I expressed my hope that, throughout our sessions, each of them would be open and honest about their experiences and feel comfortable sharing them. The following were some field notes I took from that session:

My first impression of the participants is that they were able to follow along as I reviewed the consent/assent forms picture by picture. The female participants showed enthusiasm by smiling about the project to each other and nodded when they comprehended a point I was making. They asked a few questions about partnering; I said that I planned to draw names from a hat... They asked when it would start a few different times, I think out of enthusiasm, and each time I explained that officially our sessions begin on July 14.

I provided participants with their oversized cardboard envelopes and asked them to work on gathering photographs from Haiti and other artifacts or mementos that they might consider using in their digital story. Once I was done speaking, participants had the opportunity to ask questions.

Right from the initial meeting, I recall how Diane appeared to be an inquisitive student. She held her head high and had a big bright smile. Sitting on the edge of her seat, she inquired about the process of making a movie, the amount of writing that would be expected, and the range of topics we would cover. She explained how she lived with her

aunt and how she was very comfortable talking about her experiences. She also informed everyone that she had used iMovie for an assignment at her high school. She perked up and exclaimed that she was excited to be a part of the project. The others were quiet and reserved at our first meeting, though they appeared to be actively listening.

**One more gathering before project begins.** I knew that the participants would have to feel safe enough to tell their story (or a richer version of it). To make some inroads with them, I volunteered to help Don launch the beginning of the summer program. Don had gathered the participants and asked them to write an autobiography during the six-week summer program that he was overseeing. The teaching assistant, Jill, and I escorted the participants to the local library and helped them to select a range of biographies both in subject and reading levels. The idea was that participants would select one to two biographies and familiarize themselves with how someone tells the story of his or her life. As participants were about to embark on telling their own autobiographical stories, I set aside time to get to know each participant a bit more. In this way, I was preparing both myself and the participants for a meaningful project together.

### **The Project Begins**

**Ready for the first session, or so I thought.** By the time the day came for the project to officially begin, I felt prepared. I had the materials and equipment that were necessary, and was getting to know each of the participants from our prior interactions.

Steven was the first to arrive, followed shortly thereafter by Diane, who came over from the main building of the community center. Before leaving, Don informed me that “all my kids are over in the main building,” but the remaining four participants were

offsite assisting a fieldtrip for a youth group. By the time we began the session, it was 5:25 p.m., about one and a half hours past the original start time.

We met in Don's office while the other teenage members of the community center played video games in the main part of the teen center. At times, the volume was so loud in the main area of the teen center that I was unable to hear the participants. The other teenage members had free reign of the open space, while the participants and I were squeezed into a room barely large enough for everyone to sit. Nevertheless, I had everyone's full attention as we began our work.

Since this was the first time all six participants were gathered with Jill and me, I asked everyone to introduce him or herself and to include the school they currently attended and state how long they have lived in Boston. It was then that I realized that the majority of the participants had only been in the U.S. for one to two years. At that moment, it also occurred to me that their recent arrival explained why, for some of the participants, their use of social language was still arduous. Since I was expecting to work with students with an intermediate level of English acquisition, I had planned and prepared to conduct the project in English only. However, since I did not build into the project a Haitian-Creole-speaking teaching assistant, I continued to work with the beginner–intermediate level students in English only. Hiring a Haitian-Creole-speaking teaching assistant had not been a top priority since I expected students from a range of linguistic backgrounds. I needed to understand all the data I was gathering—the conversations and participant writing—and if participants code-switched between English and Haitian Creole, analyzing the data would have become much more challenging.

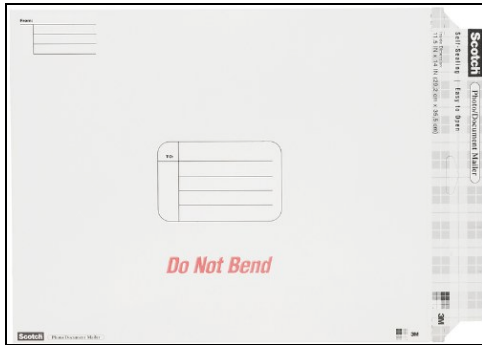
I quickly realized that I needed to adjust the pace of the project. Beginner–intermediate level students of English were going to need more time to translate or clarify the work we were about to undertake, and I had to re-conceptualize how to accommodate that need and still complete the digital story by the end of the three weeks. The participants took the challenge to use English in earnest, but it was a very slow process for some of them. Though I did not anticipate working with high school students, or students who were 18 years and older working toward completing high school, or students who were still developing their abilities to communicate in basic English, I found the participants to be an inspiring group to work with from the beginning. They had experienced great disruptions and tremendous life changes yet were motivated to make their futures something meaningful and successful.

### **During the Project: Issues Arise**

This study explored how participants perceived their transmigration experiences. Though the methodology was firmly established in advance, sessions were carefully planned in a way that gave participants the time and space to unpack the topics and consider their responses. I fully expected to be taken off task when something unexpected arose. In analyzing the digital recordings, field notes, scripts, and final products, I isolated seven issues that emerged from the project, each of which I discuss in the following sub-sections.

**Envelopes.** As the researcher and facilitator, I was confronted with a false assumption made before the study began. I believed that if I went to Staples and purchased oversized envelopes (Figure 7) for participants, then surely they would comply with my request to fill them up with various photographs and mementos of Haiti. Before

the recruitment was finalized, I did not consider that all of my participants would be Haitian and would have come to Boston shortly after the massive earthquake that leveled their country. In other words, the participants came to the U.S. with very little in hand and thus were unable to fill an envelope, however sturdy and large, with anything other than a few photographs.



*Figure 7.* Envelope. Open access image found on the Internet.

From the first night together onward, I checked in with the participants regularly and inquired about adding some items to their envelopes, but only a few participants were ever able to bring in more than a couple of photographs. Diane had two pictures of her as a child (Figures 8 and 9), and Tonya brought in one beautiful portrait of her mother sitting in a chair (to be discussed later). Despite the reminders I gave, Steven, Jacqueline, Margaret, and Sarah did not have any pictures to use.



*Figure 8.* Diane and her father. Reprinted with permission.



*Figure 9.* Diane and relatives. Reprinted with permission.

Steven wrote at length in his script about how special his mother is to him and how, when they lived together in Haiti, he had always been by her side. It therefore came as a surprise to learn that Steven did not have a picture to share of this woman who meant

so much to him. At one point, I asked him directly, “Can you add any pictures of your mother? Or you with your mother?” Steven replied sheepishly, “I don’t have any pictures of her. I just talk on the cell phone.” I was hopeful that there was still enough time, so I inquired, “Are you able to get one?” to which Steven responded, “No, not really.” How could Steven have left his mother’s side without a picture as a memento? This was another instance during the study when my assumptions as a teacher / facilitator were challenged. I had taken it for granted that before families separate, they provide their children with keepsakes. Looking back, I now understand that this makes little sense, but when Steven revealed that he had no pictures of his mother, I had to hide the sadness that grew out of my bias that children should be provided a picture of their loved one to look at when they are not together. Figure 10 is a picture that Steven found on the Internet to capture his emotions about leaving his mother.



*Figure 10.* “Steven and his mother.” Open access image found on the Internet.

None of the participants explicitly told me that they were not able to bring many personal belongings from Haiti; instead, they politely expressed that they would see if



they could find anything that could fit into their digital stories. These initial assumptions I made before the project began demonstrate the ways in which I was not sufficiently prepared to teach and learn from that particular group as a researcher. They also demonstrate the ways in which assumptions and biases influence the ways that teachers prepare to facilitate their students' learning

**Utilizing the technology.** Obtaining the laptops for the participants was a major feat, but ensuring that each participant could engage with the tasks we worked on in each session was another. In their late-teen years, the participants' experiences using movie-making software, conducting image searches, and typing scripts varied greatly. For example, the teaching assistant Jill and I realized that downloaded images needed to be large enough to fill the size of a laptop monitor without appearing blurry. Jill demonstrated that in just a few clicks, one could search for images of a certain minimum size. Some participants needed to be shown how to search for images with these parameters numerous times, while others were able to follow the steps to meet these guidelines. I had assumed that if one of the participants was uncertain how to perform a task, he/she would ask to be shown again. However after each session, I reviewed the pictures the participants downloaded to keep track of everyone's progress and noticed several instances in which some of the participants selected images that were too small. Jill and I would again model how to search for images and how to set the search function to only find images greater than 640x800 pixels. I wanted participants to feel empowered by honing computer skills, and was happy to practice with each of them until they felt capable of completing the tasks independently.

Loading participants' own images onto their laptops was also a task that varied in complexity for the group. I viewed these participants as young adults, and when some explained to me that they knew how to email themselves photographs, I took them on their word that they would complete this task. I recommended that they spend time either at night or before the sessions attaching their images to an email to themselves so they could download them onto their laptops as soon as the sessions began. However, this was not an option since the majority of participants did not have smartphones with a data plan or digital cameras that took pictures at a high enough resolution, so we brainstormed an alternate plan. Five of the six participants had smartphones, so they could take pictures and upload them directly if they were in a space with free wireless Internet. I bought an inexpensive digital camera for the one student, Tonya, who did not have a smartphone and showed her how to use it to capture images of her day-to-day life. When Tonya brought the camera back to our sessions, though, none of the pictures that she took were saved, despite her certainty that she had used the camera in the way we had discussed. The time I had initially budgeted for the image-generating tasks became delayed as a result. Despite these setbacks, everyone remained invested in finding and using the best images possible to tell their stories.

Diane had lived in Boston the longest and was the only high school graduate in the group. This by itself gave her unmatched social capital. Additionally, she seemed to have an outgoing personality. Diane was capable of utilizing the technology and attempted to teach herself how to use a program or search engine, for example, if she did not already know. This was both a strength and a weakness of hers, as I interpreted it to mean that she preferred not to ask for assistance and to spend as much time as she needed

to teach herself a new skill on the computer. That determination held up her progress. She was one of the last to finish her digital story. During the last week of the project, her pictures were not matching up to the words in her script. As I had done with the others, I asked her to practice reading her script to see how the words matched with her pictures. We slowly began to adjust the times. I wrote the following field note after the session:

Diane opted not to advocate for herself when working with technology. For example, I asked her, “Do you have any questions? Do you need help with anything?” and she replied, “Not really” so then I inquired on the progress she had made and she gave me a look as if to say “I’m fine” and “I’ll let you know if something comes up.” Though it is evident she has more work to do, she still does not let me know that she needs assistance.

During the last week of the project, I asked Sarah to arrive early one day, as she still had pictures to add to iMovie. She steadfastly worked on gathering a few images on Google, and then we assembled all of the images and worked closely on the timing. Even after she noticed that she needed a few more pictures—Miami airport, people talking—once we began work again, she realized she needed to find more pictures. Once she gathered all the visuals she needed, she could then concentrate on manipulating the times of the photos, which was impressive, and she was able to record her story.

I praised participants’ progress and emphasized that they were almost done creating their stories. In the last few sessions, I also tried to keep them motivated by talking up the celebration planned for the last day, which seemed to pique the interest of Sarah and Margaret in particular. Margaret was much more willing to communicate using social language in English. She started to use words in English more freely and became

more talkative. In addition, she was able to explain what she needed to do using iMovie, and got the assistance she needed to complete her work independently.

**Use of first language: Haitian Creole.** The participants' dominant language was Haitian Creole, and most participants greatly preferred to communicate in this language. Since participants were all of the same cultural and linguistic background and in some cases had not been in the U.S. much more than one year, they were still developing their English language production skills. This posed a major challenge throughout the project: utilizing their social language in English rather than speaking in Haitian Creole.

As an educator, emphasizing a monolingual environment goes against my philosophy that students should use the language with which they feel more comfortable. My formal preparation as a teacher also shaped my thinking that students construct meaning better in the language/s they know best. However, I needed everyone to use English in order to ensure that I could understand their ideas when I played back the recorded sessions. Beyond asking for clarification from peers, participants were asked to use as much English as they could to communicate with one another. I was not prepared to facilitate a study in two languages, for reasons discussed earlier.

It did not take long though before I felt that the participants' use of Haitian Creole warranted some discussion. Perhaps due to having to perform tasks on the MacBook which were challenging for some or due to arriving late and wanting to catch up quicker in one's first language than trying to grasp what the task was in English, there were at times language-related tensions within the group. I became keenly aware of the amount of Haitian Creole spoken, and regretted not having someone fluent in it. For example, simple requests such as "Can I use a pen?" were asked in Creole when I knew that

everyone could express that question in English. When I gave the same reminders when we worked on the more challenging tasks, it seemed that they truly struggled with the directive. There seemed to be more literal translations of tasks, as the participants seemed on task regardless of the language they used. Eventually, by working together to clarify unknown terms or how to use technology, participants were able to tell the version of their story they felt comfortable sharing within the limitations of the English language.

As a researcher, I was unprepared to facilitate a group comprised of Haitian Creole dominant speakers. My sense that I needed to capture as much of the meaning-making process as possible through the data collection process led me to pressure students to speak in English only, a practice that went against my teaching philosophy and preparation as a certified ELL teacher. This directive served by own limitations as a non-Haitian Creole speaker. This practice also points to the ways that external pressures or standards, or perceptions of them (in this case perceived pressures regarding doctoral-level research expectations), can lead teachers to emphasize classroom practices that go against what they have learned through their preparation.

**My attempt to change the momentum.** Roughly halfway through the project, I recognized that participants' enthusiasm was waning. The novelty of participating in the project was gone and they seemed tired of pushing themselves to use academic English. Rather than narratives assembled by stitching together their interview responses to form a version of their experiences, I had hoped for scripts that were drafted several times, using the interview responses only as a start. That night I memoed:

It doesn't feel like the DS [digital storytelling] project overall is doing well. I

thought that the participants would see my interview guide as a jumping off point

and they would be able to think about their lives in terms of changes they had to make and then capture these ideas in a script.

When talking with cohort members and my committee, Dr. Zakharia, Dr. Kress and Dr. Kiang, and more recently with Dave, I was excited about how this project will morph into some type of advocacy work or at least have a community engagement piece once it is completed. At this point though, I don't see how it is possible to do that.

Instead, the interview guide became a de facto list of questions that were answered and included in the script, even when they are not applicable or relevant to the participant's story. Some participants are including the answers to some of the questions posed in the interview guide even when they disrupt the flow in their script.

I wanted everyone to "reset" their perspectives on the project, shifting the focus away from mere task completion in hopes of eliciting some of the creativity I knew existed within them. Thus, in an effort to re-engage them, I posed the following questions:

- (1) What do you want other people to know about your transmigration experience?
- (2) What are some of the strongest memories of all of the adjustments you have had to make?
- (3) How do you feel about your digital story so far?
- (4) What questions do you have?

I asked Steven to start, and he put forth an idea that I did not foresee but had hoped would arrive nonetheless. "Well Miss," he said, "all the changes started with the earthquake." I

noted to everyone that more than half of the sessions had passed and this was the first time the word “earthquake” was said aloud. I had read all of scripts and no one had mentioned the word earthquake once. I told them that I imagined that all of their lives had changed after the earthquake but that no one had raised this topic at all. I asked them to consider why no one had talked about it until now. Diane jumped on my question and exclaimed, “Well Miss, you never asked us a question about the earthquake [in the interview guide]!” Below are some direct quotes were transcribed from my response to Diane:

Me: That’s fair. I understand. I asked that you explain your experiences and talk about the changes you went through.

Diane: I was following the guidelines so I didn’t put it. I just went sentence by sentence.

Me: The guide I made was only a guide. Only suggestions. Not science class, or a recipe. To make dinner, you need to do all these things. This is more like art class. You can make a painting in many different ways. You can add what you want to tell a story.

I reiterated that the interview guide was just a suggestion for ways to think about telling participants’ stories and that it was not necessary for them to use all of the questions. I prompted them to recognize that only they knew the story of their transmigration experience; I paused while they pondered what they wanted others to know about their experiences.

Diane reminded me, “You said the movie is supposed to last three minutes. I think if we add the earthquake I will need to make a whole other digital story.” I asked the group, “Do you feel that your story has the most important parts?” While everyone thought about this, I asked Margaret directly, “What do you think? Do you think your story has the most important parts?” Margaret gave a brief response, “Yes.” Next, I put the question to Diane: “How do you feel about your digital story? What do you need to do to finish your digital story?” Diane replied, “I feel good, content.” Admittedly, I had hoped that participants would have decided to add more information, regardless of whether or not it was asked, but no one spoke to needing to do this.

At that moment, Diane announced, “Tonya is crying!” and I saw that in fact Tonya had her head down and was silently crying so as not to call attention to herself. I knew immediately why she was crying. After all, she had told me before the project began that she had lost her mother in the earthquake. I was sitting next to Tonya, and I leaned over and asked her if she wanted to leave the room, go for a walk, or go to Don’s office, but she did not want to move. I thought it was probably better to keep going with the lesson, as Tonya was communicating with body language and nodding her head that she did not want to talk about anything and seemed to just need some space to collect herself. Jill and I made it clear to Tonya that she had options, but the fact that she remained in her seat with her head down and a few tears streaming down her cheek indicated that she did not want to move or talk at that time.

I had been hoping for a breakthrough with the participants. I realized that the amount of structure given to the participants around crafting their stories became a roadblock in an otherwise creative process. We continued to talk about everyone’s



progress on their digital stories, and I gave them some ideas to keep in mind: organize photos in a way that corresponds to the script, think about how long each picture needs to play to coincide with the words being spoken, and consider what quotes they wanted to type up and play to emphasize their meaning within the story they were telling. I then announced that it was time to take a break.

Participants exhibited a great deal of effort while they completed their remaining work—final selection of images, tweaking scripts to complement the images, narrating their movies, adding quotes to transition slides. The participants' limited social language made each step completed a minor victory. Each one was determined to tell their own story. I was passionate and committed to this project, and would have worked and reworked ideas to aid each participant. However, their narratives were their own to tell, and they showed more interest in conveying their stories visually by the last week of the project.

In trying to move the pace of the project. I learned that participants believed that they were engaging in the project in an authentic way, by responding directly to the pre-scripted questions I had provided, even though they chose not to include some of the more personal aspects of their transmigration journey. In addition, I was confronted with the reality that some students may need additional support in processing the trauma around their transmigration experience. This episode in the research process suggests the ways that unexpected issues arise during the teaching and learning process that make it important for teachers to be prepared in the sociopolitical or situational context from which students are coming, particularly as Boston and other U.S. urban centers receive more and more students from disaster and conflict-affected contexts. Even as teachers are

prepared for this reality, individual students will have experienced transmigration differently. This has implications for how teachers are prepared and supported to work with newcomer ELLs. I discuss these implications in Chapter 7.

**Omissions.** When I initially met and spoke with participants, I was struck by how freely two of them shared their personal experiences with me. I had hoped for this, but I was well aware that there were no guarantees that participants would open up about private, potentially painful moments in their lives. Starting off in this way, I thought that the trend of sharing and openness would continue and later translate into digital stories that were conveyed this personal information. I took for granted that if these two participants were willing to share with me, at our first encounter, then they would surely incorporate this personal information into their digital stories. As I learned, however, participants were willing to share their experiences with me but not with each other, and they did not want particular information included in their digital stories. Perhaps they saw me as a trusted adult figure, but might have felt too vulnerable sharing beyond a one-on-one conversation? I did not foresee that the participants would choose to disclose something to me but have no intention of sharing it with others, or intentionally withholding the experience from their digital stories. This happened in four different instances, described below.

Upon meeting Tonya for the second time, I had a private conversation with her. She told me that she had moved to Boston in September 2013, which meant she had only lived in Boston for 10 months. I noticed that she had returned with her large envelope, and I was intrigued to see what was inside. I asked her about her family, and then she took out a lone picture from her envelope. It was a portrait of her mother sitting in a chair

(Figure 11). She held it and with a smile explained to me that her mother died in the earthquake in January 2010 in Haiti. She explained this quietly, factually, keeping her head down as the words came slowly out of her mouth. What struck me was how matter of fact she was.



*Figure 11.* Tonya's mother. Reprinted with permission.

In her digital story though, Tonya did not mention her mother at all. In her narration, she said, "When I came to Boston, my father was here with me but my grandmother stayed in Haiti." I was surprised that she chose to share her unthinkable loss with me in such a matter-of-fact way so early, but then chose not to bring it up again. Out of respect for Tonya and all that she had been through, I did not press her on this choice, at any point.

Diane had her own lapses in what she would talk about versus what she opted to include in her digital story. Through conversations during the sessions, we learned that

Diane's mother "lives in Haiti and works as a nurse practitioner and her dad and brothers live in Florida." In her writing, she was critical of her father's decision to relocate the family, claiming that he "didn't seem to have a plan." She was very comfortable sharing her experiences and was eager for feedback on her writing, yet none of these experiences made it into her digital story. I interpreted these omissions as an indication that Diane did not think these aspects fit in her story. In addition, another aspect of Diane's experiences was that she arrived in Boston in April but did not start school until September; however, she did not account for how she spent this time. I encouraged her to say more about this five-month gap and include it in her digital story, but she did not.

There are more anecdotes from Diane that she could have shared in the digital story, including answers to two questions that came up in our sessions. The first was a response to a question I posed: "Do your families let you stay home if you are sick?" Diane replied spiritedly, "Oh Miss, my father will call everyone, including people in Haiti if I stay home for one day. He would call Obama to say that I did not go to school." All of the participants were steadfast in their assertion that taking time off for sick days was not allowed, and they all had a laugh about it. Secondly, I asked participants about what their families wanted or expected from them now that they were living in Boston. Specifically, I asked them to consider what they thought it meant to their family for them to be successful? Diane replied with confidence, "They want us to speak English properly." She knew that they had impressed upon her that that is how people become successful in the U.S. Neither example made it into her story, but each one is telling of the complexity that immigrant students face as they integrate.

During one highly productive session about two-thirds of the way through the project, I asked participants “What do you want other people to know [about all the changes they experienced]?” Diane declared that, “Immigrants shouldn’t be minimized or put down because people should know that it is hard to move. Immigrants work hard and want to work hard.” I affirmed Diane’s thought by assuring everyone that they “are strong and have shown their strength by everything you have survived to get to Boston.” As poignant as her idea was to transmigration, she did not add it to her script.

