# The Intersection of Transnationality and Scholarship: Self-Positioning and Teaching, Research, and Service Practices of Three Transnational Teacher-Scholars

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## Abstract

There is an increasing number of transnational faculty who work outside their home countries, yet little is known about their transnational social fields and how their transnationality may intersect with their scholarship practices. This interdisciplinary qualitative study explores the self-positioning and teaching, research, and service approaches of three foreign-born, transnational teacher-scholars in the United States. Data was collected through a written questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. In addition to questions about their cross-border ties and teaching, research, and service scholarships, the participants were asked to narrate several critical incidents from their transnational lived experiences and to describe a significant personal artifact they owned. Positioning theory and the concept of non-place migrant identity were used to identify participants' self-positioning in relation to place and their teaching, research, and service scholarship practices. Grounded in a social constructionist paradigm, the data was analyzed using thematic analysis. The study provides further empirical support that transnationality and scholarship shape one another as transnational teacher-scholars use their transnational past and present as an asset and a form of capital in their teaching, research, and service scholarships. Findings also reveal that transnational teacher-scholars position themselves at different points on the continuum of non-place identity and belonging. The study concludes with recommendations for encouraging transnational student-teachers and faculty to realize and capitalize on the strengths they bring to the academy.

**Keywords:** Transnational faculty, teacher-scholars, teacher identity, non-place identity, positioning theory

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## Introduction

Transnationalism as "a manifestation of globalization" (Vertovec, 2009, p. 2) has become a topic of much academic interest (e.g. Bloemraad, 2015; Boccagni, 2012; Canagarajah, 2018; Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton, 1992; Portes, Guarnizo, & Landolt, 1999). Transnationalism scholars challenge the assimilation-integration dichotomy and draw attention to migrants' sustained cross-border ties. Studies have shown that many migrants maintain transnational ties to varying degrees (Basch, Glick Schiller, & Szanton-Blanc, 1994; Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007) and that transnational ties may expand beyond migrants' countries of origin and host (Lee, 2011; Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007; Sperling, 2014; Trotz, 2004; Voigt-Graf, 2004). Additionally, transnational social fields are varied, context-specific, and in flux. As individuals relocate, they create new networks and their social spaces are reshaped. (Guarnizo, Portes, & Haller, 2003; Itzigsohn & Giorguli Saucedo, 2002; Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004; Waldinger, 2008).

There is an increasing number of transnational faculty and other professionals in the education field who work outside their home countries. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2019 in the US alone, of the 27.5 million foreign-born persons in the labor force, 3.8 percent or over 1 million were employed in education and related fields ("Economic News Release," 2020). Almost a quarter of the faculty in post-secondary institutions in the US identify as foreign-born (Theobald, 2013). In today's competitive academic job market, as institutions compete to attract and retain highly qualified faculty, there is a need to examine and shed light on the lived experiences and positionings of transnational teacher-scholars and the way in which their transnational lived experiences may shape or be shaped by their teaching, research, and service practices. Research on transnational teacher-scholars can help teacher-education programs better prepare transnational student-teachers for a career as transnational teachers and researchers. This interdisciplinary study explored the self-positionings of three transnational teacher-scholars in the teacher education field and the way in which their transnationality intersected with their teaching, research, and service practices.

### Transnationals and Non-place Identity

Transnationality as a construct of teacher identity negotiation remains an ambiguous concept. The term is sometimes utilized to refer to teachers who have lived in two or more countries and identify as bicultural regardless of their current cross-border interactions (e.g. Menard-Warwick, 2008). Additionally, the terms transnational, international, and foreign-born are often used interchangeably. To prevent transnationalism from becoming an overused catch-all phrase, however, the *trans* in transnationalism needs to be clearly defined. To theorize the term transnational teacher identity, I begin with the concept of non-place.

In his introduction to the concept of supermodernity, Augé (1995) characterized places of transience such as airports, hotels, and supermarkets as spaces that cannot be defined as relational or historical. He characterized these places as non-places that are not tied to a national or historical context (Augé, 1995). Hanauer (2008) expanded the notion of non-place to migrants who, thanks to their legal documentation and economic viability, are able to move freely across nation states in pursuit of professional opportunities. According to Hanauer (2008):

> The potential for a non-place identity involves moving beyond identification with either source or host identification and focusing on personal interests and functions. This function may be shallow and shifting. While many migrants who function within a nationally situated identity will not be able to access this option of identity, for the qualified, travelled professional, non-place migrant identity is a philosophical perspective that reduces the significant of place (and nation) by centralizing the individual as the nexus of meaning construction. New, non-place citizens respect the law, but consider

> personal identity, attachment and placement as private matters divorced from significance of place as a primary identity marker. (p. 216)

This fluidity has been explored by scholars such as Appadurai (1991) who coined the term translocal identity and Ong (1999) who observed that thousands of transnational Chinese entrepreneurs used their dual citizenships to pursue economic opportunities overseas, a phenomenon he called flexible citizenship. The non-place identity is also echoed in Craith's (2012) study in which transnational writers articulated an "in-between experience" (p. 9) and described themselves as lost between two or more cultures and languages, not quite belonging to one, yet successfully navigating their careers and using their feeling of in-betweenness as a catalyst for their writing. Craith (2012) argued, "Ultimately, all the writers continue to wrestle with this experience of being insiders and outsiders – not fully one identity or another. But perhaps they also recognize it as a gift that has sparked their creativity" (p. 148). As these studies have shown, a 'non-place identity', while no longer space-bound, may provide opportunities for growth.