In response to the same question, Margaret said, “I think it’s just good to share your story.” I was pleased that she added this idea to the conversation. She seemed to me to be quite introverted, but she expressed that she still wanted others to know about her. When I engaged with her, she put forth great effort to make herself understood. I suggested, “Only you can tell your story. I want to help you figure out the best way to tell your story. This is not for school; it is not for a grade. I am not your teacher, but I am a teacher-researcher who loves the idea that these digital stories can be told as a way to share that these stories are happening all the time.”

Regarding his transmigration experiences, Steven was adamant in sharing that his separation from his family was the most challenging aspect of his transmigration. He was open and thoughtful in the way he shared his deeply personal sentiments:

I want people to know that my transmigration experience was not easy because when you see you gonna leave all your family members is not easy even after you get where you wanna be will be nice but members that you leave will be a issue for you, [such] as [what happened after] the earthquake.

Though Steven did not mention if there were any plans to reunite with his mother, it was clear that she was never far from his mind.

Neither Margaret's nor Steven's sentiments were included in their digital stories. Despite how open and candid Steven was, it seemed he had even more to say about family separation than he allowed himself.

The omissions that surfaced during the digital story making process suggest that participants may not have wished to freely share personal details, including details that are significant to who they are, or their identity. Participants may equally have felt that such details do not belong in an activity that they may have perceived as educational (with a teacher and students) and/or public (with the stories to be shared with others). As in all relationships, trust must be established. If a student does not feel that teachers have an interest in who they are as a person, or developing them as a scholar, how could students want to take the emotional risk and explain the circumstances surrounding their migration? Other students may have families who caution their children not to say too much about their families or their past to the adults at school. After all, in some cultures teachers are thought to be in the classroom teach the students, not to delve into students' personal business. This may have implications for how teachers are prepared to work with newcomer ELLs. By strengthening rapport with all students, teachers may further support newcomers in developing a deeper sense of belonging at school, and in the classroom. This sense of support and belonging may be present, even if students choose to omit aspects of their story. I revisit these ideas in the final chapter.

**This project was not meant to be an extension of school.** Our project met during the summer at a community center. I deliberately did not want the experience to

feel like an extension of school for the participants. I opted not to work at the school where I was teaching. Nor did I want to find a group of participants to work with me after school, the rationale being that the participants would potentially have been thinking about the events of the day and still would have been in “school mode.” Rather, I wanted participants to have a shared experience within an inclusive setting that conjured up as few reminders as possible about their academic identities.

However, besides the safeguards I had already taken to prevent participants from viewing me as their instructor, they still regarded me as such—a teacher who wanted to do an assignment with them. This was an insurmountable challenge for me. They knew that I was a teacher and that the work we were doing could potentially be done in an ESL or ELA class at their high school. Therefore, the project became synonymous with school, and encouraging them to be creative and open during the entire process was a roadblock I could not get past. While I expected to hear, for instance, that the project “help[ed] you practice your English so it’s good” (from Sarah), my critique goes beyond that. Improving academic English was intended as a byproduct, not the main goal, of engaging in the project, so I felt disheartened that it was the major takeaway. I wanted the work we did together to explore meaning-making, yet the participants seemed to be focused on accomplishing a set of tasks. Three examples from participants, who made their own points about this topic, follow.

When Diane spoke about the many changes in her life, she was able express the different kinds of feelings and levels of resolve she experienced. However, when she read her script in class, it seemed to lack emotion, which sounded completely different from the way she expressed herself verbally. I realized that the participants wanted to meet the

requirements of the assignment, and to ensure that they had told enough about themselves they included most of the answers to the questions I posed in the interview guide rather than striving for a particular narrative flow of their unique experiences. I interpreted this as the participants feeling bogged down by utilizing the target language, which may have limited the creativity in their writing. The issue was not that the participants could not reflect and make meaning of their transmigration experiences, but rather that writing in one's second language constrains the way one can express himself/herself, at least while one is still developing the ability to write.

As a separate matter, I grew to understand that the participants did not view school as a space to process the changes they have been through. The way they conveyed their initial experiences upon entering school left no doubt about how isolated they felt upon arriving. The participants felt very much on their own as they made their way to school for the first time. However, one way this transition was eased was through language. Participants who entered a high school with other Haitian students and perhaps some Haitian-Creole-speaking staff (i.e., everyone but Steven) recalled how they were able to open up and share parts of themselves with the school community. Regardless, the work I facilitated with the participants was considered an "assignment," and in their experience, school is not a place to process emotions. They aimed to keep their personal feelings out of the digital stories.

I think this also helps to explain Tonya's choice not to mention that mother's death in her script, despite it being one of the first things she shared with me when we had our first one-on-one meeting. In school, in a classroom, newcomer immigrants do not open up about the heartache they have experienced. They do however, comment on the



progress of their academic language production. Tonya had to take standardized tests upon arrival. As such, her high school sent her the message that school is a place for learning and demonstrating that knowledge; it is not a place for sharing personal feelings or processing traumatic events.

Although this project was by no means a study in how to counsel teenagers as they process their transmigration experiences, I did expect to engage in some difficult conversations about their lives in Haiti, the trauma of the earthquake, the difficulties in settling into a new academic environment, the challenges of making new friends, and the uncertainties of their futures. As high school students who were, with one exception, 18 years of age and older, their resolve to stay in school and try to graduate was impressive. Diane graduated from high school the month prior to the start of the project, and the other five participants expressed a deep commitment to do the same. As a whole, this group did not seem to want to look back as much as it needed to think about what lay ahead for them. Although research shows that the dropout rate is higher for late-entry ELLs, whether due to linguistic, academic, or school characteristics, or a combination thereof, these participants wanted to earn their high school diplomas and enter college (Callahan, 2013, p. 8; Crumpler, 2014)

**Trauma.** When I learned that I would be working with all Haitians, I realized that the project would undoubtedly take an unexpected path from diverse stories of newcomers in Boston Public Schools to a narrative about Haitian transmigration after the massive earthquake in January 2010, which destroyed much the country (WHO/PAHO, 2010). One cannot delve into this population in this timeframe without discussing the role that trauma played at various points in their lives: before and after the earthquake, upon

arrival to Boston, and while entering Boston Public Schools. More than likely, leaving their homeland was not their choice, nor was parting with beloved family and friends. Under more favorable circumstances, these transitions can be overwhelming and challenging to process; however, in the context of fleeing an unstable government that is hard-pressed to support its people during a national crisis, teenagers are going to be well aware of these uncertainties and may not have anywhere to direct their questions or anxiety. Taking all of this into account, I had to carefully consider, “What story do they feel safe enough to tell?” Knowing the participants had not been in Boston very long, I wondered if participants would be willing to share their stories at all.

Steven rose to the challenge and expressed some feelings he had about his own trauma. He created a digital story that addressed the periods of crisis and uncertainty that were his reality. Despite the assumptions I had made about material possessions (regarding his lack of photographs of his mother) and his late-entry status at his high school in Boston, Steven demonstrated a great deal of resilience in both the amount of hardship he had overcome in his life and in his ability to adapt his script and select images to tell his story. For example, he concluded his script by declaring, “I’m not saying that I’m a master speaker, but my listening is better. My words are perfect, or clearly understood. Now I can talk with whomever I want.” His pride was evident in the tone of his voice at the end of the script. Jill remarked to Steven, “Emotion is portrayed in all your pictures. Even though most of the images were found on the Internet [see Figures 12-14], they convey a lot of emotion.” Steven persevered and did not shy away from a provocative digital story.



*Figure 12.* Students in Haiti. Open access image found on the Internet.



*Figure 13.* Child crying. Open access image found on the Internet.



*Figure 14.* Studious children. Open access image found on the Internet.

## **Finishing up the Project**

In this section, I focus on the last two days of the project. During the second to final session, participants worked on two tasks, recording their voices over their scripts and approving all of the edits. On our last official day, we met earlier than usual and had a celebratory lunch while we viewed the final products.

**Second to last session: Recording their voices.** I planned for participants to record their voices onto their iMovies. We had been working extended hours for the two days prior in an effort to adjust and readjust the timing of the photographs to best suit the pacing of each of the participants' scripts. The participants all seemed that they were looking forward to be done with tweaking their stories. The session unfolded in the following way.

We began recording at 5:00 p.m. I instructed participants to speak their scripts slowly and confidently and to take pauses if they got ahead of the pictures to keep the words and images in sync. Participants read their script into the digital recorders, and then we uploaded the MP3 files to iTunes and dragged the files into iMovie to overlay the images. I played each video back to the students to get their feedback and final approval. Jill and I stayed until 7 p.m. in order to record everyone's voice to his or her satisfaction.

Diane and I had a memorable exchange on the final day of work. Diane had wanted to continue to add to her digital story, as she had pictures that she still had not used. Diane showed me a few pages of in her notebook that she had hoped to turn into script. I did not expect this and wrote the following in my field notes:

Since Diane's DS was already 3 minutes I suggested that she work on honing in on the most important parts of what she'd wanted to add. She wasn't pleased with

this, but I think she saw the benefit of editing. She had about 10 pictures that had no script and I asked her to edit those. She chose 5 pictures, including 3 shots of her high school graduation and 2 of community college. She then used the additional writing in her notebook to guide her with what she'd like to say. For organizational purposes, she numbered the pictures she'd like to use and wrote down what she would say as the pictures play.

Her strategy worked and her story became richer. She put a great deal of effort into adding additional text, and the new pictures had a clear purpose to the overall message of her story. Most importantly, Diane was now satisfied with her work. Although I did not expect Diane to make these last minute changes, assisting her with them was gratifying. She thought about how best to tell her transmigration experiences right up until the end of the project.

**Final session: Digital story celebration.** For all the emotional ups and downs and unexpected snags during the project, the final session felt as if it had snuck up on us. Three weeks went by quickly, and it felt like I had known them all much longer than that. To mark the occasion, I ordered Haitian cuisine (Figure 15) from a well-known restaurant. We had a celebratory luncheon in the main room of the teen center, where we were able to relax and view everyone's final versions of the digital stories.



*Figure 15.* Typical Haitian food. Open access image found on the Internet.

Jacqueline volunteered to present her digital story first. Her enthusiasm and pride was written all over her face. Though she may not have been as vocal as others, Jacqueline was earnestly involved in every step of the project. After Jacqueline, it was Diane's turn. Diane was delighted to show her work, as her bright smile was beaming. At the end of each showing, I initiated applause. Don was there, and he was genuinely animated and impressed with the quality of everyone's stories.

From there, the conversation shifted as Don inquired about the participants' overall experience in this project. They remarked how it was a "good experience" (Margaret) and that they were "glad they didn't give up" (Diane). Once again, I praised them for their hard work and efforts to stay committed to the project and to add their voices to the conversation about transmigration experiences that is expanding in the literature.

**Evaluations.** I created an extensive self-, peer-, and instructor-evaluation form that addressed the specific tasks, conversations, and work that participants were expected to engage in and complete during the project. My intent was to tailor the questions to

their experience as much as possible and have them reflect upon how they felt they, their peers, and I performed. They did not have to share their thinking with anyone else or defend their reasons for selecting a specific rating. The evaluation questions and answers can be found in Appendix E.

**Final Product.** This interpretive study examined the process of working with a group of former newcomer English language learner (ELL) students as they simultaneously processed their transmigration experiences and produced a short digital story that captured these experiences. Embedded in the rationale of this study was participants' willingness to share what they had been through in their life and to discuss these experiences to the extent that they felt comfortable sharing with others. The digital storytelling component gave my study a structure, but the purpose of the study was not for participants to make a movie. If for some reason participants were unable to complete their digital stories, but otherwise contributed their ideas and experiences, their data would have been used regardless. As intended, the meaning-making practices allowed for new understandings of transmigration to emerge, which occurred regardless of the completion of a final product.

While the final product was not the most important element of the project, the work we did during the interviews—whole group discussions, and image selections (to help convey to an audience what each participant's transmigration journey was like)—was undertaken with the intention of meeting the goal of creating a digital story by the last day of the project. I wanted to introduce a goal to work on from the beginning. Therefore, at the information session, I handed out the digital storytelling rubric (see Table 4). I thought it better to explain how the sessions would be spent ahead of time,

rather than leave participants wondering what was coming next. Some participants were also quite curious at the initial meeting about the process of creating a digital story. For these reasons, I thought it best to hand out the rubric at the information session.

During the first session, I reviewed each of the categories that comprised the digital storytelling rubric: point of view—purpose; point of view—awareness of audience; voice—consistency; images; narrative arc; and duration of presentation. We discussed how the purpose of the digital story needed to be clear. I explained that the viewer should not have to guess what the point of view of the creator was while watching the digital story. Regarding the awareness of audience, the creator had to convincingly explain his or her choices of the vocabulary, quotes, and images. For the voice element, we discussed how one should be easily understood, by speaking clearly and at an appropriate volume, for the duration of the digital story. The images section of the rubric was critical to their digital story. I wanted participants to create a distinct tone to compliment the different parts of their story. The narrative arc element asked participants to consider the amount of detail necessary to tell their story. It was a balancing act to give the viewer enough information but to not spend too long on a particular aspect of transmigration. Finally, I asked students to create a digital story that was approximately three minutes long.

I chose not to score the participants' final products. I did not want the rating of their digital stories to be one of the final memories of working together. I also did not want to have participants score each other or themselves when they completed their self- and peer-evaluations. Participants' faces were beaming with pride for themselves and for each other as their digital stories played during the final session. This demonstrated to me



that they had no interest in receiving a grade to judge their hard work. Knowing how much time and hard work went into each digital story, I did not want the project to end with the formality of receiving a grade. Rather, the categories in the rubric matched the focus of our sessions, and the rubric served as a guide during the creation of their digital story.

The fact that all the participants met the expectations of the rubric, within the set timeline masks issues in the process of and preparation for working with newcomer students. Teacher preparedness issues can arise even when students appear to meet expectations of work. Those measures alone are not enough to understand the quality of newcomers' learning experiences as they adjust to academic life.

### **Emergent Themes**

As the sections above describe, a number of issues arose during the course of the project that led me to reflect on the ways in which I was prepared, and simultaneously unprepared, to take on a project with newcomers, and by extension, the ways in which teachers in urban public schools may be prepared/unprepared to work with newcomers. The process issues that arose during the project can be grouped into six key themes: (1) teachers' assumptions and biases, (2) cultural assumptions regarding the student-teacher relationship, (3) teachers' perceptions of external pressures/ standards, and (4) teachers' preparation in the sociopolitical or situational context. A fifth theme emerges from the issue of how participants wanted to meet the requirements of the "assignment", even though this project was not meant to be an extension of school. Finally, trauma is a significant theme that emerged, and it can present itself in numerous ways in a school setting. I discuss each of these briefly below.

Assumptions and biases influence (or guide) the ways that teachers prepare to facilitate their students' learning. I confronted this issue at the beginning of the project when the participants did not possess any mementos that they could put in their envelopes. I had assumed that the participants would be able to share some tangible items from Haiti. However, the majority of the participants had none to share. Teachers plan lessons and develop assessments based on their assumptions of how their students learn and they create timelines to maximize learning while staying on pace with district guidelines. Teachers need to be prepared to engage in their work with students by checking their biases, particularly as their relationships grow with their students. The assumptions that teachers possess can be to the detriment of their students, which is why it is essential in teacher preparation for pre-service teachers to unpack some of their assumptions and biases of working with immigrants, second language learners, students living in poverty, or other biases that middle-class educators may have due to a lack of direct experience with any of these populations.

The role of cultural assumptions regarding the student-teacher relationship was a second theme that emerged during the course of the study. For example, I had thought that students who were 17–20 years old would inform me if that they needed a task to be shown again or a reminder of how to use the technology when working with laptops and cameras. However, most of the participants did not seek out any assistance. Instead, they remained stuck at a certain point until I noticed they were not making progress. The implication is that students do not always let teachers know when they need assistance. Conversely teachers need to be attentive to these silences. Whether it is due to personal qualities, or students' perceptions of academic or classroom expectations around

receiving help, teachers need to be observant of students' needs. As part of their preparation, teachers need to be familiarized with a number of ways that they might provide assistance to students in order for them to be supportive and accepting of students' diverse learning styles.

The use of Haitian Creole was a “problem” for the study. Participants clarified tasks and asked questions by using their first language. In this situation, I wrestled with my perception of the pressures set by an external (dissertation) standard, namely the need to collect high quality data that I would be able to interpret within a set timeframe. It is established in research that students construct meaning and learn best in an environment where they can use the language they know best. However, I felt pressured to have students use as much English as they could so that I could comprehend their thinking when I listened to the recorded sessions.

I reverted to the dominant paradigm of English-only to compensate for my own linguistic gaps. When constrained with the task of having to complete my own study to meet the requirements of a dissertation, and a timeline in which to get this goal met, I encouraged the participants to engage in an English-only project, even when I knew that their ability to produce language was still developing. I emphasized a practice, using English-only, that goes against my teacher preparation and beliefs about learning.

This particular aspect of the research process may hold significance for how urban public school teachers engage with newcomer ELLs. Teachers' perceptions of external pressures or standards may also lead them to revert to English only with their students, and thus work against their teacher preparation or beliefs about language and learning. For example, as mentioned in Chapter 1, all students in Massachusetts are required to sit

for the MCAS exam one year after arrival, regardless of English proficiency, despite how the scores will not count towards their school's adequate yearly progress until the student has been enrolled for one year. The pressure created by these external standards, for teachers and for students, may lead teachers to revert to English only, in a bid to accelerate results.

At different points in the project, unexpected issues arose that made it important for a teacher to be prepared in the sociopolitical or situational context from where students are coming, particularly as Boston and other U.S. urban schools receive more and more students from disaster and conflict-affected contexts. Even as teachers are prepared for this, individual students will have experienced trauma and transmigration differently even from the same country.

Per the requirements of the Dissertation Proposal, I created a structured plan to have students use an interview guide. The guide contained topics related to transmigration. However, as I tried to have participants consider all of the changes they had been through, I realized that I had scaffolded their writing in such a way that did not meet all participants' needs. My approach hindered participants' creativity because they believed they needed to follow the formulaic guide verbatim, rather than write about their own unique journeys in their own way. The implication is that teachers need to be prepared to vary the level of support offered to their students. If provided with too much scaffolding, students will not have the opportunity to consider how they want to approach an assignment, while others need sentence starters to assist them in addressing various topics that form a cohesive essay or script. Teachers need to be prepared to offer the appropriate accommodation at the time the student needs it.

Towards the end of the project, it was evident to me that some of the participants were treating the work that needed to be done as an extension of school, rather than being a participant in a voluntary, low-stakes project. The issue is that some of the participants wanted to complete the project simply for the sake of being done. The implication for teachers is to know their students well enough to be able to design lessons and modify curricula that maintain high-levels of engagement, while teaching the content standards. Students will not be excited for every assignment, but teachers need to be prepared to make their subject matter authentic for their students. By knowing students' diverse learning styles and utilizing them, teachers can prepare students to attain the objectives they need to learn. Teacher preparation needs to emphasize that there are a number of ways of achieving mastery of a standard, and teachers need to be competent in their practice to vary activities and assignments to keep students' focus.

In this study, some of the participants expressed how they did not view school as a space to express their emotions. In fact, they explained how they believed they needed to keep certain aspects of who they are to themselves, during school time. The implication for teachers is that students can appear disinterested in the content of a lesson, doing their work, or preparing for an assessment. However, without emotional support and unsure of where to seek it out, students can have a hard time focusing on their studies when under a great deal stress. Teachers' preparation at the school level should include knowing how to hone the district's resources to get newcomers' support. Knowledgeable colleagues, instructional coaches, and lead teachers can be found in one's school building. An entire department dedicated to ELLs with resources and professional development opportunities available for public school teachers who feel ill equipped to

meet their learners' needs. One can ask around for advice or make phone calls within the district to develop a plan to build one's own capacity in working with immigrant students.

Even with multiple certifications and a decade of experience with culturally and linguistically diverse learners, there was a lot I could have done differently that would have positively impacted the participants' experience and thus the project as a whole. This experience has left me considering how teachers can be equipped or prepared to work with newcomers and meet their social, emotional, and academic needs, without having some built-in time to form a rapport and adjust teaching strategies. In this high-stakes climate of education where teachers need to start to test newcomers right away, this is not very likely to happen.

### **Discussion / Conclusion**

In this chapter, I presented the ways that I was prepared, and simultaneously unprepared, to facilitate and research a digital storytelling project with a group of Haitian high school students who had lived in Boston for 1–3 years. Throughout the process, I was forced to confront assumptions I did not realize that I held regarding all sorts of matters. While writing my nightly field notes, I found myself recording that I was “surprised” or “astonished” much more often than I anticipated, given the time and effort I put forth to ensure I was ready to conduct the study. Thus, I struggled with cultural competency in light of participants I was unprepared to facilitate. As discussed in Chapter 2, Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) hold that “culturally competent teachers, regardless of race, can learn enough of the child's home community and cultural context to be able to properly interpret behavior and structure curriculum” (p. 68). Meeting the participants

and realizing how the project I prepared for needed to be modified in many ways, I kept the aspects of culturally relevant pedagogy, however, I adjusted my lesson plans. Ladson-Billings (1995) maintains that students' home culture is drawn from, when appropriate, and cultural integrity is preserved as students engage in their work. The issues that emerged through the research process suggest some of the ways that other formally trained teachers working with newcomer ELLs in urban public schools may be simultaneously prepared and unprepared to undertake such work.

For the entire year that I wrote the proposal, I envisioned that my group would be comprised of students from a variety of countries who had lived in the U.S. for 3–5 years, and as argued in Chapter 2, I would foster academic excellence and cultural integrity, while preserving the languages of the students (Lowenstein, 2009). Because the participants were supposed to have lived in Boston for somewhere in that timeframe, I could justify not having a translator or bilingual teaching assistant, particularly since I expected the first languages to vary. Both from my experience as an ESL practitioner and established research in second language acquisition, I felt confident that the participants would have acquired enough social language in English to understand the tasks independently and express themselves freely in the context of the project. Had I known that the participants who were being recruited were from Haiti exclusively who had lived in Boston for 1–3 years instead, I would have modified my study's design and had a bilingual and biliterate teaching assistant built into my proposal. Time and resource constraints prevented me from doing this. To be clear, Jill's high caliber of professionalism and dedication to the students was quite valuable. She was a tremendous asset and showed true dedication to the participants and to the project; however, a

bilingual/biliterate TA would have been the bridge that linked the goals of the project and the participants' linguistic abilities. The dynamics of the group would have been completely different amongst the peers and between the participants and myself.

I also would have done research on the current education system in Haiti and familiarized myself with Haitian migration to Boston before the study began. In short, I would have gotten myself prepared to work with the specific group of young adults who became my participants, instead of learning about where they came from and what kind of access to schools they had during and after the study. The conceptual framework of this study would have been different, as would the areas I set out to explore as I wrote my dissertation proposal.

Therefore, I ended up feeling unprepared to effectively facilitate a three-week digital storytelling project with participants who had beginner to low-intermediate-level abilities to interact in English. Similarly, the role of a public school teacher is to teach all students, regardless of the academic and social abilities they possess when they enter that teacher's classroom. As discussed earlier, newcomer ELLs are assigned to schools based on seat availability, where students live, and parental preference, rather than SEI availability, and even though Boston Public Schools has taken measures to add staff who are ESL licensed or prepare staff to pass the ESL licensure test, there are simply not enough licensed ESL teachers to meet the demand for all students who would greatly benefit from having a teacher with a better-suited instructional approach than what is offered in the general education setting (Rennie Center, 2007). Regardless, all teachers are charged with finding a way for all students to make academic progress and show student growth throughout the academic year, which will be reflected on one's



evaluation, a permanent record of a teacher's performance for the academic year. Public school teachers have a high-stakes position, even more so than the one I was in as a doctoral student facilitating a research project.

Per the requirements of my doctoral program, I designed a study, which was voluntary, not affiliated with any public school district, and without the high-stakes intent of having this experience feel academic for the participants. I was faced with linguistic challenges and timeframe discrepancies, and though these unexpected challenges are significant, they are quite different from those faced by public school teachers. Still, the research process was instructive and holds value for understanding some of the issues faced by teachers working with newcomer ELLs. In particular, the process was telling in terms of the particularities of being unprepared, despite my extensive experience and formal training as an ESL instructor and the lengths I went to in preparing for the details of the project.

As described in this chapter, I found myself in quite a predicament at the beginning of July 2014. I had been working towards my goal of conducting my study, and that moment had finally arrived. Participants were recruited, the location was secured, and my lessons for each session were planned thoughtfully to maximize meaningful conversation on our sensitive topics related to transmigration issues. Despite my planning, I became the teacher who was not able to best meet her students' needs, in much the same way that Nieto (1992) describes meeting urban students' diverse needs (as I discuss in Chapter 2). There was recognizable difficulty in initiating conversations with Margaret, Tonya, and Jacqueline. While all the participants were polite and paid attention to my overview during the Information Session, I recognized that some of the participants

had difficulty following my overview. At first impression, I remember being hopeful that some of the participants simply needed to warm up and once they felt more comfortable around each other and me that they would participate more in our conversations.

Diane and Steven lent support in Haitian Creole to fill in the gaps of what the others were not able to figure out by themselves. As they had been immersed in an English-only learning environment the longest, they were able to explain the “exchanges and tasks”, and other aspects of the hidden curriculum that I set out to do with participants and did not make explicit (Apple, 2004, p. 81). This left Diane and Steven to regularly translate their group members’ questions, concerns, and comments so that I could try to keep everyone roughly on pace. Although Sarah, Margaret, Jacqueline, and Tonya’s ability to produce social language to engage in a project that is only in English was still developing, everyone was able to write their own ideas with confidence.

Another concern I had was about how fully Tonya, Margaret, and Jacqueline were able to reflect on all the changes in their lives and articulate a narrative about it. Those who had arrived at some point during 2013 had only lived in Boston between 1-1.5 years. My thinking was that they were still adapting to everything that is new to them and perhaps did not feel as settled as others in Boston. I noticed that their scripts seemed to read like snippets of time pieced together, rather than a story about transmigration, and was left to ponder whether this was because they did not have enough time to internalize a narrative as a way to explain all the changes in their lives.

In contrast, I made all the decisions regarding pacing of my instruction, modification of my sessions, and getting my participants motivated all on my own. In doing so, I was cognizant of Operario and Fiske’s (1999) work regarding motivating the

participants to establish positive social identities regarding our group (as discussed in Chapter 2) (as cited in Padilla & Perez, 2003). Though I had a highly competent teaching assistant and a partnering organization with directors who were willing to chat, the study was mine. Granted, I have an advanced degree in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and over 10 years' experience teaching multilingual learners, however, I had never organized and facilitated a project that I simultaneously researched. This was uncharted territory and I quickly had to scrap the plan I had and create a different one that would allow for more modification of the assignments than I previously considered.

As argued in this chapter, the issues that emerged during the process of undertaking this digital storytelling project may point to the ways that teachers working with newcomer ELLs in urban public schools may be simultaneously prepared and unprepared to undertake the work. In considering the ways in which I was prepared and unprepared, a distinction might be drawn between preparation and preparedness that may account for the discrepancies in the ways that I was/not prepared to undertake some of the pedagogical aspects of the work. In making this distinction, I consider the term preparation to refer to (1) forms of formal training, such as attaining licensure and certifications, as well as earning an M.Ed. and (2) the activities involved in preparing for teaching, including researching how digital stories are used in a classroom and designing lesson plans tailored to the project that I envisioned. I use preparedness, on the other hand, to refer to having contingency plans and adjusting the goals of each session according to participants' language abilities. The distinction between preparation and preparedness may provide insights into how teacher preparation programs and schools

might support teachers to anticipate and plan for working with newcomer ELLs. For example, at the school level, teachers and administrators can develop an expectation of what welcoming practices should entail. This way, no matter what time of year a student begins, the newcomer will receive the same experiences. Current teacher preparation and school provision might be expanded through elements of preparedness. I discuss the implications of the preparation/preparedness distinction and how they might inform policy and programming in the concluding chapter.

## CHAPTER 6

### FINDINGS

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter, I examine how former newcomer ELLs, engaged in a digital storytelling project, made meaning of their transmigration experience and adjustment process in their new academic and social life in Boston. By using direct quotes from them, both from our conversations during sessions and from the writing they did that later became their scripts for the digital story, I illustrate participants' perceptions about the circumstances around their move, feelings about reception on arrival, and social integration at school. Students' texts reveal that participants shared many common experiences during their transmigration experiences, such as separation from a parent. Teachers played a significant role in participants' social integration process. Language was also prevalent as a cross-cutting theme, as participants maintained that they felt more at ease using English the longer they had been in school.

Taken together, the data suggest that language holds central importance to the transmigration and social integration experiences of newcomers. Furthermore, digital storytelling, as a pedagogical process, may serve as an effective tool for working with newcomer ELLs, both as a means to facilitate meaning making and give significance to their transmigration experiences, as well as to support language development. In addition,

digital storytelling may offer a process by which teachers may better understand the circumstances of students' transmigration and thus how better to support them.

As this chapter demonstrates, participants made meaning of their transmigration through digital storytelling in different ways. They were able to reflect on their experiences and share at their own paces, and had complete creative control over their digital stories. The participants who had lived in Boston longer, Diane and Steven, were better able to explain their experiences than others whose social language was still developing. However, they all made invaluable contributions that benefited the group.

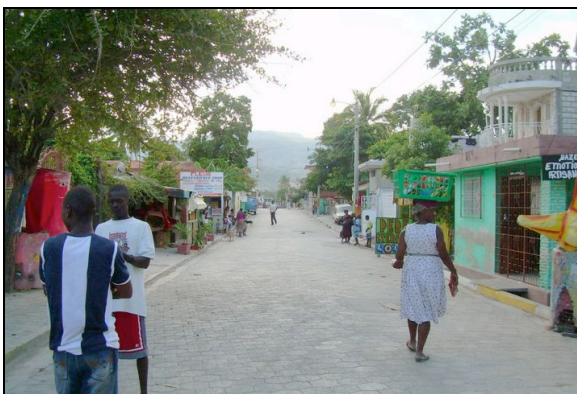
### **Making Meaning of Transmigration in the Context of English-only**

In this section, I describe and discuss aspects of the transmigration experiences of participants, as reflected in whole group and personal discussions, as well as the various texts produced by students during the three-week project. The findings provide insights into how participants make sense of their move and their school-specific experiences on arrival. Cross-cutting themes included the centrality of language, their ability to make personal connections with teachers and peers, and their own resiliency during this period of uncertainty, which were all central to personal narratives. In this study, resiliency is the “ability to overcome challenges of all kinds—trauma, tragedy, personal crisis—and bounce back stronger, wiser, and more personally powerful (Henderson, 2012). Finally, the findings shed light on how a digital storytelling project can facilitate student meaning making regarding transmigration, and the strengths of such an approach.

**Participants make sense of their move.** Participants in this project demonstrated an understanding of the circumstances regarding their move in different ways. I will share five examples that elucidate this awareness.

In Margaret's script, she shared certain details about leaving Haiti and moving to Boston but ultimately withheld much of what she experienced. She expressed how she had loved her life in Haiti and that, at some unknown point, "My father told me that I would come to Boston, so I talked with myself about what would become of my life, my school, and I thought about everything that I would need to do." The reader of her story is left wondering about what that entailed for her. In the very next sentence of her script, she reflected on how she felt when she first arrived in Boston. She then went on to describe her life upon arrival as a "little bit good, and a little bad because people spoke English and I didn't understand what they were saying." Margaret seemed to be a keenly interested in engaging in the project. Therefore, I can easily imagine how difficult it must have been for her to adjust to a new country, with limited opportunity to use the only language she knew at that time, Haitian Creole.

In the interview guide, Margaret revealed that her father alone was the one to inform her (Figure 19). I was left wondering why her father and mother together did not explain how they would move, and whether there were other siblings or relatives present.



*Figure 16.* Street in Haiti. Open access image found on the Internet.

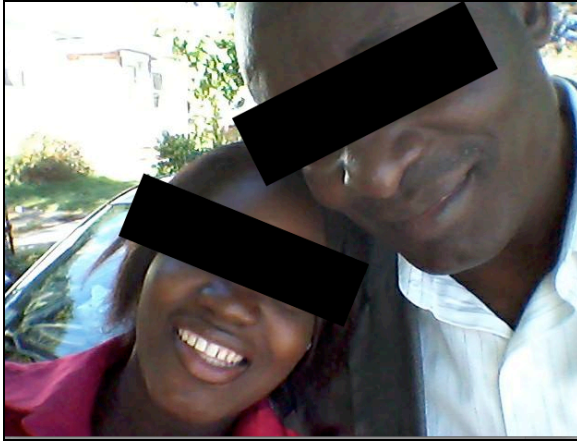


*Figure 17.* Classroom in Haiti. Open access image found on the Internet.



*Figure 18.* Margaret feels confused. Open access image found on the Internet.





*Figure 19.* Margaret and her father. Reprinted with permission.

Figures 16 and 17 were found on the Internet and used to convey Margaret's former life in Haiti, while Margaret provided Figures 18 and 19 to convey how she felt when she first arrived (Figure 18) and how she felt at the time of the study (Figure 19). Margaret gave no indication of how much advance notice she had before leaving Haiti, so the reader has no idea how long her family had to prepare. She also did not share if her entire family was able to stay together during the transition period. Ultimately, Margaret kept the circumstances surrounding her move vague in her story.

Steven, on the other hand, spoke candidly in his digital story about how hard it was for him to part with his mother upon his move. This was one of the aspects of Steven's script that stood out during the study. Regarding his life with his mother in Haiti, he wrote the following in his script:

She was a special mother. At that time [in Haiti], she always took me by her side. Everything that she needed to do was for me. It then seemed that things abruptly began to change. One day, my father called me. He said, "Steven, we are going to go to another country." I asked, "In how many months?" He said, "In one year." I

said, “Wow! That’s so far away!” Then, after my father left us I began to be sad because I saw that I would leave my special mom.

Steven did not mention where his father was living at that time; however, I got the sense that they were not living together, nor were they in touch that often that this point. At an undetermined time later, Steven explained that his father returned to his house and informed him that “we will go to another country in one month,” and in order to get ready to move, Steven’s “mother began to buy [him] clothes, and buy [him] everything [he] needed to go to Boston.” In Steven’s case, we know that he had time to prepare to say goodbye to his mother, though we do not know why his mother was unable to join them in the move, nor do we know if there are any plans for the mother to move to Boston to join the family. Steven did not mention in the digital story if he had siblings or other family members, so the extent that his family is separated from one another is unclear. It seems to me that there is more to his family dynamic, but he only chose to share the details above in his story.

Steven used a calendar (Figure 20) to demonstrate the time that passed from when he was initially told of the move to the move itself. Steven also added pictures of a high school in Boston (Figure 21), a picture of a high school classroom (Figure 22), and a picture of a Haitian Creole-English phrasebook (Figure 23) to represent the major aspects of his sense-making in relation to his move.

2012

JANUARY							FEBRUARY							MARCH							APRIL						
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15	16	17	18	19	20	21	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31					26	27	28	29				25	26	27	28	29	30	31	29	30					
MAY							JUNE							JULY							AUGUST						
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27	28	29	30	31			24	25	26	27	28	29	30	29	30	31					26	27	28	29	30	31	
SEPTEMBER							OCTOBER							NOVEMBER							DECEMBER						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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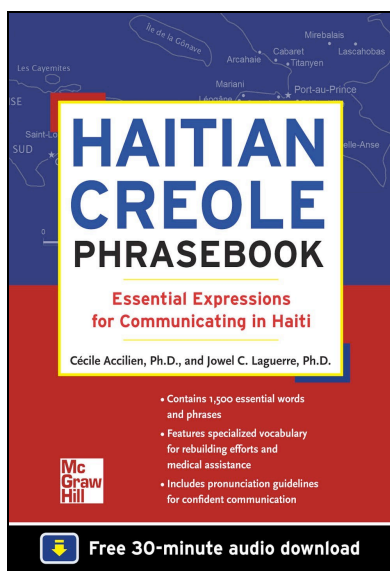
Figure 20. Calendar. Open access image found on the Internet.



Figure 21. High school. Open access image found on the Internet.



Figure 22. High school classroom. Open access image found on the Internet.



*Figure 23. Dictionary. Open access image found on the Internet.*

Steven’s scripts and corresponding visual images were compelling and, moreover, were representative of the way he wanted to share his understanding of his move. Although he did not provide all the logistics regarding his transmigration experiences during the interview portion of the sessions, Steven nevertheless shared his greatest concern regarding his move, separation from his mother.

Jacqueline also left out some information about how much she understood about the move before it happened. At the beginning of her script she talked about how she lived with her parents in Haiti and explained that they were both involved in her education. To represent these details, Jacqueline found an image of a classroom (Figure 24) and a house (Figure 25) in Haiti.



*Figure 24. Classroom in Haiti. Open access image found on the Internet.*



*Figure 25. House in Haiti. Open access image found on the Internet.*

Jacqueline wrote about whom she lived with at the time of the study but did not account for other family members. She revealed, “I moved to Boston with my older brother and we live with my mom and other brother. We left together from Haiti. It was in January 2013 when we arrived in New York. I felt strange because I saw how different it looked, like I came to live in another world.” Jacqueline did not share when she found

out she was leaving Haiti, nor do we know how much notice she had before leaving.

Sarah incorporated Figures 26, 27, and 28 to elucidate her script.



*Figure 26.* Airplane. Open access image found on the Internet.



*Figure 27.* Boston skyline. Open access image found on the Internet.





*Figure 28.* High school. Open access image found on the Internet.

Jacqueline did not expound on what happened to her father, either. I was left wondering when he became separated from the family and if there were any plans to reunite. Considering that they had lived together in Haiti, it would seem like a major adjustment within her family to become a female-headed household, let alone living without her father in an unfamiliar place. I was left wanting to know more about how she faced these difficult changes.

One part of Sarah's script that stood out was the way she described her family and how they would spend their time back in Haiti.

I lived with my mother, brother, and cousins [in Haiti]. I had other family members close to where I live. My old neighborhood was tranquil, peaceful, and quiet and I still have family in Haiti. Every Sunday, we always went to church. Sometimes I went to the supermarket. For vacation, I used to go to Jacmel with my mom. We always went to see my grandfather grow vegetables on his farm. Now I talk to my family by telephone and sometimes we write to each other on Facebook.

Sarah found figures 29 and 30 on the Internet, while she provided Figures 31 and 32. These images capture her fond memories of life in Haiti, where she had both immediate and extended family nearby to support her. Regarding her life after the move, she chose not to go into detail about whom she lives with now and whom she left behind. She explained, “I live with my father and my little brother on Nelson St.,” but she did not elaborate on why her mother and other family members did not go with her, nor did she discuss any plans for reunification. As with others, Sarah’s mother was never far from her thoughts. She explained, “Even though I live [with] my father, I never stop think[ing] of my mom because I miss her presence.” Moving with her father and brother made Sarah the woman of her house. In conversations, Sarah mentioned that her father expects her to make him and her brother dinner and that laundry responsibilities fall to her as well. This change would have a tremendous impact on any teenage girl, but compounding this adjustment with migration, all while having to learn academic English and other content areas as a high school student, would take a toll on anyone.

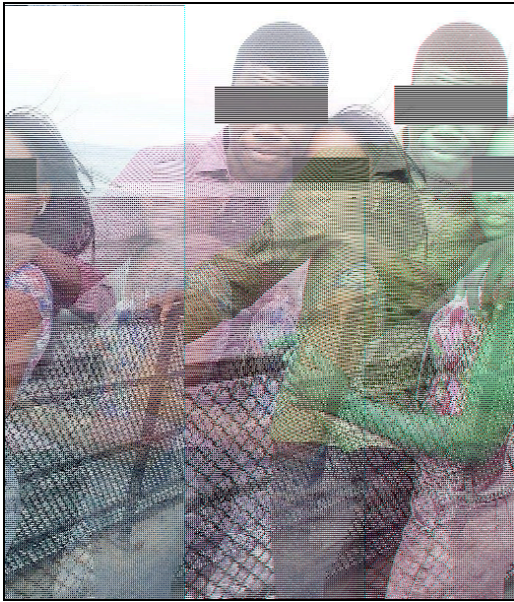


*Figure 29.* Farm in Jacmel. Open access image found on the Internet.





*Figure 30.* Children in Haiti. Open access image found on the Internet.



*Figure 31.* Sarah and her brother. Reprinted with permission.



*Figure 32. Sarah cooking. Reprinted with permission.*

In Diane's script, she explained her understanding of her move with the following: "I knew that I was coming to the U.S. but I did not know exactly where I was going to reside—either in New York or Boston." Diane selected the images in Figures 33 and 34 as a juxtaposition. "I moved by myself when I was traveling," she revealed. "I was separated from my mother, aunts, cousins, and friends." In Boston, at the time of the study, she lived with her aunt and cousins. During one session, Diane discussed how her father was the one who initiated the move for her, though she was critical of him. She blamed her father for not having a good enough plan that would keep her family together. Diane was adamant that if he had planned the move better, she would not have been separated from immediate family members. Her father was living in Miami at the time of the project, though she did not say why they were separated in the U.S., what he was doing there, how often they speak, or if there were any plans to reunite with other members of her family. Her mother was still in Haiti, but Diane did not indicate why she stayed behind or if she would join Diane or her father in the U.S.



*Figure 33.* New York. Open access image found on the Internet.



*Figure 34.* Boston. Open access image found on the Internet.

Participants made sense of their move in various ways. Some chose to reveal personal details, while others were vague about what they knew about their moves and when they knew it. Margaret did not seem to know much about her move before it happened, nor did she share much about the circumstances of her move. Steven was clear with his audience that his father had taken him away from his mother and that he knew his separation from her was going to be hard for him, but he did not provide any information as to why his mother did not join them or if any reunification plans had been discussed. Jacqueline explained that her move meant she would live apart from her father, though she also did not disclose if they had any plans to reunite. When Sarah

arrived in Boston, she became the female head of the household, though she did not express how that made her feel. She also did not say whether she would be able to live with her mother at any point in the near future. Diane explained that, at the time of the project, she was living with extended family, which seemed adequate for her, but she expressed blame toward her father for separating her family at the outset of her migration.

As participants made sense of their move, some cross-cutting themes emerged. There was a change in roles within families for all of the participants, and there was separation and loss for all of them as well. The change in roles within families pertained to gender, moving from extended families to partial nuclear families, and transitioning from a two-parent household to a single parent home. When Sarah left Port-au-Prince, her mother stayed behind. This meant that she became the head female in her house. She spoke of the domestic responsibilities that entailed, cooking and cleaning, and also missing her mom. Many other participants had their extended families nearby and they had the ability to visit with them often. They spoke fondly of having this freedom during our discussions. Steven's change in family dynamics meant that he did not have any women / maternal figure in his household.

Separation and loss existed in some form for all of the participants. Diane had to live with her aunt and cousins in Boston, while her father stayed in Miami with his new family and her mother remained behind in Haiti. Tonya lost her beloved mother and had to adjust to life without her in unfamiliar surroundings. Steven's separation was emotionally hard on him, as he shared in his digital story. Others lost the ability to feel the support and connection to their extended families. They try to utilize technology, to

the extent that it is possible, but Skype cannot take the place of stopping by one's grandmother's house for a home-cooked meal.

**First impressions of school.** When immigrants arrive in the United States, they undergo a “lack of access to the language, daily knowledge and common practices, and necessary skills of the mainstream society” (Rong & Preissle, 1998, p. 83). The lack of “cultural groundedness” they experience permeates every aspect of their lives. Even the simplest tasks can become “onerous and forbidding when background knowledge and familiarity are absent” (Goodwin, 2002, p. 164). While the above holds true for all immigrants, children are thrust into their new settings, including school, and will be keenly aware that their new surroundings are different from home. Participants were able to recall some chance encounters that made them feel at ease, as well as some challenging times they went through upon arrival, as they reflected on the types of initial interactions they experienced at school, such as any special supports or introductions. Some participants described chance encounters with peers of Haitian descent who made some of the participants feel welcomed in their new schools. Participants shared how they spent their time when they began school. Some recalled having the opportunity to be more social than others, depending on who their initial contacts were. Overall, there was a range to how welcomed participants felt upon arrival.

Margaret recalled when she started school, September 2013. In her script, she revealed that she had no idea what was going on at the beginning. When she “was lost, she felt afraid and her eyes filled with tears. I went to the cafeteria. Students were walking around getting their food, but I didn't know what to do, what to say. I didn't have any idea.” This scenario would no doubt be challenging for a new student in any

high school setting. However, considering the kind of language barrier Margaret faced upon arrival, an unfamiliar protocol such as getting one's lunch, and anyone would be overwhelmed without any assistance. This is one example of a participant being faced with the hidden curriculum. Margaret explained that in order to make her feel welcomed, one teacher emphasized to the students that everyone was equal. "He did not like when students laughed at each other". Margaret was really struck by this idea that all students were the same. Even though she recalled the initial pain she felt in an unfamiliar school setting, the hurt feelings diminished when a teacher put things in perspective. I wanted to know more about how Margaret mastered school routines, such as her schedule and finding her way around the building, but I think that her cafeteria example highlighted her feeling of isolation due to unfamiliarity with the dominant language and culture.

Tonya recalled feeling "depressed [the first few days at school] because I sat by myself at the table." She gave a memorable example of an initial interaction when, two weeks after school began, she had to take the MCAS English exam. She explained:

I didn't even know what the teacher said. She gave me paper and she told me I didn't speak English because she saw me I didn't write [on] anything that she gave me. She asked "Does anyone in class speak Haitian Creole?" One student said "I do" and the teacher said, "Can you explain to her the instructions of the text?" He said, "Yes." And he explained to me in a way that I could understand what he was saying and I understood the instructions, but I still didn't know how to write the answer in English. The proctor gave me a dictionary in Haitian Creole. I cried. When I looked at my class I saw everybody had their head down. I was confused.

Tonya's initial impression of being a student in Boston Public Schools was that taking a high-stakes test is an unavoidable part of life, even for students who just arrived. Whether or not someone explained to her that her scores on these tests did not count for her or the school's adequate yearly progress (AYP) is unclear. What is certain, however, is that she was unlikely to forget that moment any time soon. When she discussed this in her digital story, one could hear the anguish she felt in that moment. She had no idea why she was forced to take that test, considering the limited extent to which she was able to produce responses in English. The last thing Tonya needed was a test to reinforce what she already knew well, that she barely knew any English when she arrived.

When reflecting on these isolated moments, Tonya maintained that her transmigration experiences were "really a struggle because you come to another country and you don't speak English." Considering all that she had been through, this did not come as a surprise. Paying attention to and participating in developmentally appropriate lessons is cognitively demanding enough for any newcomer. However, trying to engage with the format of a standardized test and read through large amounts of text that one can barely comprehend is educationally irresponsible. It is no wonder that Tonya cried in front of her peers at the prospect of trying to access any part of the standardized test.

Steven maintained that he was the only student from Haiti at his school, though I cannot verify this. In his script, he described the beginning of his school experience:

When I moved to Boston, I didn't know anything very well, including the language. But one of my cousins, who was born in Boston, helped me ... When I went to my school, I was very unhappy because my friends were back in Haiti.

The second day, the director from my school took me. She began to talk to me. At

the same time, I didn't understand anything because I didn't know how to speak English. Then I was the only Haitian in the school. My teacher took me to the library to translate English from Haitian Creole. At that time I began to talk to my teachers. My English teacher gave me a dictionary to study some words, not only to study, but to learn them. When I needed to talk to somebody, when I needed something. From that dictionary I began to talk.

Steven selected Figure 35 from the Internet to convey some of his feelings about these school experiences after his move.



*Figure 35.* “Steven” working with his director. Open access image found on the Internet.

Steven possessed a great deal of pride in his ability to acquire academic English. His self-discipline and determination were two of his greatest strengths. What was very apparent about Steven was that he did not need a core group of friends who had been through what he had been through and who spoke his language to make him feel included. Instead, Steven needed validation that he was an intelligent young man capable of learning a new language. Steadfastly independent, Steven achieved great satisfaction from his academic, social, and linguistic gains. In addition, my impression of Steven's start as a high school student in Boston was that he was willing and eager to capitalize on any opportunity he



was given. Regarding his education, he expressed that he intends to make the most of what is available to him and in the future will hold that same attitude about his career.

Jacqueline started school in Boston in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. She waited nearly two months before beginning school because no one was available to help her with the registration process. Her mother did not speak English well enough to help, and her older brother had to work, which made her feel helpless. She spent her days at home until she was able to form a plan. She described other ideas about beginning school:

I asked my older brother to help me find a school but he said he didn't have time because he has to go to school and after that he had to go to work. He told me to find someone else to help me. I was so sad. Then I asked a friend of my mom to help me to find out where I could register for school.

After two months of waiting around, her mother's friend took her to the school to register.

Upon starting school, Jacqueline revealed that she sat next to her younger brother in the cafeteria. She did not seem to struggle with the same level of isolation as others because her brother was going through the same type of adjustment. Jacqueline was the only participant who had a sibling with whom to experience and share this major transition. However, she did not mention making friends at the beginning of school, and I wondered if that was because she did not feel a pressing need to get to know her classmates, who, she maintained, knew she was Haitian but did not know anything about her language and culture.

The start of school in Boston was not easy for Sarah. She felt "lonely and sad" because she "was thinking about [her] mom and friends." The newness of the

surroundings—physical, cultural, and linguistic—was challenging. Sarah recalled her first impressions of school in the following way:

I didn't understand anything and did not feel welcomed. I tried to find someone to translate for me. When she finished helping me, she showed me where I was supposed to go. When I entered the class, everyone looked at me. I was very shy and [felt] strange.... At lunch, I didn't eat because I didn't like the smell of the food... After the class ended, I had a girl come up to me and talked, everyday she stayed with me. In three days, I had two girls try to hurt me. They said bad words in English to me because they knew I didn't speak it. I wasn't afraid [though] because I knew they were Haitian.

Teachers may make an incorrect assumption that all students of a particular background will support and help newcomers if and when they can. This simply is not the case at all. Sarah's example shows that simply because people are from the same place, or their families are from the same place, does not make someone more likely to extend some kindness to a stranger. Potential tensions exist between different generations of immigrants and teachers need to be prepared to mediate this, to the extent that it impacts the classroom community as a whole. In my own teaching experience, second or third generation students can and will flat out refuse to translate or otherwise support a newcomer, for no other reason than because they do not want to be involved. Teacher preparation also needs to include this type of depth about diversity issues.

Sarah had the good fortune of meeting and befriending a Haitian student. It did not take her long before her and this classmate would travel home together at the end of the school day. Her start to school, though, had its challenges as well. Not long after

enrolling in her school, she faced conflict with two students. Though she did not say what caused this problem for her, or what her perception of the cause of the problem was, she maintained that she was not fearful of these young women.

When reflecting on her start of school, Sarah shared some advice. To help newcomers in their transition, schools, she asserted, “should welcome [new] students ... by being patient with the students because people have had different experiences.”

Although she did not provide concrete ways in which schools could exhibit patience, I believe Sarah was referring to having to rush from class to class with little understanding of her schedule or the rationale behind it. Since schools in Haiti tend to keep students in one classroom while teachers travel from room to room throughout the day, this would have been an enormous change. In addition, not knowing about the various services available to students of Boston Public Schools upon starting school also left her in the dark about potential ways to have eased her transition.

Diane’s aunt was able to assist her with the registration process for entering Boston Public Schools, which made her ability to start school much easier. Despite this, though, it took her approximately five months to begin school. This was the longest time out of school of any of the participants. She arrived in Boston in April but did not begin her academic pursuits until September. She described feeling “strange, sad, lonely because it was the beginning of a new life.” Diane indicated that she never received any school tour. She asked one of the Haitian students to help her around, but not often, because she wanted to try to speak English. In her first class, Diane introduced herself to the teachers and sat down. She recalled feeling “weird, alone, depressed, and want[ing] to cry.” She recounted in her script that she “was thinking of a lot of things like when I was

in my country, my friends that I had, the school that I used to go to, and the teachers I had. I felt like everything had changed and it seemed like I was dreaming.” Despite how much time she had to acclimate to her life in Boston—living with her aunt and cousins, getting to know her new neighborhood—starting school was a major transition for her nonetheless.

Starting a new school, even the same school for some of the participants, was a unique experience for each of the students. Margaret was lost and afraid but then befriended Haitian students. Her teacher’s kind words mattered a great deal to her and instilled the notion that everyone was “equal.” Tonya had a difficult start to school. While still learning her way around, she had to take an MCAS exam, which caused her so much stress that she cried in front of her peers. Steven expressed how focused and determined he felt, right from the beginning of school, to learn English. Jacqueline was not able to register for school for two months, but once she did, her younger brother was also at her school, relieving some of the anxiety around her transition. Diane spent her first five months at home. She struggled to be independent but wanted to learn her way around. She made friends who were Haitian from the start at her new school.

Participants each had their own unique experience when they began school, however, there were also some commonalities between what they went through as well. Teachers played a significant role in how the participants integrated socially. In Margaret’s case, one of her teachers emphasized that everyone was equal. Despite dealing with aspects of the hidden curriculum, this teacher’s kind words helped her to feel welcomed. One cross-cutting theme is that even the simple things teachers say can leave a lasting impression, positively or negatively, on students, which impacts the

degree to which they perceive they belong. For Tonya, it was nearly impossible for her to perceive that her teacher thought she belonged. Having to take a high-stakes exam while everything still felt unfamiliar, gave her the impression that her academic and emotional needs were not as important as her peers’.

The importance of camaraderie was another cross-cutting theme, and embedded in this theme is the use of the English language. Jacqueline started school with her brother and did not express any isolation. They could sit and talk together when they had free time. Theirs was unlike the situation that many other participants faced. Margaret shared how alone she felt and how that feeling was exacerbated by not knowing her schedule or way around her school in the beginning. Tonya sat alone in the cafeteria and struggled emotionally to the point where she felt depressed. Similarly, Sarah sought out someone to translate for her so that she could begin to familiarize herself with her school. Some participants were fortunate and found Haitian Creole speaking staff and/ or peers to assist them when they needed it greatly.

**Participants recount their social integration experiences.** Participants had a number of ideas about what schools could do to welcome new students. These ideas centered around having extended opportunities to acquire English, unplanned moments of teachers or peers showing their genuine care and concern for new students, and participants’ own resiliency.

Sarah and Steven agreed that schools should be patient with newcomers—patient with the length of time it could take for newcomers to willingly produce oral language, acclimate to the new physical environment, and learn the new schedule, for example. When teacher preparation programs instill in their pre-service teachers that newcomers

begin schooling in the U.S. with a wide range of educational experiences, teachers may be more likely to acknowledge students' academic abilities and content knowledge, and work with them to modify subject matter to make it accessible.

Jacqueline maintained that in the one and half years since she had arrived in Boston, she was now a “part of [her] school today because when [she] first came to the U.S. there were many things that [she] didn’t know ... but now [she is] able to speak to do anything.” Reflecting further on how her academic and social life had progressed, Jacqueline asserted that she was “able to communicate clearly with [her] teachers and [other] students ... better than before” she first arrived. Jacqueline provided an image (Figure 36) in which she seems proud of what she has accomplished thus far in Boston. However, when asked with the overarching question “What do you want people to know about your transmigration experiences?” Jacqueline paused and revealed “this experience was difficult for me.” Jacqueline now feels accepted by her school community and boasts about her current language acquisition but still must acquire more proficiency before she is able to use social language to discuss a broader range of topics. Having the two and a half hours a day of beginner-level ESL classes has provided her and the other participants a daily opportunity to practice and make mistakes with peers at their ELD level in a safe space.



*Figure 36. Jacqueline and her mother. Reprinted with permission.*

Margaret and Diane, on the other hand, felt that an effort should be made to make newcomers feel comfortable. From their experiences, newcomers are lost and left alone. We also talked about the importance of having a “buddy” to show newcomers around school when they begin school, which prompted Sarah, Jacqueline, and Margaret to speak about having someone who was Haitian show them around their schools. Not one of the participants had a buddy assigned to them formally, but all except Steven confirmed that they sought out a student or teacher who looked to be Haitian in their first days at school. These unplanned encounters meant a great deal to everyone as they became acclimated to their new settings.

Margaret thought her teachers saw her as “great because they see [the] good [in her] because they care about [her].” After one year of schooling in Boston, Margaret felt that she belonged at her school because she had learned English and felt proud of herself

as a result. For Margaret, her social integration was a combination of language acquisition and caring interactions with her teachers that made a difference for her.

Regarding her own transmigration experience, Diane asserted that she wanted people to know

transmigration is a very tough experience, and it should not be minimized. People who migrate [come from a] different culture, and language, and act [differently] etc. Instead of putting immigrants down because they do not speak or get used to the new culture, [people] should lift them up for what they have been through.

She had lived in Boston long enough to have developed a perception that immigrants are viewed as having less value than the other African Americans in her neighborhood. She felt strongly that newcomers' strengths should be recognized and that immigrants had a lot to offer their communities. Diane also felt conflicted about whether or not she belonged at her new school when she first arrived. I found two differing accounts in her notebook and interview guide. First, she held that

I did not feel welcome when I arrived at my new school because I did not have any teacher or someone who guided me the first day. I had to ask people if I needed help. The feelings I had when I first went to the new school were melancholy, depression, sadness, and loneliness. To welcome students to a new school, I think schools should take the new students on a tour.

Then, at a later point, she insisted:

I felt welcomed at my new school because it felt like I had sympathy, sometimes my principal would speak Haitian Creole with some Haitian students. This was the biggest reason I felt comfortable.



Even though there was not a particular person assigned to orient Diane and ensure she knew where she needed to go, when she arrived at the school, she indicated that these dark feelings were fleeting. Her desire for independence, coupled with her self-confidence, guaranteed that she would start to find her way socially and academically at school. Diane's resiliency ensured that she would succeed in her new setting.

I take these two conflicting reports to mean that Diane had different narratives depending on how deeply she wanted to express herself. Diane's more vulnerable account fits in with others' memories of their initial arrival. Once she felt more acclimated to the structure and routines of school, she experienced an encounter with her principal that she recalled fondly.

In the interview guide, I asked participants to think about how their school experience had changed over the past two years (though not all participants had lived in Boston for two years). Diane was eager to share her response:

I felt like I was a part of the school because I went to school daily, like the other students. I made connections with the principal and teachers. I knew where all the classes were located. I graduated and obtained a high school diploma. These are the reasons I felt that I was a part of my school.

Indeed, Diane applied herself and graduated from high school:

I am most proud of earning my high school diploma. This is the biggest accomplishment of my life. I think, to become a part of American society, one should put in great effort. I attend community college [now] and am determined to work even harder than before to achieve my goals.

Diane believed in meritocracy. As someone who had only lived in Boston for three years, finishing high school was quite a feat. There are students who are born and raised in Boston, attended Boston Public Schools their entire academic career and are still unable to pass all the requirements. Only 65% of students in Boston Public Schools graduate, according to data from 2013 (the most recent available) (MA DESE, 2015). Diane acknowledged that she worked very hard to meet all the necessary requirements to graduate. Because of this, she was able to matriculate into a local Boston area community college.

Steven's thoughts of social integration differed from the other participants in that he would have preferred to make the acquaintance of other newcomers when he first arrived, not necessarily others of Haitian descent, but other newcomers in general. When asked, "Was there anything the school could have done to help students feel more welcomed?" Steven replied, "I could have had someone who could translate for me. But I don't need someone to be Haitian to explain for me. I think that's why it's no problem to do something for myself." This reveals much about the extent to which Steven held himself responsible for his own language acquisition. In a school context, Steven maintained that if the content had been comprehensible, then he could have accessed the material without any Haitian Creole.

To the question "How do you think your teachers see you after you have lived in Boston for 2-3 years?" Steven had an interesting response. He held that "when [I] was in their class a long time, they change[d] the way they talk[ed] to me over time." Steven saw that his relationship with teachers grew after they had gotten to know more of one

another, and also that they saw him differently. I had hoped he would go into more detail about the exact changes he was referring to, but he did not.

Tonya also responded positively to this question. She said that her teachers made her “feel important in [her] new school. They talk[ed] to [her] very slowly to [help her] understand what they said.” In the one year Tonya had been a student at her school, she felt that she could “go to the main office to ask questions and participate [in] everything.” These were the two anecdotes about forming a relationship with a particular teacher. Each one caused the participant to change how they felt about a teacher in a positive way.

Sarah exhibited perseverance as she adjusted to living in Boston. She reported, I can talk to people I want to [now], even though sometimes I am shy. But, I can try my best because it is very different from the first time I came to Boston. Now I go to the supermarket to buy what I want and go to the store by myself. Day by day, I have started to understand more English. I go to summer school [and] every Friday I go somewhere different. When I get lost I can ask someone for help.

In Tonya’s script, there was not a hint of her feeling badly for herself regarding all the changes she had experienced. Tonya’s resilience got her through these challenging periods in her life. In fact, she expressed pride in the progress she had made. She recognized that her ability to meet her own needs, such as purchasing groceries in a supermarket, was once daunting but has become manageable. Sarah also noted that her feeling of being lost was not something that overwhelmed her, either. In Figure 37, Sarah is exploring her community with a friend. Rather than retreating inside her house, Sarah’s resilience allowed her to continue to learn about her surroundings.



*Figure 37.* Sarah in her community. Reprinted with permission.

Regarding the role that school leaders play, if it all, in social integration, participants were asked, “How did school leaders make you feel welcome?” Participants had no experiences to recount. I asked them to pause and think about the question, but doing so did not generate a discussion about their interactions with school leaders when they first arrived; in fact, most participants noted that they did not know who their principal was when they first arrived. Instead, Diane shared a fond memory of posing for a photograph with her principal at her high school graduation. Tonya also shared a memory of being congratulated by her principal for earning good grades, though this was well after she began school. Based on these accounts, I gathered that school leaders typically do not have an active role in welcoming students to their buildings. Administrators leave these tasks to the teachers who work directly with the students. Diane has positive encounters with her principal, but that was not at the onset. Overall,

newcomers may not know who the principal is or even what the principal's name is for some time.

*American student.* Unless students are in a sheltered English immersion (SEI) program, besides during ESL class, other content areas, such as mathematics, science, and social studies, are with students in general education. Even if some of the participants were enrolled in an SEI program, they still attended specialty classes—art, music, dance, theater, or physical education—with general education students. At the very least, students spend time in the cafeteria, school bus, or in their community with the rest of the student population. (I should note, however, that how students are grouped and travel to different classes varies widely in secondary education). Therefore, I wanted to know how they would respond to the question, “What does it mean to be an ‘American student’?” Jacqueline and Tonya both held that “to be an American student is to [be] born in America.” Similarly, Steven felt that “it means that someone has to be born in America.” Sarah expressed a different sentiment: “When you go to school in America, you can become an American student.” Margaret’s experiences compelled her to respond, “I think to be an American student means to be rude because they don’t know how to speak with you and they use bad words.” Conversely, Diane argued that “to be an American student means you make yourself adapt to American culture, learn how to study, and how to act.”

Not one participant considered him or herself to be American. Half of the participants insisted that one must be born in the United States to be an American student, meaning that they believed that there was no way for them to become an American student. Sarah’s idea suggests that one can change into an American student, perhaps over time, by attending school in the U.S. Margaret’s sentiment reflects the way she had

been received and treated in her neighborhood and within her school community. There is a dense immigrant population in her section of Boston intermixed with African-Americans, who have become the dominant group during the last 40 years (as the White population left) (Seelye, 2012). Margaret was angry and felt unsettled about having to endure this type of treatment from students whom she thinks do not take their education as seriously as she does. Lastly, Diane emphasized self-discipline, expressing the notion that adapting and studying as American students do would at least give off the air of being an American student.

As a follow-up question, I asked, “What does it mean to become an American student?” and there was a consensus that in acquiring the language, one becomes a de facto American, which is precisely the hidden curriculum at work. According to Steven, “Some people think that if you speak English, you’re American.” Similarly, Sarah felt that “when you speak the language very well like American English you become an American student.” Jacqueline thought that “to become an American student I’ll work hard at learning the language to be like an American,” while Margaret maintained, “When you speak good English you can become an American student.” Though the participants had lived in the U.S. three years or less, they were convinced that being an American was equated with speaking English and in Margaret’s case, being a monolingual English speaker. By their thinking then, they will become American over time through learning the language and culture, and as Heller (1987) argues in Chapter 2, language is an instrument of identity negotiation, not simply a way to communicate ideas, which enables or restricts access to powerful social networks.

In this study, the participants measured social integration by their English acquisition, ability to make personal connections with teachers and peers, and their own resiliency during the challenging times they have experienced. The general implication for teachers is that the longer students have been in school, the better/ more comfortable they are with the English language, and the more relationships they have forged (and the quality of these relationships improves over time as well).

Overall, participants agreed that social integration takes time and that there is no set formula for feeling a sense of belonging. Jacqueline maintained that she felt like she belonged at school but still had a long way to go before the transition felt complete. Margaret advocated for schools to do more to make newcomers feel comfortable. Diane had the same sentiment but also provided conflicting reports of how welcomed she felt. Steven recognized that his teachers perceived him differently over time. He also felt that forming friendships with any newcomers, not just Haitians, was his priority. Tonya expressed how teachers assisted in her social integration by making her feel valuable to her school, which provided a sense of belonging that helped her. Sarah identified her progress and accomplishments in making her way around her community.

In terms of the role that language played, Jacqueline noted how her ability to converse in English has improved over time. Margaret credited her language skills as the reason that she had been able to establish new friendships as well. Tonya was proud of her ability to speak with school staff in general. In lieu of a formal buddy upon arrival, all the participants except for Steven sought out Haitian Creole speakers, and all of them attributed their positive feelings of social integration to being able to utilize English in social and academic settings.

All of the participants reported feeling more at ease in their school and in their communities over time. Margaret was pleased with a relationship she formed with her teacher who had expressed some pride in Margaret's progress in language learning. Steven noted how his relationship with a teacher had strengthened the longer he had been a student at that school. Tonya went so far as to say that she felt she was an important member of her school, and could speak freely with anyone in it.

Honing one's resiliency is not quite something that teacher preparation programs can train their pre-service teachers to do. However, when the participants considered what mattered in terms of making them feel integrated socially into their new learning environments many of them cited their own resiliency. Diane's independent streak ensured that she would fare well in her school, and she did. The Haitian Creole speaking staff and some friends of Haitian descent she made was an advantage of being assigned that particular high school, but she passed all of her assessments and was able to graduate in a timely manner due to her resilience. Tonya recognized how far she had come. Initially, she was put off by simple tasks, such as purchasing items at a grocery store. She did not give up on trying to master these skills, and now she is unfazed by taking care of these errands for her family. Similarly, Sarah did not care for being lost when she first arrived, but now feels comfortable trying to find her way, even if she gets a little lost when finding a new place.

**Making meaning of transmigration through digital storytelling.** Providing a space for participants to reflect and talk about what they have been through and honoring them for their willingness to share their transmigration experiences was at the heart of this digital storytelling project.



However, embedded in the DS process is deep language acquisition and meaningful practice. During the production of the story, learners must write a complete narrative, rewrite/reform the message of the narrative into a short script, speak (record) the script using accurate English, listen to the recording, judge whether or not it can be understood, and re-record the script to perfect it. Later, they choose images or video clips that are understood across cultures and audiences. (Rance-Roney, 2009, p. 29)

In planning the project, I had thought that as participants engaged in the work, they would potentially be experiencing emotions and recalling events that they might not have otherwise had the opportunity to process, at least in a structured way. However, the project also had other outcomes that have implications for research and teaching.

Participants had had little control over being uprooted and relocated; yet, through the storytelling project, they were given an opportunity to make meaning of their experiences, and in some sense, regain some control over their transmigration story. This type of project, therefore, was different from other ways of capturing students' ideas and feelings about migrating. However, considering that the participants who were involved had not spent longer than one or two years in the U.S., I am not confident that they had been in Boston long enough to fully process their emotions in regards to their transmigration experiences. At least to some extent, Tonya, Jacqueline, Margaret, and Sarah were still working through some of the more challenging aspects of their experiences. All of them, in one way or another, chose to leave something out of their

narrative or rather shape their narrative without including certain details they had shared in our sessions.

On the evaluation form, participants were asked three questions pertaining to the methodology of the study (see Table 6). Specifically, they were asked to complete three sentence starters related to their experience with the digital storytelling project; that is, they were left to interpret an applicable response. The first question asked participants to summarize their experience participating in the project. The next question asked participants to name a reason why participating in the project was enjoyable. The third question asked participants to elicit an emotion regarding how they felt about discussing their move from their home country to Boston.

Table 6

## Participants Thoughts on Understanding Transmigration through Digital Storytelling

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Question</b>		
	<b>1. “Overall, the digital story project was...”</b>	<b>2. “I liked participating in the digital story project because...”</b>	<b>3. “Talking about moving from Haiti to Boston is...”</b>
Sarah	“so good for me.”	“it was really great for me, I enjoyed myself, when I talked about my whole life.”	“a good thing because you remind people how was your life.”
Margaret	“great.”	“I learn more something I didn’t know was going on.”	“little bad and little great. People can know more about you.”
Diane	“great because I had the opportunity to talk about my journey to America.”	“I got to hear different stories from each person.”	“very difficult and bad because when talking about it I could remember the moments where I was moving.”
Tonya	“good.”	“they help me to get more experience.”	“great they portage (?) our ideas.” (i.e. convey, in French)
Jacqueline	“great because I started to know how to create iMovie. I didn’t know about that before.”	“it help me with my English to improve it more.”	“was helping me reminder how my life was in Haiti.”
Steven	“very perfect because for the first time I thought it’s gonna be difficult.”	“I like to getting ideas from other people.”	“very easy because you was the only one who got through everything the passed to Haiti.”

These responses represented strong examples of the types of ideas I was trying to elicit from the participants. Sarah and Jacqueline’s responses were similar; their ideas are all positive in nature, and there is no indication that the move or subsequent changes had been challenging for them. Margaret expressed that she enjoyed the project despite the

sensitive nature of some of the topics. I believed her ideas were respected and well-received by others, even when opinions differed. Diane's answers showcased her desire to share parts of her life with others. She loved talking to people and getting to know more about them. Even when talking about her transmigration journey caused her discomfort, she enjoyed participating in the process.

Tonya did not give us a full picture of how she felt about participating in this project or that she had experienced a life-changing loss, her mother's passing. This is consistent with Tonya's inclination to hold back expressions of emotion much of the time during our sessions. After an intense three weeks, Tonya's feedback was warm and reassuring to read.

Ms. Elizabeth - I think it was a good project because I learned a lot and have a lot of fun. I would say this project gonna stay the rest of my life. I learned so, so much everything [such as] how to use computer and [you] pushed us to speak English.

It was not always easy to tell how Tonya was feeling about participating in the project; she seemed quite stoic at times. Her comment points to the ways that digital storytelling work with ELLs can have additional benefits, such as skill development in language and technology.

Steven's ideas were a somewhat dissimilar from the others. He admitted to making an assumption at the information session that the project would be a challenge that he felt daunted by at the outset. However, his reservations dissipated once the project began. He was also engaged throughout the project and enjoyed the process of

assembling the digital story, particularly when he got to share aspects about himself that we would not have known otherwise.

Regarding the development of photography skills, all but one participant agreed that this project presented an opportunity to learn how to take better pictures. In an age of smartphones, tablets, laptops, and countless forms of social media to participate in, participants enjoyed taking pictures and getting feedback from the group. Sarah was the only participant who indicated that her photography skills did not improve during the project. As she explained, “I didn’t have time to take pictures,” so she relied on images found on the Internet. Diane noted that her photography skills “improved a little” “because I have made my own video and I have used IM Creator so I did not really think my ability to photograph improved a lot.” Despite Diane’s self-reflection, she received positive reviews of her pictures, either ones that she had taken or ones that she found using Google image. Margaret declared that her photography skills “improved a lot” because “I know a lot of things.” Margaret’s ability to search and select images improved a great deal during the project. Tonya’s photography skills “improved a lot” “because I didn’t know how to take a photo in the MacBook”; yet, by the time the project ended, she did. Jacqueline specifically addressed the technology aspect of gaining photography skills, maintaining that “it help[ed] me know how to make folders and I [could] do any research,” which is beneficial in any area of academics. Steven benefitted in a practical way. He felt that “because I know how to make my [posture] to make a picture” that his ability to take a picture had “improved a lot.”

In their self-evaluations, I also wanted to know what participants thought of their ability to make a digital story. Participants felt they successfully engaged in the work; all

but one categorized their ability as having “improved a lot.” Diane explained that her prior experiences using computers and software meant that she was only able to “improve a little.” Sarah had thought that “because I explained so much about my life,” she had learned a great deal about digital story making. Margaret expressed her sense of accomplishment in her response: “I know how to make it.” Tonya was thinking long term when she chose her answer. She described herself as “really excited to know that it [is going to] stay the rest of my [life], all I learn[ed].” Jacqueline simply stated that her ability to create a digital story “improved a lot” “because now I know how to make a digital story because of that project,” and Steven shared a similar sentiment: “I know how to make it from a computer.”

Other outcomes of teaching ELLs through digital stories, such as language development, technological skill development, opportunity to tell their stories, meeting as a Haitian student community with shared and unique experiences, have implications for research and teaching. As the participants expressed in Table 6, they were all pleased to be involved in the project, though their reasons varied. Some challenged themselves to use more English, while others felt the highlight was getting to collaborate with other former newcomers who are also Haitian. The participants were supportive of one another. For teenagers and young adults, sharing personal information can feel risky. It can take a great deal of trust before it happens. Their parallel journeys were difficult to put into words for them at points, for numerous reasons, but the bond that was created through doing so was invaluable to creating a cohesive group. They listened to each other with understanding and sympathy, having left Haiti around the same time, settling in the same community, and enrolling in the same public school system. They did not need to use

their imagination to comprehend what the others had experienced. The implication is that the more teachers get to know their students, the more they can make connections to their students' lives in a genuine way. Teachers who capture students' interest by using digital stories would be able to link content matter to aspects of students' lives. Students' sense of belonging and motivation to be part of their school community would increase, as their affective filter is lowered.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter reexamined the research questions of the study. Upon examining the data, I discussed how former newcomer ELLs made meaning of their transmigration experience and adjustment process in their new academic and social life in Boston. Drawing from the work participants produced during the project as well as our digitally recorded sessions, I interpreted the cross-cutting themes, such as how language's central importance to the transmigration and social integration experiences of newcomers.

Participants made sense of their move by either describing how their move changed or disrupted their family dynamics, or by explaining how leaving Haiti and coming to Boston caused separation and loss for them, which was also a finding of M. Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco's (1993) research of immigrant youth that was discussed in Chapter 2. Many of the participants came to Boston with only one parent, which meant they had to adapt to a new and unfamiliar way of life without one of the most important people to them. Family separation was a theme that emerged, leaving some of the participants as the female head of household. Some participants learned of their move beforehand, while others only seemed to know of this major change as it was happening.

Forthrightness was shown when we discussed how participants felt about their experiences in their high schools when they first started. They noted how it was a difficult transition for all of them – there were tears, they got lost, and some yearned for independence. Some sat alone in the cafeteria at first, while others were challenged by having to follow a bell schedule without much guidance. Lacking the ability to use English, participants expressed the isolation they felt from their school community as a whole. With their identities in flux, participants were forced to negotiate how to engage cognitively in their new academic setting (Nyati-Ramahobo, 2006). Befriending students of Haitian descent and having the opportunity to clarify their questions in Haitian Creole made the transition smoother for everyone but Steven, as this convenience was not available to him. Registering for school was an issue for Jacqueline and Diane, who did not begin school for two months and five months respectively upon arrival. Listening to their experiences, it became clear that schools, and school districts, could do much more to provide students with specific language supports when they first enroll, as newcomers have basic questions and wonderings that go unanswered.

Participants' recollections of their initial interactions starting school told of some trying dealings and some happenstance moments that gave them reassurance as well. No one received a school tour formally or informally, but many recounted making the acquaintance of a Haitian Creole speaking "buddy" to answer their questions and point out locations of classrooms and other essential spots they needed to know. The consensus was that nothing formal was done to make them feel welcome, and some explicitly advocated for the need for that to change. On the other hand, some participants expressed how fortunate they felt to find a Haitian Creole speaking peer by some chance



interaction. Similarly, teachers made positive and lasting impressions on some participants through memorable encounters that made participants feel that they mattered to these role models.

Overall, participants recognized how much had changed for them since they arrived. They expressed varying degrees of pride regarding the extent to which they have integrated socially in their schools. They all acknowledged that it took time to adjust during these major transitions, and many could cite teachers as having a direct hand in helping to ease some of the isolation that was described. Margaret was pleased to credit everyone around her “Each month that passed, I realized that I knew how to say more words in English. My father helped me. My friends helped me. My teachers helped me. I feel proud of myself.” Over time, the participants categorized themselves as students who fit in with the culture of their high schools, and reflexively now refer to themselves as students, per Stets and Burke’s (2000) identity theory. Even though everyone could name ways in which they have integrated, exploring this topic left me wondering how they each will grow and adapt further. There was no doubt though, the amount of English they had acquired directly correlated with the extent to which they felt integrated into their schools.

Resiliency was also a trait that existed within many of the participants. They were all late-entry high school students who started in low-level ESL classes. Theirs was an uphill battle, however, they each could cite instances where they made a choice to not give up on themselves.

Making a digital story is unlike any other type of research. The participants immersed themselves in the process of the project, and through rich discussions and

drafting a script, they were able to make meaning of their transmigration experiences. The data that I collected could not have been yielded through surveys, or by analyzing student test scores. Additional outcomes of utilizing digital storytelling in a content area include: language development, technological skill development, the opportunity to tell their stories, and meeting as a Haitian student community with shared and unique experiences. As individuals, each participant went through their own transmigration journey, and thus, made meaning of what they went through in their own way. Everyone expressed the positive ways in which the project impacted him or her, and were proud of their ability to see the project through till its end. Teachers can implement this type of project work, modifying the work expectations for each group. Students can take this tailored assignment and produce work at their individualized level of understanding the content.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION

#### **Introduction / Summary of the Study**

In this qualitative interpretive study, I explored how former newcomer ELLs in BPS made sense of their transmigration experiences through a digital storytelling project. Newcomers are students who have moved within the last year to the U.S. and represent a range of educational, linguistic, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. I worked with former newcomers because I wanted to learn their perspectives on the numerous transitions they made after living in the U.S. for approximately one to three years.

Newcomer ELLs have additional needs that go beyond the needs that U.S.-born, monolingual and ELL students have. In addition, Boston's foreign-born population has increased at a faster pace than Massachusetts and the U.S. Thus, my topic is timely and worthy of exploration. In 1990, 20% of the city's total population was foreign-born, compared to 27% in 2010. Furthermore, Boston has 41,000 Haitian-born immigrants, with Haitians comprising the second largest share of immigrants in Boston, which has increased since the devastating January 2010 earthquake. Fostering a successful educational experience for Haitian children is a particularly well-timed issue of concern in the major metropolitan area of Boston, where Haitians largely settle. Thus, the rationale for my study is that the immigrant student population in BPS is rising, and teachers must be prepared to meet newcomers' specific social needs.

Teachers and administrators, whose collective history impacts their professional careers, must meet students where they are academically, and effectively work together to get them to grade-level as quickly as possible. However, teachers and administrators must understand the role of students' home culture and language in learning, and draw from these strengths, in order to form meaningful relationships.

Social integration, and how students experience it, is a major aspect of this study. It is the degree to which immigrants are interacting positively with U.S.-born peers and the school community as a whole, which involves the welcoming and inclusion of newcomer students into the school community. Research holds that school influences students' lives in a unique way, as it becomes instrumental in defining one's overall sense of community. Social integration, and not academic achievement, is a stronger predictor for how students will fare in their education (Marcus & Sanders-Reio, 2001).

Set in a community center in Boston, this study drew on ethnographic methods to examine the transmigration experiences of former newcomer students and explored how those experiences impacted their adjustment. Rather than examining the effectiveness of a particular program at one school, students shared their unique educational experiences in their home country of Haiti, and in different academic programs in BPS. Therefore, my study filled a gap on transmigration experiences in the context of an English-only education. Massachusetts was an excellent site to examine students' transmigration experiences, with BPS having the largest concentration of ELLs in the Commonwealth.

The questions my study set out to uncover were: (1) How do students understand the circumstances around their transmigration? (2) What types of initial interactions do students recall having in their schools? (3) How do students make sense of social

integration in their schools in the context of an English-only education? (4) How can a digital storytelling project using Photovoice facilitate student meaning-making of their transmigration experiences?

I used a combination of methods: interviews, participant observations, photography, digital storytelling and analysis of student work to learn about students' circumstances surrounding their move, including with whom students moved and what advance notice they were given, feelings regarding reception upon arrival, and social integration at school. Some of the artifacts that I analyzed for themes include: lesson plans for each session, memos of interactions with peers and myself, drafts of a script that captured participants' perceptions and experiences. Themes emerged and the data I presented were rich in description.

As I managed my data, I strove for it to be both high-quality and accessible to other practitioners who wish to facilitate a similar digital storytelling project in the future, by thoroughly documenting the sessions with participants, and later by recording how I analyzed students' work. Participants' perspectives were presented both as individual quotes and through crosscutting themes.

Validity was established through corroborated evidence. Participants' ideas were verified and I encouraged them to verify others' thinking as well. Credibility was established by the work I did with the participants over a period of time and by being embedded in the context of the project.

To date, little work has been done on former newcomer ELLs' transmigration experiences at the high school level, particularly from the perspectives of the students themselves, as well as in a setting where districts are restricted in the type of

methodologies employed. Adding to the body of immigration literature on how newcomers fare, I propose future directions of research on how pre-service teachers and administrators can enhance their professional practice and be prepared to meet ELLs' needs in their new setting.

### **Authenticity Criteria Revisited**

Guba and Lincoln (1989) developed authenticity criteria to address specific issues that can emerge when utilizing a constructivist paradigm. I will reflect on how the following criteria were used in this study: fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, catalytic authenticity, and tactical authenticity.

**Fairness.** Fairness occurred when individual participants discussed what they knew about their own experiences naturally. In terms of this study, all of the participants had an equal opportunity to tell their stories. During our whole group discussions, everyone was able to share their viewpoints, be understood, and understand others. We all listened respectfully as participants took turns explaining aspects of their transmigration experiences. Participants reaffirmed what others were saying and added on to others' ideas, or asked relevant questions.

**Ontological authenticity.** During our whole group discussions, the interview questions were semi-structured. The conversations involving the participants and myself were more meaningful with the potential questions and their order determined beforehand, as it was the appropriate amount of structure without feeling locked into a set agenda. Participants could see in writing what topics were going to arise and what the specific questions were. As participants shared their ideas, I gave time and space for us to explore particular aspects of their transmigration journeys in more depth. The ontological

authenticity of this study, the enhanced position of self, occurred when participants were able to understand their situation in a more informed way through participating in the project. Participants indicated that by engaging in the topics—circumstances around their move, initial interactions upon arrival, and social integration—they were able to reflect on their experiences with a fresh perspective as some time had passed and some distance could be put between the participants and their experiences. This allowed them to understand what they had been through in a deeper way.

**Educative authenticity.** By facilitating this project, I gained an enhanced awareness of the position of others. Both the participants and I were able to understand the situations of other participants in more informed ways. Before this project began, I had a sense of how emotional and intense engaging in this work could be, but it was not until I was responsible for overseeing each aspect of this project and for participants' ability to thrive while engaging in it that I felt myself growing as a practitioner.

Participants were put in vulnerable positions. By choosing to participate, they were opting to share information about themselves and their pasts that are personal and may be considered private. My role was to make sure that participants felt that they had a safe space to do so. I took on that aspect in earnest and learned a great deal about cultivating a positive classroom community. Participants were supportive of one another during the sessions and formed friendships that extended beyond the project. These are further examples of how they also understood their fellow participants' situations in a more informed way by engaging in the research.

**Catalytic authenticity.** Reflecting upon how the study went, I am able to evaluate the extent to which the participants gained insight into how they may change their

situation as a result of participation in the research, which is the catalytic authenticity. Facilitating this project, participants shared a range of views that they held regarding their transmigration. The fear, uncertainty, and isolation they experienced in the process rang true for everyone. However, the participants also proposed concrete ways that starting school could be a less daunting experience. Suggestions such as having a point person to field basic questions for the first week, receiving a tour, demystifying the process of using the cafeteria and who to go to with a question and for what were all ideas that were echoed to help newcomers feel welcomed. These were all areas that participants had to figure out on their own. Participants also gained greater insight into the journey of transmigration. Until they moved and started a new school, participants may not have considered the fact that many families migrate for all kinds of reasons and thus have to learn a new language and culture to thrive in a new setting. The commonalities shared in the group were powerful.

**Tactical authenticity.** Participants stated how this project meant a great deal to them and how they unexpectedly learned new things about themselves as a result. They wanted to create their digital stories to be able to speak to school leaders and teachers about the emotional impact of leaving their home country and starting over in every possible way. The act of producing a digital story inspired participants to become advocates for change, the tactical authenticity, for future newcomers. The project ended with the sentiment that they could help newcomers become acclimated with their schools since they knew what it felt like to be in that position.



## **Overall Findings**

The findings of this study can be grouped into three major areas, which all have implications for how teachers are prepared to work with newcomer ELLs in urban public schools. The three areas include (1) the process of preparation and preparedness, (2) the findings on transmigration, and (3) the findings on the utility of the digital storytelling process. These findings emerged from the various issues I encountered during the project, and were discussed in Chapters 5 and 6.

**Findings on Preparation and Preparedness.** Preparedness is a component to teaching that is essential, and one aspect of that is being able to step back and decenter or reframe the “problems” that educators face. When instructing youth in any capacity, issues may emerge that one does not anticipate. “Problems” arise and need to be addressed. Student “problems” may be due to expectations from educators, whether as part of the hidden curriculum that remains unspoken or due to a teacher’s habitus. In these moments, there is an element of decentering “problems”, which may make for a more successful educational experience for the students.

As discussed in the second chapter, the hidden curriculum is the implicit teaching of social and economic norms and expectations to students in schools. It also refers to how schools transmit unstated, embedded norms, values and beliefs to students through the unspoken rules that comprise the routines and social relationships in school and classrooms (Giroux, 2001, as cited in Apple, 2004). While Benjamin Franklin is not attributed to the hidden curriculum in any traditional sense, his beliefs that the purpose of schooling was to “Americanize” and prepare children to function in a democratic society,

meant that the hidden curriculum is not hidden (Apple & King, 2004). Rather, it is the overt institutional role of schools to perpetuate dominant culture values.

Habitus, on the other hand, directly impacts teachers' ability to relate to their students. Due to a teacher's own early socialization experiences, "ways of looking, sitting, standing, keeping silent, or even of speaking" are loaded with powerful restrictions that are hard to resist precisely because they are subtle, persistent, and shrewd (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 51). Instead of blaming immigrant youth for their own problems—difficulties learning at grade level, challenges with behavioral norms at school—educators must pause and ask themselves when this occurs to what extent they are contributing to this issue being a "problem."

In my study, I expected several things from the participants. I wanted them to fill the envelopes I provided them. I expected them to have higher levels of social language in English. I had also hoped that the participants would immerse themselves in original script writing, which did not happen. Regarding each one of these "problems", I found myself surprised to be met with something different from what I expected. Immediately after each of these occurred, I placed the "problem" squarely with the participants themselves. However, over time, my thinking shifted and I reframed these issues as instances to learn from in order for the teaching and learning process to proceed.

The findings on preparation and preparedness is comprised of five themes. The first theme notes that as teachers prepare to facilitate their students' learning, assumptions and bias can influence their instruction. This theme surfaced when the project began. I made an assumption, which was that the participants would be able to fill envelopes with their artifacts. Save for a few pictures from Diane, Tonya, and Sarah, the envelopes

largely went unused. I had assumed all immigrants would bring some sentimental objects with them when leaving their home country. That was not the case for half of the participants in this project.

According to the findings, pre-service teachers may benefit from engaging in thoughtful and critical discussions in their programs, regarding how their assumptions and biases will impact every facet of their careers. As seen in the second chapter, Lowenstein (2009) reasoned that teacher candidates are bridges between the cultures of school and home and drawing from relevant cultural elements is essential to creating an environment that fosters academic excellence and cultural integrity. The way teachers plan lessons, develop assessments, grade tests, converse formally and informally with students may all be impacted. If teachers' assumptions and biases remain unchecked, it may be to the detriment of their students. Teacher preparation programs may need to raise the importance of this issue, and spend some time unpacking some of the assumptions and biases related to working with immigrant students, second language learners, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, or other biases that educators from dominant culture and middle-class backgrounds may possess.

The second theme came up when students used their laptops. Cultural assumptions regarding the student-teacher relationship vis-à-vis the hidden curriculum caught me off guard as the facilitator of the project. Kentli (2009) described some aspects of the hidden curriculum in action as “trying, completing work, keeping busy” (p. 87). I modeled for the participants how to resolve the issues that they kept having, and orally provided the language they could use to describe the challenges they encountered, which as Sheets (2005) explained, perpetuates the dominant culture. For this reason, I had

assumed that since the participants ranged from 17–20 years old, they would have elected to bring to my attention that they needed individual support when using their laptops. In the case of this study, more one-on-one time was required than I had allotted during the sessions. Students' perceptions of academic/classroom expectations around receiving help, or students own personal qualities may prevent them from initiating help from their teachers. Teachers may need to know that students, no matter the age, may not always make teachers aware of when they need help with something. For ELLs, behaviors congruent to the hidden curriculum may be obtuse and troublesome because norms in home cultures may vary greatly from norms they must conform with at school in order to be successful (Kentli, 2009). The implication is that teachers may need to be aware of students' needs and may benefit from training regarding the variety of ways that they can provide assistance to students in a supportive manner that is inclusive of diverse learning styles.

Thirdly, I struggled with the theme of perceiving external pressures/ standards. Participants' use of Haitian Creole was an issue. Participants opted to use their first language to clarify tasks and ask questions amongst each other over speaking in their second language, English. Research holds that students learn best, and construct meaning, when they are able to utilize their dominant language (Cummins, 2006). However, I needed to comprehend students' ideas when I played back our recorded sessions. Therefore, I felt pressured to encourage students to use as much English as they could produce orally. I was not prepared with a bilingual / biliterate teaching assistant that would have allowed participants to code-switch freely, and would have been congruent with C. Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco's (2001) work on the intersection of identity

and language use (as discussed in Chapter 2). Language education—in this case the acquisition of academic English—should not lead to the eradication of a student’s native language along with the transformation of his or her identity. According to the findings, rather than viewing language from a deficit perspective, schools may need to value language as a resource, and the primary language should be utilized as such. Instead, I encouraged them to use as much English as they could, which may have limited the extent to which they could express their ideas. To offset my own linguistic deficits in Haitian Creole, I reverted to the dominant paradigm of English-only. I needed to meet the requirements of a dissertation, with a set timeline in which to conduct the study. For this reason, I emphasized a practice, using English-only, despite how I knew that participants’ ability to produce language was still developing. This approach went against my teacher preparation and personal beliefs about learning.

The fourth theme I explored was participants’ omissions from their digital stories. Another example of an incorrect assumption I made was that I did not expect participants to share their ideas orally, yet not include them in their digital stories. However, all the participants, in one way or another, chose to leave something out that they had shared with the group. I assumed that if they talked about a memory in our sessions, they would be willing to put it in their digital stories, but that was not the case. All the participants, in one way or another, chose to leave something out that would have given viewers of their digital stories more insight into their journeys. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the school setting, perhaps more than any other social institution, is an environment in which many of the issues that first- and second-generation immigrants face are played out (M. Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1993). Teachers may need to be aware that some immigrant

students may opt not to share personal details, including details that are significant to who they are, or their identity.

Before some students open up about their past, they may need trust to be established. Students may also come from cultures where teachers are thought of solely as a disciplinarian and authority on content, not as someone who connects with students' emotionally. The findings of this study suggest that pre-service teachers may need to learn that by strengthening the rapport with all of their students, they will feel a deeper sense of belonging at school, and in their classrooms (Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007). Marcus and Sanders-Reio (2001) found that students who feel valued and recognized for their strengths may be more likely to work with teachers and administrators in a bidirectional adjustment process as they adapt to new circumstances at school. In addition, students who felt they had teachers who were supportive and caring were less likely to drop out of school.

When the participants initially brought up the earthquake and described it as the event that changed everything about their lives, it was a major "moment" in the project regarding the distinction between preparation and preparedness. I had assumed that the earthquake had impacted all of their lives in some way, but was not prepared for the collective reaction. The momentum of the session came to a halt. Participants became upset and guarded at the thought of Steven raising the topic of how all of their lives had changed due to the earthquake. Tonya instantly put her head down and began to cry. The emotional presence I had with my participants was significant enough to let Tonya know that her feelings and reactions towards the earthquake that took her mother were validated. Ripski, LoCasale, and Decker (2011) hold that the interactive nature of

teaching is such that dispositional characteristics, traits that make a person more inclined to behave in a particular way, such as openness or with worry or sadness, may impact the way in which a teacher is able to meaningfully interact with students. The participants and I had not known each other for long, but they saw that any reaction they had towards the earthquake would be respected and honored. These powerful findings illuminate the profound importance of schools having well-established welcoming practices and well-trained staff who can facilitate a smooth transition at a daunting time for students.

The fifth theme drew from evidence that participants treated the project like an assignment they had to complete for a grade in school. Despite meeting in a community center during the summer, and creatively making a short movie, participants may have wanted to complete the tasks as if it was for a grade in school. I had tried to shift the momentum of the work and have participants try to reflect on the particular aspects of transmigration that they wanted others to understand, but participants were satisfied using the interview guide as a formula in which to tell their stories. I realized that the structure I provided for brainstorming ideas to include in one's script became a de facto script for participants that thwarted their ability to creatively share their transmigration experiences. According to the findings, when planning their lessons, teachers may need to consider that their students are not going to enthusiastically embrace each assignment, project, or assessment. Yet, teachers are still responsible for making content accessible and having students master specific standards within a specific time. Teachers may need to be aware of and may benefit from planning assignments with students' diverse learning styles in mind, in order to keep students engaged.

**Findings on Transmigration.** Findings on Transmigration is the next area, and contains five themes that have implications for teacher preparation programs to consider as they train the next generation of teachers. First, how participants make sense of their move is discussed, followed by participants' first impressions of school. Next, I recount participants' social integration experiences, as they perceived them. Next is teachers' preparation in the sociopolitical or situational context of their students. Lastly, trauma is a theme, and it surfaces in various ways in schools.

Participants made sense of their move in a number of ways. As the population of children in immigrant families has grown by almost 50% in the past 20 years, nearly seven times faster than the population of children of U.S.-born parents, it is vital for educators to understand how such a huge transition can impact students (Passel, 2011). Some were more open than others about what they went through, and how it impacted them emotionally, while others provided only few details about what they knew regarding the details surrounding their move. Some crosscutting themes surfaced during this process. Each participant had a change in roles within families, and separation and loss occurred for all of them as well. Participants changed roles within their families as they pertained to gender. They also had to adjust from having extended family members nearby to living with partial nuclear families. Participants also transitioned from living in a two-parent household to a single parent home. Participants expressed the toll of losing their extended families nearby. They enjoyed getting to see them regularly. To compensate for the separation and loss they felt, many of the participants utilize technology, though they maintained that phone calls or social media does not replace the



ease of stopping by one's cousin's or grandmother's house for a quick visit or home-cooked meal.

Participants' experiences starting school were similar and also unique to one another. Some participants felt scared, lost, both figuratively and literally, and struggled to be independent, as supported by Vertovec's (1999) research in Chapter 2 of this study. Yet, one participant recalled how focused and determined he felt. Participants expressed some commonalities that capture significant events or interactions that occurred when they began school in Boston. The role of teachers and peers were key for minimizing the anxiety initially felt by the participants. The implication is that even the simple things teachers say may leave a lasting impression, positively or negatively, on students, which may impact the degree to which they perceive they belong.

Camaraderie was also a crosscutting theme, and embedded in this theme is the use of the English language. Most participants expressed isolation at a certain point in the beginning. However, nearly all of the participants were fortunate to find Haitian Creole speaking staff and/or peers to help them when they were in need of it. Notwithstanding, teachers are 88% to 90% European-American middle class, two-thirds are women, and less than 5% claim fluency in a language other than English (Terrill & Mark, 2000). As we saw in Chapter 1, few teachers have recent immigrant backgrounds, which can explain why it is often difficult for teachers to understand and appreciate the history, experiences, and culturally learned behaviors of immigrant students (Nicolas, DeSilva, & Rabenstein, 2009). However, five of the six participants were placed in schools with Haitian Creole-speaking staff and peers. Despite not having a formal practice of welcoming newcomers, there were ample chance interactions that were to the

participants' benefit in these school settings.

After participants revealed how they felt when schooling began, I asked them to share their thoughts and ideas on their social integration, the third theme. Measured by the amount of English they had acquired, participants' ability to make personal connections with teachers and peers, and the topic of their own resiliency arose in our whole group discussions. Schools are "one of the first and most influential service systems" for newcomer ELLs, and as Kia-Keating and Ellis (2007) found in their study of school belonging and psychosocial adjustment, "a greater sense of school belonging was associated with lower depression and higher self-efficacy, regardless of the level of past exposure to adversities," and "more than a quarter of the variation in self-efficacy was explained uniquely by a sense of school belonging" (p. 29). The general implication for teachers may be that the longer students have been in school, the more comfortable they may be with the English language, and the more relationships they may have forged (positive relationships with peers and teachers are implied).

Participants maintained that social integration is a process that takes time, and language is central to this process, which is in line with the relationship between language and identity that was discussed in Chapter 2 (Canagarajah, 2005). M. A. Suarez-Orozco et al. (2011) explain how transnational displacements have interrupted the taken-for-granted cultural schemas and social practices that structure belonging and membership within in-groups or out-groups. All of the participants were able to reflect on their initial feelings and recognize that they have all grown used to the culture of their schools and feel more comfortable with their lives now than when they first arrived. This sentiment is congruent with Turner et al.'s (1987) work on social identity theory (as cited

in Stets & Burke, 2000). As the participants came to view themselves as members of their school, they reported feeling less isolated. Many of the participants credited the role that language played as the reason that they had been able to form new friendships as well. As language is intimately bound with identity, the language one uses may impact how a group views itself (Liebkind, 1999, as cited in García & Zakharia, 2010). In this study, none of the participants received a formal buddy upon arrival, and had to form relationships entirely on their own. However, the findings are such that they all attributed their positive feelings of social integration to being able to utilize English in social and academic settings.

Whether or not the participants were cognizant of it in their descriptions, what mattered in terms of making them feel integrated socially into their new learning environments was their own resiliency, as they navigated between their two worlds. Honing one's resiliency is not quite something that teacher preparation programs can train their pre-service teachers to do. However, pre-service teachers may benefit from being knowledgeable about the role resiliency plays in one's academic and emotional successes at school, and may need to be equipped with strategies to cultivate resiliency in their students.

The fourth theme that arose was that teachers, particularly in urban school districts, may need to be informed, and stay informed, of the sociopolitical or situational contexts of their students' origins. Urban districts receive more and more students from disaster and conflict-affected contexts. Teachers may need to be knowledgeable of the lifestyle and circumstances these families are leaving behind, in order to anticipate students' needs. Depending on where students are coming from, they may have gaps in

their education, or education may not be widely available to most students, or perhaps only males are educated past a certain grade.

In this study, the massive earthquake in Haiti in January 2010 spurred an influx of Haitians moving to the U.S. Initially, teachers in Boston Public Schools may not have known about the current state of Haiti before the earthquake, or the quality of life that students had before moving to Boston with members of their family. The implication is that organizations in the community and the school district may need to work together to keep teachers and administrators informed of groups who are being resettled in the area. Sociocultural consciousness will need to be developed, “an awareness that a person’s worldview is not universal but is profoundly influenced by life experiences, as mediated by a variety of factors, including race, ethnicity, gender, and social class” in order for teachers not to solely rely on their own schema to understand their students (Nieto, 1996, as cited in Villegas & Lucas, 2007). The findings suggest that teachers may need to understand the inequities that exist in society and the role they may play at the school level in giving rise to differential access to power. The department of a school district that is responsible for creating professional development for its staff may need to plan and implement sessions on where students are coming from and what their circumstances may entail, for each upcoming school year.

The fifth theme addressed is trauma. During the project, participants spoke about how school is not a place to seek emotional support. Some participants also held that during the school day, they share only the academic version of themselves. Teachers may need to be aware that some students may prefer not to share much of their identity with anyone at school. This type of student may appear disinterested in learning, or have

trouble concentrating on content. Teachers may need to hone a culturally responsive practice that is both “responsive for and capable of bringing about educational change that will make schooling more responsive to diverse groups of students” (Villegas, & Lucas, 2002, as cited in Colbert, 2010, p. 16). In the case of this study, family separation and initial language deficits weighed heavily on all of the participants. Teachers may need training to be cognizant of students who are experiencing some potential emotional turmoil and are having difficulty processing these feelings. The findings suggest that teachers may need to know what types of resources are available and who to connect students with for further support. Although trauma is manifested differently, teachers may need to prepare for ways to welcome that students and consider where students could be referred ahead of time.

**Findings on the Utility of Digital Storytelling.** The third area is an analysis of how the participants processed their transmigration in a structured way, along with additional outcomes that may impact the way teachers and students come together to instruct and learn, as well as how research may be conducted via creating digital stories. As a pedagogical process, digital storytelling was shown to be an effective tool for working with newcomer ELLs, both as a means to facilitate meaning making and give significance to their transmigration experiences, as well as to support language development. Student voice was exercised, as participants had the ability to determine aspects of their products. As a multi-layered concept, voice encompasses both ability and participation (Richardson, 2001). The findings of this study suggest that teachers may also utilize digital storytelling as a way to better understand the circumstances of students’ transmigration and thus how better to support them.

By utilizing digital storytelling, I was able to explore the ELL participants' orality and non-print literacy, which DeCapua and Marshall (2011) describe as small group discussion, oral storytelling, tying in relevant use of visuals, in combination with participants' print and technological literacy (Porter, 2013). This method was an appropriate way to capture participants' ideas as it combines aspects of their culture and background with the challenge of meeting the standards put forth in the rubric I used.

In my own classroom, I have used video projects to pique students' interests in their own oral language development. For example, students practiced short plays for a portion of our class time and at the end of the week I recorded their role playing. Students put in a great deal of effort to articulate and emote their lines in English, applying their student voice (Johnson, 1991). When we viewed their work, they were able to critique their own progress on their oral language production. This non-traditional approach to enhancing oral language allowed me to draw from students' home cultures, as students chose the short plays we worked on and the options were representative of the cultures where students originated. I learned from these experiences as a teacher to Level 1 and 2 ELD students that bringing technology into academic language development, as well as empowering students by allowing them to make choices that impact their learning, motivates and engages students in ways that textbooks and workbooks alone cannot.

As participants engaged in their work, I anticipated that difficult emotions may surface as they recalled events. I was also cognizant of how some of the participants may not have had an opportunity to process these emotions yet, at least in a structured setting. The findings suggest that when used in schools, digital storytelling may provide a way for ELL students to share their cultural experiences and transmigration journeys in a safe

setting, and it also allows ELL students to gain confidence in their language production skills, writing and speaking (Porter, 2013; Alrubail, 2015). Culturally relevant pedagogy, when utilized by teachers, gives them a way to learn who their students are and what their core values are by “affirming their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools perpetuate” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 204). This study showed that when creating a digital story, students may benefit from being able to edit their experiences and ideas in a short timeframe in a genre that provides a creative space for students to explore language. In addition, the project had other outcomes that have implications for research and teaching ELLs.

Language development, technological skill development, opportunity to tell their stories, and meeting as a Haitian student community with shared and unique experiences all benefitted the participants in this study. The data showed that some participants challenged themselves to use more English, while others held that a highlight for them was getting to collaborate with Haitians. They demonstrated a great deal of empathy towards each other. The findings suggest that teachers may benefit from taking the time to get to know each of their students and become knowledgeable about their strengths as individuals and learners in order to make authentic connections with them. By utilizing digital stories in the classroom, students may be able to learn content matter as they engage in a creative approach to mastering standards.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that community centers in urban areas, such as the one where I did my study, may be able to organize and implement digital story projects with great success. Being completely removed from the high-stakes testing environment, community centers have the autonomy and resources to recruit students

during after school hours, intersessions, and summer breaks. Students may be able to strengthen their voices in their own work by immersing themselves in a topic of their choosing and then interpreting the visual images that they believe best tell their stories.

### **Implications for practice, policy, and research of teacher preparation programs and school districts**

The findings suggest that systems and structures of how pre-service teachers learn to teach may need an overhaul that will ensure fledgling teachers are prepared to educate the immigrant students who arrive in their classrooms. A systemic change may be necessary in the way pre-service teachers are educated, mentored, and become certified in their teacher preparation programs. My experience mirrors the current understanding of how pre-service teachers are trained to educate culturally and linguistically diverse students. I enrolled in the one required course that addressed diversity in my program. For the duration of that semester, I engaged with such authors' work as Gloria Ladson-Billings, and Jean Anyon, among others, and had to demonstrate competency of why their thinking is relevant and vital in classrooms. However, I did not have to connect culturally relevant pedagogy or how learning intersects with race, social class, and educational policy, in any other course, whether in assignments or during class discussions at any other point in the program. Demonstrating an awareness of immigrant students' unique needs was not required whatsoever.

Yet, Zion, Allen, and Jean (2015) hold that pre-service teachers need to “engage in explicit conversations and teaching about power, privilege, and systems of oppression in course and internship experiences, throughout teacher training programs, induction, and professional learning” (p. 931). The opportunity to explore these ideas may need to



be embedded in all aspects of the program, rather than the “one multicultural education course” model that exists (and meets the requirement) of many programs. To this point, Goodwin (2002) argues

at a time when the country needs to be the most generous toward and welcoming of immigrants, and when teachers need to be the most open-minded and well prepared to work with them, sentiments expressed by many American tax payers appear to be quite the opposite (Crawford, 1998), and conversations about teacher preparation seem to be silent when it comes to teaching immigrant children. (p. 158)

As I stated in Chapter 2, the number of immigrant students has increased significantly, by almost 50% in the past 20 years, and immigrant students are projected to be one-third of the more than 100 million U.S. children by the year 2050 (Passel, 2011). When this is combined with how researchers maintain that teacher preparation programs are failing to prepare pre-service teachers with the training they need to support immigrant students’ academic and linguistic needs, immediate change may be necessary. This study suggests a number of ways to implement change, which are divided into the following three categories – Language, Teacher and District Preparation and Preparedness, and Changes in Practice.

**Language.** Teacher preparation programs may need to revamp and reprioritize the way they instruct pre-service teachers to utilize language in the classroom. The findings of this study show that pre-service teachers may not be prepared with the knowledge of how second languages are acquired, and are only familiar with some theorists’ names and ideas. The findings suggest that teachers may benefit from utilizing

students' first languages, regardless of whether or not teachers themselves are proficient in them. Lastly, teachers may benefit from being proficient in a second language, both to be able to engage with students and families and to be able to understand the cognitive demands necessary to learn a second language.

As this study demonstrated, for any student to be able to integrate socially in a new school setting, language is an essential component. Regardless of one's prior educational history or the reasons that students had to immigrate, when students arrive, they are going to need support, and social integration fosters "persistence in schooling" as well as contributes to positive feelings connected to school (Langenkamp, 2009). I recommend that language acquisition theories and research regarding current cultural and linguistic diversity practices may need to be embedded in each course and in each assignment required of pre-service teachers. Research indicates that the ways in which newcomers adapt academically and socially to their lives in their new country may determine their educational attainment, which is linked to upward mobility in the U.S. (Nicolas, DeSilva, & Rabenstein, 2009).

Masters of education programs design their course loads to meet state requirements, although the course names and some of the content may differ depending on the program. Regardless, gone are the days that teachers may be able to begin their careers with one required diversity course that will meet all learners' needs, with little mention of immigrants, at that. Course work regarding diversity may have been too general and undifferentiated up until now. If this change were to occur, children's bilingualism may no longer be a "scapegoat for poor academic achievement," as pre-service teachers may have learned the practices they may need to apply when instructing

second language learners (Goodwin, 2002, p. 168). The findings show that pre-service teachers may benefit from being able to begin their careers with the knowledge that students who migrate from another country have additional needs.

Newcomers who have never had any instruction in English may not be able to connect the content the teacher is explaining in class, with content that they may have had in their home country, without some explicit scaffolding of the content in English, and some direct translation of the tasks the student is expected to perform. Gozdziaik and Martin (2005) had found that immigrant learners who are not proficient in English cannot fully represent themselves in an English-dominant society (as discussed in Chapter 2). As was seen in this study as well, the participants relied on direct translation from their peers to perform basic tasks, and this was not a high-stakes environment. In an academic setting, it may be essential that students' language preferences be honored. When policies mandate that schools deny children's skills in their home language/s, they deny the cognitive and academic competence already available through those languages, thus denying the identity and self-respect of the children themselves (Baker, 2006; Piller, 2014). Therefore, the findings suggest that additive bilingual skills may need to be applied when instructing newcomers. During one's practicum, the supervisor may be able to give specific feedback on how student teachers utilized the students' home languages in their lessons. For example, students may be able to draft their writing assignments in their first languages and workshop with peers and their teacher to produce their work in English. Practicum coordinators may be able to share best instructional practices that pertain to honing these skills that immigrant students and/or low-level English language learners need their teachers to possess.

Teachers attaining a proficiency in a second language may need to be a requirement, according to this study's findings. This recommendation would be a tremendous shift as Young, Madsen, and Young (2010) describe the U.S. teaching force as being largely monolingual. Given the rise of culturally and linguistically diverse students, a monolingual and monocultural teaching staff may make it exceedingly difficult to foster an inclusive school community. Having staff that were Haitian Creole-speaking made all the difference to the participants in this study in terms of how welcomed they felt as they settled into their new schools. Therefore, part of a teacher candidates' preparation may be to hone all four-language functions – listening, speaking, reading, and writing – in a language that is in demand for a school district. In the process of acquiring a second language, teachers may also develop a sense of empathy for what their students go through upon arrival. Teachers may have gained firsthand experiences of humbly making mistakes or seeking clarification of basic tasks in the second language. The difference, however, is that students do not choose to leave their home countries, or learn a new language as they adapt to a new culture, while teacher candidates have chosen to enter the profession.

**Teacher and District Preparation and Preparedness.** My study revealed that there is more to being a teacher to newcomers than meeting all of the university and state requirements to become certified. The research I conducted demonstrated that there are other things at play, such as how teachers learn to engage with their students, in addition to meeting their academic and linguistic needs. The findings suggest that teachers may need support in developing capacities for preparedness. This may require longer

practicums. Educating immigrant students may need to be differentiated from culturally and linguistically diverse students who were born in the U.S. Lastly, pre-service teachers may need to know about current and recent events and sociopolitical movements in the world, and how that can and will impact the student populations of their district.

During a speech at Teachers College of Columbia University, Secretary of Education Duncan (2009) held “by almost any standard, many, if not most, of the nation’s 1,450 schools, colleges, and departments of education are doing a mediocre job of preparing teachers or the realities of the 21st century classroom. America’s university-based teacher preparation programs need revolutionary change.” Even when teacher candidates earn highly qualified status, research indicates that many do not feel ready for the challenges they face.

For this reason, I propose that teacher candidates may need to have a residency where the demands and challenges on them increase over time, as pre-service teachers learn how to manage their students and hone interpersonal skills, and create lessons and assessments by using data to advance student learning (Knowles, 2013). Practicums should be an entire year, not one semester, to confront assumptions while being mentored by both a lead teacher and a practicum supervisor. If pre-service teachers hope to gain employment in an urban school district upon graduation, then their field placement must also be representative of the urban student population they hope to teach. As I saw in this study, it took participants time to warm up to their peers and me. Everyone was on their “best behavior” for the first half of the three-week project. The intense pace of the sessions meant that we became comfortable around each other, but nevertheless it took time. It is only after the honeymoon period of the first few weeks that pre-service

teachers may be able to experience the weight of responsibility of managing a class, which may only come from gaining an increased amount of duties over the course of an entire school year.

To this end, teacher preparation programs may also need to unpack why the “color-blind” approach may be damaging and unfair for immigrant students.

U.S.-born children of color who may also speak home languages other than English may share similar experiences with immigrant children, such as discrimination, racism, inequity, and exoticization, yet immigrants and their offspring bring experiences and issues to schools that are unique and deserve close analysis and understanding. These issues must become part of the teacher education curriculum and dialogue if teachers are to be adequately prepared to teach students who are immigrants. (Goodwin, 2002, p. 162)

Although both immigrant children and children who are second or third (or fourth or fifth) generation may be dominant in a language other than English, their needs are not the same. U.S.-born children may be more adept at navigating the school culture, while immigrant students may need the hidden curriculum made more explicit. On the flip side, immigrant students may enter school with content knowledge that exceeds their grade level, or without any prior academic experiences at all, depending on several factors, while ELLs may have been exposed to the content, yet if it was not scaffolded, it may have been only mildly attainable.

Lastly, pre-service teachers may need to have a component added to their preparation program where they learn about current events. Specifically, pre-service

teachers may benefit from coursework, or a standalone course, that hones in on areas of conflict and disaster around the world, and sociopolitical movements as they pertain to migration. Teachers in the U.S. may need to learn about the groups of people involved in the conflict, as well as the roots of the conflict and how they are impacted by the unrest, with emphasis on groups who are working with relief organizations to be placed around the Boston area. This information may be valuable for educators when these families are able to migrate to the U.S.

As seen in the process of this study, despite my extensive experience and formal training as an ESL instructor and the lengths I went to in preparing for the details of the project, there were particularities of being unprepared. The issues that arose during the process of working with the participants on this digital storytelling project may shed some light on how teachers who work with newcomer ELLs in urban public schools may be simultaneously prepared and unprepared to undertake the work.

**Changes in Practice.** As seen in this study, schools and community centers are each vital stakeholders in integrating immigrant students, and both play a role in welcoming and supporting them. The findings suggest a number of ways for this to be done. Districts need to place newcomers in language-specific SEI or SIFE programs (if they exist) instead of multilingual strands of SEI or SIFE. Immigrant students need to have a dedicated safe space within a school. School culture needs to be inclusive of all the students. Teachers need to explicitly address customs, manners, and expectations related to the hidden curriculum. Finally, community centers are vital spaces in immigrant students' neighborhoods that already exist and this study showed that immigrant students benefit from utilizing their offerings of various enrichment activities.

This study showed that districts may need to be more mindful in how they place newcomers in its schools. Most of the Haitian newcomers in this study were placed in school communities with large numbers of Haitian peers and Haitian Creole-speaking staff. However, not all of them were. To the extent possible, all newcomers from a cultural and linguistic background representative of an SEI or SIFE program in Boston may need to be placed in schools with existing SEI and SIFE programs specializing in their first language. School leaders and those in central office who determine school budgets need to work together to ensure that spaces are available and exist in these programs for newcomers as they come throughout the year. This study showed how new students were positively impacted by chance interactions with Haitian Creole-speaking peers and a guidance counselor who could speak to students in their native language. Rather than being assigned to any available program for ELLs, which contains newcomers from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, the placement of Haitian students needs to specifically be in one of the schools where a community of Haitians is already present.

As the participants expressed in this study, they felt alone and unsure of where to go and who to talk to when they first arrived. Therefore, it is possible that immigrant students would benefit from a dedicated space, such as a large office or classroom, as a zone where they could go to socialize, share concerns, and gather information (Lasso & Soto, 2005). They may also benefit from having time built into the school day to be able to go to this space, potentially during a specialty class or lunch. Students may benefit from being able to communicate in their own language, which may counter any potential feelings of isolation. The alienation felt by the participants in this study upon arrival may



have been mitigated if such a space existed. Newcomers could have their questions answered as they arise, instead of feeling overwhelmed about something. Participants in this study noted how scared and alone they felt in the first few days and weeks. Having a safe space to connect with others and receive information when they needed it would have helped them a great deal.

The findings in this study also showed that a school culture, which celebrates diversity and practices inclusiveness may benefit all students. Providing newcomers with a ‘buddy’, an immigrant student who has been at the school approximately three years and is aware of a newcomer’s initial needs, may potentially reinforce two ideas. For the student who had been there three years, he or she may feel recognized as a vital school member. For the newcomer, he or she may feel inspired by the progress the ‘buddy’ has made. In many of the digital stories, participants spoke of how chance interactions of Haitian Creole-speaking peers meant a great deal to them. Research also supports this finding. Newcomers value personal connections when they first arrive (Ladd, 2000, as cited in Marcus & Sanders-Reio, 2001). Participants felt vulnerable and did not know anyone. Being assigned a ‘buddy’ as an official sounding board may have made a difference. Instead, some had to risk further exposure by soliciting help from passersby at their schools.

The hidden curriculum may need to be explicitly taught to immigrant students. The needs of immigrant students, given their uneven educational backgrounds and that they start school upon arrival at different points during the academic year, may require teachers to shift the way they think about students and plan instruction (Goodwin, 2002). Customs, such as raising one’s hand and asking for permission before leaving a

classroom, must be modeled and made clear, or else newcomers cannot be held responsible for violating these practices. Teacher preparation programs may need to foster these standard practices to help new teachers, regardless of grade level, to develop the skills, dispositions, and sensibilities, which may make immigrant students feel welcomed. Even students who are at grade level or higher than students in their classes may be unfamiliar with the norms regarding how to interact and participate with their peers and classmates (Goodwin, 2002). General education students may be able to assist with this shift in practice. The findings in this study showed that the participants did not want to draw attention to themselves unnecessarily when they first arrived. They struggled to learn the routines and may have benefitted if they had teachers who were aware of how to convey aspects of the hidden curriculum before it became an issue for the participants.

Community centers may also play a vital role in integrating immigrant youth into their new neighborhoods. In a less formal setting than their schools, community centers offer social support while providing public information and other services. For students who are newcomers, such as how the participants in this study were, supplementing their academic days with enrichment activities may serve to reinforce the academic language they need to learn outside of the high-stakes environment. Community centers have the freedom to use nontraditional methods to engage students, such as digital storytelling projects, that may be organized and implemented alongside other activities such as cooking or learning a musical instrument. The finding show that allowing students an opportunity to collaborate and share their collective experiences and personal narratives

strengthen the cultural and linguistic diversity of the entire community, as it fosters a sense of togetherness among immigrants.

As was shown in the study, there are benefits of digital storytelling for ELLs. Three major ones include: communication, critical thinking and creativity, and writing (Alrubail, 2015). Participants were able to practice expressing an experience or idea, and how they felt about it, in a genre that was quite unlike academic writing. They got to immerse themselves in developing a narrative by using family photographs, found images, and the tone of their voice, to convey how they felt about certain events. Participants also refined their ability to think critically about each aspect of their lives that they wanted to include, or exclude, from their digital stories. There were many choices they had to make, which allowed them to improve their ability to reflect. Participants also made many creative decisions throughout the process. They determined the order they wanted to tell their story, prioritized certain events over others, selected how long each image displayed, chose quotes from their script to display on a slide as they read that portion aloud, and other many choices for them to show their digital creativity.

Finally, writing is a task that can be overwhelming for ELLs. Through the process of writing one's script, participants' affective filters became lowered through sharing their work and getting feedback from it during our sessions. My work at the community center spoke to this. Immigrant students who speak first languages other than English may require more than instruction, they may learn best from teachers who will be their advocates, and protect them from practices and policies that do not have their best interest in mind.

## **Future Research**

In this study, I collected data and analyzed students' perspectives. Future research could illuminate the experiences of teacher candidates and veteran teachers to learn how they perceive preparedness in regards to newcomer integration and race. Through interviews and group discussions, teachers themselves can give voice to the roadblocks that currently exist at the school, district, and state level. These stakeholders can also posit what reforms they deem may be necessary to the experiences that newcomers have in their schools upon arrival. This research contributes to the body of literature, immigrant education, on the reforms that may be necessary to ensure newcomers are welcomed into their new schools, recognized for the strengths they bring, and supported emotionally during their period of social integration.

Some barriers I see to reforming students' social integration experiences include a school's budget and teachers' time. Schools lack human capital of guidance counselors and teacher educators with expertise in immigrant students' needs that can work with a manageable amount of teachers to train them to work with students to monitor their emotional stability. These trainings, designed for teachers at any stage of their careers, would emphasize that even simple acts of kindness from teachers, administrators, and newcomers' peers can make a tremendous difference regarding how welcome students feel. Though teachers and administrators have logistical and financial challenges in implementing this type of professional development, it would set a positive tone toward working on student-centered goals. Approaches such as establish student-led tours, classroom buddies, and small acts from teachers do not require any additional funding and can positively impact newcomers' social integration.

Given the significance of how Black youth experience migration to the U.S., one other area of future research may be to examine the role that race plays in this. The way that Haitian and other immigrant groups are classified, categorized, and framed in terms of race is African American, yet Haitians and African Americans are two distinctly different groups. The issue of race seldom arose during the three-week project. I put forth three ways to justify this. First, it takes time to build a rapport. The participants did not know me well enough to speak openly about how race impacted their transmigration experiences. Had we worked together longer, I believe that our conversations may have grown more candid. Secondly, participants stuck to the interview guides and nowhere on the pre-scripted questions did I ask about race. Thirdly, at the time of our project, the participants were beginner or low-intermediate level speakers of English. Spontaneous conversation was still developing for many of them. Had the participants' ability to express themselves in English been higher, perhaps they would have introduced the topic on their own. Future research may delve into the role that race played in newcomers' integration and a study may explore how newcomers from different races experience being welcomed into their schools.

### **Limitations of this Research**

While I am confident that validity and credibility have been proven, there were two limitations that impacted my study: the design of the study and the length of time participants had to reflect.

**The design of the study.** First, size was a limitation. With six participants, the study is limited in how it can be generalized. However, larger studies could be designed based on the methodology I employed, which would be manageable for a researcher if

the participants' technological skills are such that they can use the software fairly independently.

Had I had more control over some major elements of the study – recruitment (diversity of participants' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, length of time in the U.S., and English language development levels), scheduling of the sessions, and location of sessions – I would have been able to ensure a different experience for those who participated, instead of relying on the community center. I would have met in the morning with the participants, rather than after they worked with elementary-aged groups all day, so that they would feel fresh instead of later in the day when they expressed that they felt tired from their other responsibilities in the program. I also would have scheduled our group to meet in a more spacious, air-conditioned setting with Wi-Fi, to ensure that participants were able to be comfortable and have enough personal space for their notebook, laptop, photographs, etc. instead of having to keep all their materials that they were not using in their bags on the floor.

Participants and I faced challenges with communication at times. Had participants lived in Boston longer, this would not have been an issue. They would have developed enough social language to engage in a broader range of topics in English. Had the project timeline been longer, I could have also employed a language support person to the research and project work.

The study lacked diversity since everyone was from the same country, shared a similar history, and spoke the same language. However, this did allow for an in-depth study of participants' experiences and circumstances that would not have been achievable otherwise. Had the participants' cultural and linguistic backgrounds been varied, they

might have been more compelled to explain their transmigration experiences with the group, as they might have felt they needed to fully represent their home culture and language to those who may have been unfamiliar. Instead, participants described how one's story was not altogether different from another's story. There was a shared understanding, as well as a sense of community that may not have otherwise existed. In fact, they confirmed and helped each other articulate their ideas, as their journeys were parallel in many ways. This possibly left little motivation to push oneself to create a rich script to share the unique experiences of each participant.

Language skills were essential to the project, and there were many times that participants and I struggled to understand each other. As discussed earlier, the production of the digital story itself was not the goal of the project. However, Rance-Roney (2008) holds that digital stories are “vehicles through which students can practice language and showcase what they can do with it” (p. 29). (In the case of this study, the sharing of their transmigration stories was the goal). Though languages are acquired through practice and repetition in the context of a high-interest activity, I did not design language lessons per se. The sessions were geared towards students with intermediate English abilities, which left me having to further scaffold the activities and work at a slower pace than intended. This adaptation of the project meant that we did less analysis of exemplar digital stories and had fewer conversations about the arc of a compelling story, which research holds to be the essence of a digital story (Rance-Roney, 2008).

**Length of time in U.S.** The second limitation, length of time in the U.S., impacted the study greatly. Participants were recruited, as discussed in chapter 3, based on the meeting of several criteria. Participants had to have moved to Boston from another

country, have a home language other than English, and have availability to meet in July 2014 for three weeks. As discussed earlier, I had hoped to find participants who had lived in the U.S. for three to five years to ensure that they had had enough time to reflect on the changes they had experienced. Three of the participants, Jacqueline, Margaret, and Tonya, arrived in 2013, two of them came in 2012, Steven and Sarah, and Diane had been in Boston the longest, arriving in April 2011. Given the shorter periods that the participants had lived in Boston, I do not think that the participants had processed their transmigration experiences to the extent necessary to use social language on a broad range of topics. Recalling a timeline and the specific events that were paramount to moving seemed challenging to some. Margaret, Jacqueline, and Tonya still seemed to be going through the process of getting used to life in Boston and had not had the chance yet to look at things in retrospect. They had all completed one school year, but for some for some of the participants that was it.

The length of time they had lived in Boston also seemed to indicate that the narrative they created about their changes focused on specific details, rather than telling a story about their transmigration experiences. This could also partly be due to the interview guide they were given, and how literally some of them took the guide, but their experiences seemed more to be chopped up in separate components, rather than a smooth narrative that they could talk about with others. Research holds that digital stories allow ELLs to “express themselves with fewer words. Still, creating a digital story takes students through a process that is very similar to the writing process. Students have to brainstorm, plan, outline, draft, edit and share” (Alrubail, 2015, Benefits of Digital Storytelling for ELLs section, para. 5). When using digital storytelling with the



participants, I found myself explicitly making connections between writing a script to read over their images and writing for academic purposes. We discussed the need to pare down their ideas and consider the most direct way of conveying their experiences.

Along these lines, second language acquisition researchers also hold that it takes more than three years for someone to engage in a context-specific conversation about migration (Haynes, 2007). Considering that these participants were late-entry high school students who had survived a national crises, and whose education had to have been interrupted, at least temporarily, research shows that it can take anywhere from “7 to 10 years to reach the 50th percentile”, although “many of these students never reached grade-level norms” and thus age out of graduating from high school (Haynes, 2007, p. 26). Their ability to describe the narratives of their own histories in English will evolve over time. Yet, the participants were able to engage in the work required, stay committed to the project, and explain different parts of their transmigration journeys. When I scaffolded their writing with the use of sentence starters and offered one-on-one assistance with technology, they each were able to share personal aspects of their lives and explain the many changes they had experienced. With continuous support, each one of them made their own digital story.

### **Final Thoughts**

I had been thinking about the issue of social integration and its significance since I lived and taught abroad. In 2002, I worked briefly in Korea where I taught English as a foreign language (EFL) on the outskirts of the country’s third largest city, Daejeon. My neighborhood did not have any other foreigners, and it was a long taxi ride and train commute to Seoul on the weekends to see movies in English, and eat at non-Korean

restaurants. Save for a few kind acquaintances, the whole experience was very isolating. I was not forming any true friendships and felt on the outside of Korea's culture with no way in, which made me question whether or not I wanted to integrate at all.

After a few months in Daejeon, I found another position teaching EFL in Mishima, Shizuoka, Japan. Right from the beginning, I felt welcomed. My colleagues showed me around the area, the locals were friendly and encouraged me to use the Japanese I was studying. The Japanese rail system is such that I could take a local train to an express train or bullet train and be in Tokyo in just over an hour. I was able to feel self-sufficient, but also part of my community. These are some of the reasons I chose to stay in Japan for five years, as I discussed in Chapter 3.

When I think of these two experiences, juxtaposed, as an ESL teacher it motivates me to have newcomer students feel welcomed and valued from their first day of school. I knew what a big difference that made for me, and feel that all learners deserve the chance to have a 'buddy' help them out and show them how to get to classes, order lunch, and other essential matters.

Working with the participants was by far one of the most humbling experiences I have had in an educational context. After many years in the classroom, I did not expect to feel this way, particularly as our work got underway. Since I had spent one year writing my proposal to do the study and had carefully considered what I was hoping to explore and weighing out how student participants would receive the activities, this feeling came as a surprise to me. Each one of them was brave and steadfast in their own way and I learned invaluable lessons as both a researcher and teacher. I took my roles quite seriously and the vulnerability I felt as the project got underway was unmistakable. I did

not want to make any errors in the way I introduced the project, nor did I want them to feel frustrated when I realized that their English proficiency levels were lower than I had anticipated. I wanted to take steps necessary to ensure that they would feel as comfortable as could be taking a risk, however small, to be a participant. They allowed me to ask them personal questions. Despite the language difficulties, they opened up about private experiences and trusted me to show and model sensitivity and compassion. After all that they had been through, I did not want to disappoint them.

The life experiences and changes each participant went through have influenced their personal identities and their identities as students. Their families have impacted how they value an education. Additionally, they were influenced by their former schooling experiences in Haiti, and the culture, values, socioeconomic status, race, and ethnicity their peers, teachers, and school leaders possess at their new school. I am grateful for the candidness and open conversations the participants and I shared. Facilitating the project has reshaped my own perceptions of being a prepared ESL teacher. For that, I am indebted to Steven, Diane, Margaret, Sarah, Jacqueline, and Tonya. They persevered in less than ideal circumstances, English-only instruction, to get their digital stories made. As a researcher | educator, I was enlightened by their determination and willingness to help others understand what the objectives were, and work with me to meet the goals of the project.

## APPENDIX A

### INFORMATION SHEET FOR CAREGIVERS

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

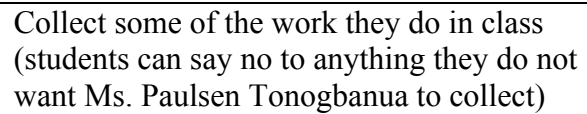
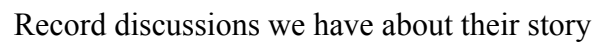
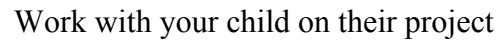
My name is Elizabeth Paulsen Tonogbanua. I want to tell you know about a study I will conduct at the XXXXXX. I am writing you:

- To describe my study
- To ask your permission to include \_\_\_\_\_ in the study

#### **Part I: Digital Storytelling Project** (all students will be taking part in this project)

	Students choose a story from their lives they would like to share with their class
	I will give them cameras to take pictures that help them tell their story
	If they want to, they can also bring in pictures from home
	I will teach them to put together their story using their pictures and their words on the computer

I am also a student at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. I am studying ways to make school better for students like yours who are learning to speak English. With your permission, I would like to include your child in my study. If you consent to this I will:





Share their digital stories with other educators

- If you agree I will change your child's name in my study and any information that identifies them. I am the only person who will know your child's true identity.
- In the US we do this for a research study to protect the privacy of individuals who choose to participate.
- This study is voluntary.

If, at any time for any reason, you decide that you do not want your child to participate, you can contact:

- Me: Ms. Paulsen Tonogbanua ([elizabethjayne.pa001@umb.edu](mailto:elizabethjayne.pa001@umb.edu)) 781-608----
- The Executive Director at the -----

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caregiver signature

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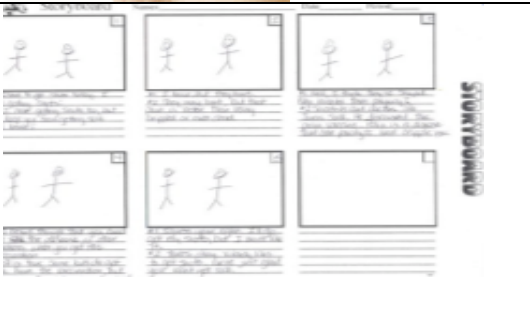
date

# DIGITAL STORYTELLING PROJECT CONSENT/ASSENT FORMS

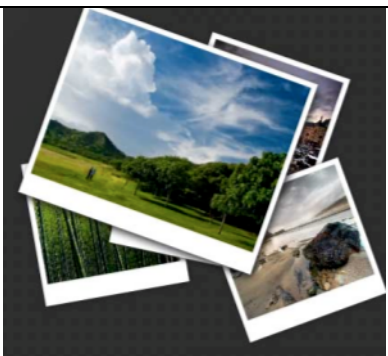
I will be creating a digital story at the XXXXXX. I will choose a topic I want to tell a story about. During this project:

	<p>I will choose a story from my life that I would like to share with the class</p>
	<p>I will take pictures to help tell my story</p>
	<p>If I want to, I can also bring in pictures from home</p>
	<p>I will put together my story using my pictures and my words on the computer</p>

Sometimes, Ms. Paulsen Tonogbanua will be joining our class for this project. I am okay if Ms. Paulsen Tonogbanua:

	<p>Works with me on my story</p>
	<p>Records discussions we have about my story</p>
	<p>Collects some of the work I do in class (I can say no if I do not want Ms. Paulsen Tonogbanua to collect everything)</p>

I can also decide:

	<p>What pictures Ms. Paulsen Tonogbanua can share</p>
---	---





If Ms. Paulsen Tonogbanua can share my digital story

If I want to stop participating at any time, I can tell:

- Ms. Paulsen Tonogbanua
- Mr. -----
- Mr. -----

\_\_\_\_\_  
caregiver signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
date

\_\_\_\_\_  
student

\_\_\_\_\_  
date

## APPENDIX B

### SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Students will develop the interview questions and ask them to each other. The following are possible questions that might be asked. They are grouped by themes / sub-research questions.

#### **How do students understand the circumstances around their move?**

- 1) Before you moved, were you attending school (in your home country)?  
If no, please skip to question 10.
- 2) When did you start to attend school (in your home country)?
- 3) How many students were in your class?
- 4) Were you in school all day?
- 5) What did you study at your old school?
- 6) What was your favorite subject in your old school?
- 7) Describe the teachers in your old school.
- 8) Describe the relationships between students and teachers in your old school.
- 9) Describe the relationships between teachers and families in your old school.
- 10) Who did you live with (in your home country)?
- 11) Where do your parents come from?
- 12) Did you have relatives and other family members close to where you lived?
- 13) Do you still have family (in your home country)?
- 14) If yes to #12, do you talk on the telephone/Skype, email, write letters to them?  
How often?
- 15) Describe your old neighborhood (in your home country)?
- 16) Did your family work with an organization to assist with the move to Boston?
- 17) How much advanced notice did you have before leaving (your home country)?
- 18) What did your family tell you about moving to Boston?
- 19) Who did you move with? Was there any separation in your family during the move? Did anyone in your family come ahead of you or stayed behind?
- 20) What language or languages do you speak with your brother and sisters?  
Grandparents? Parents?

**What types of initial interactions do students recall having in their schools?**

- (1) Describe the registration process for entering Boston Public Schools.
- (2) How did you know where to register? How long did it take before you started to attend a school?
- (3) Did you have a school tour in the first few days at your new school? If yes, who gave the tour?
- (4) Did you have a “buddy” to help you get around for the first few days and answer your questions?
  - a. If yes, who was it? Why do you think that person was chosen?
  - b. If no, why do you think you didn’t have a “buddy”? How did you figure out how to get around the school at the beginning?
- (5) Describe how the routines and class schedule was similar and different from your old school? Were there any parts of your schedule that surprised you? What were they?
- (6) What types of classroom activities did you have when you first arrived?
- (7) How did you get introduced to your teachers? (If you did.)
- (8) How did you get introduced to your principal? (If you did.)
- (9) How did you get introduced to your new classmates? (If you did.)
- (10) Describe how you spent your time in the cafeteria, during recess, and other times when you could socialize when you first arrived?
- (11) If you needed translation when you first arrived, who helped you with communicating with teachers and students?
- (12) Did you take an ESL class? What was that like?
- (13) Was there anything that could have been done to help you communicate at school? Please describe your answer.
- (14) Overall, did you feel welcomed when you arrived at your new school? Why or why not?
- (15) Looking back to when you first arrived, how did you handle adjusting to a new school? Can you give examples?
- (16) What kinds of feelings do you remember having during the first few days at your new school?
- (17) What do you think schools should do to welcome students to a new school?

**How do students make sense of social integration in their schools in the context of an English-only education?**

- (1) What (if anything) did the school leaders do to make you feel that you were an important part of your new school?
- (2) What (if anything) did the teachers do to make you feel that you were an important part of your new school?
- (3) Do you feel that you are a part of your school today? Why or why not?
- (4) What could happen at school for you to feel like you are an important part of school?
- (5) Can you describe a time at school when diversity is celebrated?
- (6) Do you think you are able to communicate clearly with teachers and students today? Why or why not?
- (7) Describe your friends at school. Are they different from the friends in your neighborhood?
- (8) Do you know about your classmates' cultures and languages? What is their background?
- (9) Do your classmates know about your culture and home language?
- (10) What language(s) do you speak at school with your friends? Teachers?
- (11) What does it mean to be an American student?
- (12) How do you become an American student?
- (13) How do you think your teachers see you now?
- (14) How do you think your family sees you as a student?

**How can a digital storytelling project using Photovoice facilitate student meaning-making of their transmigration experiences?**

- 1) What is Photovoice? How did you use it?
- 2) Was Photovoice a good way to tell your transmigration experience? Why or why not? What did you like / dislike about it?
- 3) Were you able to select your own photography for the digital story? Did you like doing that? Why or why not?
- 4) Did doing the digital storytelling project help you understand others' experiences? How so?
- 5) Did doing the digital storytelling project help you understand your own experience in a new way? How so?
- 6) Describe how you worked with a partner. Is building a digital story a good partner activity? Why or why not?
- 7) What did you learn about yourself during this project?
- 8) What did you learn about other students during this project?

## APPENDIX C

### INITIAL MEETING WITH PARTICIPANTS

When I introduce the research study, I will say “Thank you for your interest in participating in this research study. If you choose to participate, your name will be kept confidential, and as caregivers or parents, if you choose to allow your child to participate, your child’s name will remain confidential. However, certain characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, and first language will be shared. The research setting, The YMCA of Greater Boston – Dorchester – will also remain confidential. Later on when the study is finished, the research location will be known as an “urban community center” in my writing. I will collect participants’ addresses and phone numbers and keep this information on my password-protected laptop. I will be the only one with access to all of the data. As the project progresses, participants are allowed to drop out of the study at any time with no penalty.

Before I begin to work with the participants, I would like to explain what the consent and assent forms are, and ask you to sign them today. There are minimal risks to the participants in this study. On the contrary, students may benefit from being utilized as the greatest sources of information pertinent to how students experience transmigration, and how teachers and administrators can meet their specific learning needs. It is possible that talk about transmigration experiences will raise emotions of sadness or memories that are difficult. I will deal with this by talking individually with students or as a group if it is more beneficial. However, if students share something that is particularly difficult for them to process during our time together, I will refer the student to support services available at the YMCA.

I will now go over an overview of the agenda and answer any questions about participating in the research. Each session will be 2.5 hours long, and dinner will be provided by the YMCA. I will ask participants to share their transmigration experiences to the extent that they feel comfortable doing so. Students will work with a partner throughout the project by building storyboards and developing a script, partially from feedback from their partner. Regarding student work, the participants will have total control over the stories they create and the information that they share with their fellow participants and myself. Students will interview their partner and take turns using a laptop to build a digital story. Cameras will be provided by the YMCA in order to tell stories visually, but participants can also bring in pictures and other artifacts from home that represent the themes we will discuss. Participants will learn how to put together their story using their pictures and words on a computer, and during this time I will record discussions and collect some of the work that is done in class (unless students ask me not to collect their work).

The larger goal of the project is to understand newcomers’ transmigration experiences by hearing directly from the students themselves, as theirs is a voice that too often is overlooked by stakeholders who are invested in their education.

Are there any questions?”

## APPENDIX D

### OVERVIEW OF DIGITALSTORY HANDOUTS

#### Information Session Agenda

- 1. Complete demographic sheet**
- 2. Consent/Assent forms**
- 3. Agenda for digital storytelling project**
- 4. Discuss project, access to technology, expectations**

#### Information on Consent/Assent forms

- Respect
  - We will respect each other's time and experiences.
  - We will respect each other's ideas and abilities.
  - We will respect each other's effort.
- Confidentiality and voluntary
  - Name will be confidential
  - Gender, first language will be shared
  - Research setting will be "urban community center"
  - No one will know the study is at the UMCA
  - I will keep the information sheets locked in a file cabinet in my home office
- Minimal risks
  - Students will benefit from this project.
    - Assistance with academic writing.
    - Will learn new software.
  - Issues about migration / moving / adjusting to life in a new place with always be talked about with sensitivity
  - If there is something that is difficult for you to talk about and you want to share that with me or Reggie, please feel comfortable talking to us.
- Sessions
  - 2.5 hours long
  - dinner will be provided
  - work with a partner
  - build storyboards
  - develop a script based on the interviews
  - you will have control over your stories and the information you will share
- Technology
  - Cameras
  - Laptops
  - USB
  - Digital recorders

<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Agenda</b>
<b>Session 1</b>	Introduction Goals of project Photography activity Storyboard
<b>Session 2</b>	Review draft of storyboards. Discuss key transmigration events. Partner activity Build an iMovie Show digital story exemplars
<b>Session 3</b>	Interviews Partner activity - storytelling
<b>Sessions 4-6</b>	Script work Take photographs
<b>Sessions 7-10</b>	Assemble digital stories
<b>Sessions 11-12</b>	Record scripts; Presentations

## Demographic Information

Name

---

Address / neighborhood

---

---

Telephone number

---

Email

---

---

Do you have a digital camera? Smart phone?

---

---

What is your experience using Macbooks?

---

---

Where were you born? What is your date of birth?

---

---

Please describe how often and with whom you use your home language?

---

---

Please describe how often and with whom you use English?

---

---

What school do you attend? Are you in ESL class?

---

---

What grade are you in?

---

What is your favorite subject?

---



## APPENDIX E

### EVALUTIONS

I explained to participants that while they wait their turn to record their voice on the second to last session, they were to complete one last task: their evaluations. The evaluations were constructed with great care (see specific questions below) and I had every confidence that these young adults would carefully consider the questions and provide an honest rating or response for feedback. Jill remained in the front room with the group and monitored them as I facilitated the recordings with the participants one at a time. Everyone worked on their self-, peer-, and facilitator-evaluations for a long time, which afforded me some rich data. The table below shows participants' responses to the closed ended questions. Participants had to consider the question from their own perspective, the group's, and rate the instructor as well. The instructions are below:

*Please think about your effort and give yourself, your group, and the instructor a number – between 1-5 - that corresponds to the questions below.*

**1**= weak    **2** = below average    **3** = average    **4** = above average    **5** = superior

<b>Question</b>	<b>Participant</b>	<b>You</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Facilitator</b>
<b>1. Understood the digital story project and is able to talk about it clearly</b>	Sarah	4	4	5
	Diane	5	5	5
	Tonya	3	3	5
	Jacqueline	2	3	4
	Steven	5	4	5
	Margaret	5	5	5
<b>2. Understood how photography can be used to express feelings and situations</b>	Sarah	4	4	5
	Diane	5	5	5
	Tonya	2	2	5
	Jacqueline	5	4	4
	Steven	5	5	5
	Margaret	5	5	5
<b>3. Gathered photographs of your life</b>	Sarah	3	4	

<b>in Haiti</b>	Diane	5	5	NA
	Tonya	4	3	
	Jacqueline	5	5	
	Steven	5	5	
	Margaret	5	5	
<b>4. Gathered photographs or took photographs of your life in Boston</b>	Sarah	4	3	NA
	Diane	5	5	
	Tonya	3	3	
	Jacqueline	2	2	
	Steven	5	5	
	Margaret	5	5	
<b>5. Used English to express ideas and participate.</b>	Sarah	3	4	5
	Diane	4	4	4
	Tonya	4	2	5
	Jacqueline	blank	4	5
	Steven	5	blank	blank
	Margaret	4	4	5
<b>6. Fully participated in conversations about my life in Haiti</b>	Sarah	4	4	4
	Diane	5	3	5
	Tonya	4	4	4
	Jacqueline	2	2	2
	Steven	5	5	5
	Margaret	5	5	5
<b>7. Fully participated in conversations about my life in Boston</b>	Sarah	5	5	4
	Diane	5	3	5
	Tonya	4	4	5
	Jacqueline	4	4	4
	Steven	5	5	5
	Margaret	5	5	5
<b>8. Fully participated in conversations about learning in Boston Public Schools</b>	Sarah	4	3	5
	Diane	3	3	5
	Tonya	4	4	5
	Jacqueline	4	4	4
	Steven	5	4	5
	Margaret	5	5	5
<b>9. Gave feedback to partner</b>	Sarah	3	3	NA
	Diane	3	1	
	Tonya	4	4	
	Jacqueline	1	4	
	Steven	4	5	
	Margaret	5	5	
<b>10. Gave feedback to the whole class</b>	Sarah	1	1	5
	Diane	3	2	5
	Tonya	3	4	5
	Jacqueline	1	3	5

	Steven	4	4	5
	Margaret	5	5	5
<b>11. Helped others understand their digital stories better</b>	Sarah	1	1	3
	Diane	4	3	5
	Tonya	3	4	5
	Jacqueline	4	3	5
	Steven	5	5	5
	Margaret	5	5	5
<b>12. The digital story exemplars helped me (or the group) to understand how to make a digital story.</b>	Sarah	5	5	NA
	Diane	3	5	
	Tonya	3	3	
	Jacqueline	5	2	
	Steven	5	5	
	Margaret	5	5	
<b>13. Asking the interview questions to my partner helped me think about my own experience</b>	Sarah	3	3	NA
	Diane	2	5	
	Tonya	3	3	
	Jacqueline	2	3	
	Steven	5	4	
	Margaret	5	5	
<b>14. The interview questions helped me think about my transmigration experiences.</b>	Sarah	5	5	NA
	Diane	5	5	
	Tonya	3	3	
	Jacqueline	2	2	
	Steven	5	5	
	Margaret	5	5	
<b>15. Understood how to write a script based on interview guide.</b>	Sarah	5	4	4
	Diane	5	5	5
	Tonya	3	3	4
	Jacqueline	4	4	5
	Steven	5	5	5
	Margaret	5	5	5
<b>16. Able to determine the photographs needed to tell the digital story.</b>	Sarah	3	2	4
	Diane	5	5	5
	Tonya	3	3	4
	Jacqueline	3	2	5
	Steven	5	5	5
	Margaret	5	5	5
<b>17. Able to edit and make transitions in the digital story.</b>	Sarah	3	2	blank
	Diane	5	2	5
	Tonya	2	2	4
	Jacqueline	4	3	blank
	Steven	5	5	5
	Margaret	5	5	5
<b>18. Understood the presentations</b>	Sarah	5	5	

<b>given by the instructor.</b>	Diane	5	4	NA
	Tonya	3	3	
	Jacqueline	5	5	
	Steven	5	4	
	Margaret	5	5	
<b>19. Came to our meetings everyday ready to work.</b>	Sarah	4	4	5
	Diane	4	4	5
	Tonya	4	2	3
	Jacqueline	5	4	5
	Steven	5	4	5
	Margaret	5	5	5
<b>20. Displayed a positive attitude</b>	Sarah	4	4	4
	Diane	4	4	5
	Tonya	5	5	5
	Jacqueline	2	2	2
	Steven	5	5	5
	Margaret	5	5	5
<b>21. Made effective use of class time</b>	Sarah	3	3	5
	Diane	5	5	5
	Tonya	4	4	5
	Jacqueline	3	2	2
	Steven	5	5	5
	Margaret	5	5	5
<b>22. Communicated and cooperated with team</b>	Sarah	2	2	4
	Diane	4	4	5
	Tonya	4	4	5
	Jacqueline	2	5	5
	Steven	5	5	5
	Margaret	5	5	5

There are a few commonalities that stand out amongst the responses. Margaret and Steven gave above average and superior effort to everyone, including themselves for each item. Diane did not hesitate to rate herself highly while giving the group a lower response. At the same time, she gave herself an average rating, while rating the instructor as superior. Steven's scores did not vary from straight 5's, save for a few 4's in the Group column. Jacqueline and Sarah gave some of the harshest scores, delivering 2s and 1s to themselves.

The answers to the question below "By participating in the digital story project, my academic English..." did not surprise me. Diane is a high school graduate and a

"By participating in the digital story project, my academic English..."		
stayed the same	improved a little	improved a lot
	Diane - "I chose it because there were some words that the instructor explained to me and how to use them and their meaning and by hearing them daily. I knew what to say and what not to say.	Sarah - "because I wrote a lot and research[ed] more"
		Margaret - "I chose this answer because I see I know more words [in] English [than] before when I am first [joined the project]"
		Tonya - "because [they] help[ed] me with my language [skills] and the[y] force[d] me to speak English and write a lot"
		Jacqueline - "because I learned about so many [words that] I ha[d]n't learn[ed] before"
		Steven - "because when I [joined] the project I practice[ed] my English and talk[ed] to people"

student at a community college in Boston. She is accomplished in her ability to comprehend and produce academic English both orally and in written form. I would have been surprised if she had said that her language skills "improved a lot." The others, conversely, had not been in Boston as long, and besides Steven, lack the confidence to

share their thinking during our conversations and take risks in English. Participants' responses indicated that they were appreciative of the opportunity to further develop their speaking and writing skills in English.

One last question I would like to share from the evaluations is the one that asks participants to consider endorsing the project to others in similar circumstances. Steven was the unofficial leader of the group. He modeled the work for the others, and gave encouraging feedback. However, I did not consider how participants' patience in honing skillsets regarding technology and English were so essential. For example, when others were unclear of how to photograph their daily life in Boston, he showed the pictures he took of himself in his neighborhood and it helped frame for others how they could do the same. Steven was unquestionably efficient with his time, which seemed to be his strength. There is also a negative side to being able to use one's time more effectively than others in a group setting, and that is not having the patience to stay at the group's pace. Steven's quote below indicates that there was a great deal of "wasted time" that he felt he was not engaged with the project. He felt so strongly about this point that it outweighed how much he shined in other areas of the project, and seemingly enjoyed participating in it, thus he opted not to recommend it to others.

However, Steven's effort and willingness to take risks were a tremendous benefit to everyone. At the end of the project, Steven wrote a brief thank you note attached to his evaluation. It read:

Hello, I want to thank everybody that came to this project, mostly for the teachers. It was really fun and helpful because it made me practice my English and learn about how to make a movie. I'm sorry because I didn't know [what] it was going to be like. I thought it was [going to be] difficult

or bor[ing]. I'm very proud of th[e] project [and] it's helped me a lot.  
[The] only [thing] that I can say as a gift [is] thanks [to] all the teachers.

I was not surprised to read the sincere message from Steven. I knew he enjoyed engaging in the work. Nevertheless, this was written in direct opposition to his response that indicated how he would not recommend this project to a peer in a similar circumstance. I suppose this is because he truly enjoyed doing the project, but did not care for the down time between tasks.

All of the young women believed that the pros outweighed the cons. Sarah, Margaret, and Tonya held that participating in the project would allow someone a space to practice and improve their English, while Jacqueline maintained that joining a project like this will keep the memories of one's country fresh. Diane heartily concurred that this project is a worthwhile endeavor. She added that it would be fun and provide access to technology, which participants might only get to use in a narrow capacity while at school.

“Would you recommend this project to other friends who have moved to Boston from another country?”	
no	yes
Steven - “no because if I tell them already maybe they will say they will not spend time on it [the project].”	Sarah - “yes because I think it [is] going to help us”
	Margaret - “yes cause the [project is going to] help you to express yourself and understand [English] better”
	Tonya - “yes because I want to tell [someone] that it [is] going [to be] helpful if he/she do this project and [he/she is] going [to] learn more”
	Jacqueline - “yes, I choose yes because even [if] you [have spent] a lot of time [outside of] you[r] country if [you] had a movie like this you will never forget about your own country”
	Diane - “yes I would certainly recommend this project to other friends who have moved to Boston because this is one of the biggest ways that they could express their feelings and experiences also by doing the project, they can have so much fun and learn more about how to make a digital story”

Diane completed her evaluation thoroughly. She was thoughtful in her way that she addressed all the questions. I knew that if I emphasized that giving one's feedback is essential to this process that she would take on the responsibility, and she did. When she was finished, she wrote a thank you note that read as follows:

Overall, I loved this project because I learned new things and I had the chance to speak English daily. Also, I found people who show[ed] me their determination to work with me even though I was not clear by speaking the language sometimes. I believe this was a great opportunity and I did not take it for granted because now I can make a project on my own by using iMovie. I love both of the instructors because they were patient and supportive. I am grateful of having you to help me improve my English and technology skills. I will miss you Ms. Jill and Ms. Elizabeth. Big thank you.

Despite how demanding it was to have a student like Diane be a participant in the project, she took the role as student/participant on with earnest, and I am grateful for that. She remained open to sharing her ideas and experiences, and allowed others to learn from her as well.

At the end of the project, Sarah expressed her gratitude in a very personal way. Though she started off reserved and unsure of herself, after three weeks of working with the group, she beamed with satisfaction for having the resiliency to see the project through until the end. In Sarah's words,

I really appreciate [participating in the project] because Jill was very kind with us and Ms. Elizabeth. I want to thank them for this project because I learn[ed] so much. Thank you [for] hav[ing] so much patience with us. I think God is going to bless us anywhere we go. I really like it. We [did a] good job [and] I will never forget us. Thank you so much.

I was very appreciative to read these kind words, particularly from a participant who was limited in how she was able to express herself during our group conversations. Despite



how her oral language skills were still very much developing, she enjoyed engaging in the project in the ways that she was able.

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