In addition to the concept of non-place migrant identity, the term transnationalism as used in migration studies is helpful in theorizing transnational teacher identities. Portes et al. (1999) define transnationalism as "occupations and activities that require regular and sustained social contacts over time across national borders for their implementation" (p. 219). It is important to note that transnationalism does not imply a global span but rather ties that individuals maintain between their place of residence and one or more other nation states. A transnational' social field, defined by Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004) as "a set of multiple interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices, and resources are unequally exchanged, organized, and transformed" (p. 1009), extends beyond the borders of a nation state and may or may not include the individual's country of birth (Lee, 2011; Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007; Sperling, 2014; Trotz, 2006; Voigt-Graf, 2004). This is demonstrated in Trotz's (2006) study on Caribbean migrants living in Toronto whose main transnational space consisted of Canada and the US, rather than their countries of origin in the Caribbean. Additionally, transnationality does not necessarily involve travel or physical mobility (Lee, 2011; Levitt, 2001). One can have a home base and little physical movement but still maintain regular transnational interactions. For instance, Lee (2011) investigated the transnational social fields of 178 second-generation Tongans aged 18-30 living in different cities in Australia and learned that while these migrants rarely traveled, they maintained close social contacts with their country of origin, for instance, by gift exchange, financial remittance, and regular communication through telephone, email, and online social networks, what Lee refers to as "cyber transnationalism" (2011, p. 310).

Based on the concepts of non-place migrant identity and transnationalism, in this study the term transnational is used to refer to individuals with a non-place migrant identity who pursue personal and professional opportunities across borders and who maintain regular cross-border ties.

## Literature Review

### Teacher-Scholar and Scholarship

I use the term *teacher-scholar* in this study to refer to faculty members who engage in scholarly research, teaching, and service, and whose research, teaching, and service inform and influence each other. The term teacher-scholar has been increasingly used to imply the inseparability of the three spheres of faculty's work: teaching, research, and research. In his oft-cited book, *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*, Boyer (1990) criticized the bifurcation of teaching and research and the dominance of research over other academic and educational domains. In an effort to draw attention to the multiple, interrelated, and equally important functions within the academy, he defined the term scholarship as four interconnected "intellectual functions" (p. 25) of discovery, integration, application, and teaching, which inform and are informed by one another. Accordingly, in this study I use the term scholarship to refer to teaching, research, and service collectively.

Boyer's model is also a useful framework as it allows flexibility in faculty practices. For instance, research scholarship refers to any inquiry that is intended to learn more about one's own practice, to solve a practical problem, and to be shared with the scholarly community. Also, faculty may engage in research, teaching, and service scholarship activities to varying degrees based on their personal strengths and interests and their level of engagement in each of these scholarship areas may shift over time (Witt, Harris, Yarhouse, Sawyer, & Behnke, 2007). This dynamic and shifting process was reflected in the practice of the three participants in this study as they were engaged in teaching, research, and service scholarships at varying degrees.

Although the teacher-researcher dichotomy continues to dominate some section of the academy today (Mckinley, 2019), Boyer's teacher-scholar model is being used widely and has provided a useful framework for faculty evaluation and promotion in many higher education institutions. In more recent years, scholars have added *learning* to the scholarship of teaching to highlight the importance of student learning. This has resulted in the term *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* (SoTL) which has been a topic of much attention in the past two decades (e.g. Hutchings, 2000; Marquis, Healey, & Vine, 2014).

**Transnational Teacher Identities and Practices**

Teacher identity has been one of the most studied topics in the past two decades. Researchers have examined the intersection of teacher education and various identity constructs such as race, gender, and more extensively, native-nonnative teachers of English; however, few studies have examined transnational teacher identities and practices. The scant existing literature on transnational teachers tends to focus on teachers' cultural competence and their approach to teaching culture. Some studies have shown that lived experiences in more than one country bestow on teachers valuable worldviews and intercultural competence which they draw upon in their teaching, enabling their students to view the world from more than one perspective (Alberts, 2008; Gahungu, 2011; Mamiseishvili, 2013; Menard-Warwick, 2008; Petrón, 2009; Petrón & Greybeck, 2014; Skachkova, 2007). Petrón and Greybeck (2014), for example, reported that transnational teacher participants in their study used their knowledge of cultural practices in different countries and "transformed the learning environment into real world lessons on language and culture" (p. 150). For instance, instead of the content in the textbook, they used their own knowledge of American cultural practices to teach English vocabulary, pronunciation, and culture to students in Mexico. This involved deviating from the textbook to teach what they considered important if the students relocated to the US. In this way, the transnational teachers' practice tended to "project their own family history onto all of their students" (Petrón, 2009, p. 126). In Alberts's (2008) study, students believed that the information provided by their foreign-born professors about their home countries was "more credible or more real" (p. 198) than what their textbooks or their US-born professors provided. Similarly, Collins (2008) reported that students in her study felt that having a foreign-born professor was beneficial for their learning experiences because it offered them "new and different alternative perspectives or challenging stereotypes about other people and places" (p. 184). Studies have also shown that transnational teachers are more aware of the needs of the students with a transnational heritage, and they empathize more with the students' experiences of transitioning from one education system to another (Petrón, 2009).

This reproduction and application of knowledge in a transnational social field is what Kim (2010) calls *transnational identity* capital, or the "de-contextualised cultural capital which can be quickly and shiftingly re-contextualised in a series of different settings" (p. 589). In the context of foreign-born faculty, this form of capital manifested in the form of what Skachkova (2007) called *border-crossing pedagogy* or pedagogy that "synthesizes traditional and new patterns of instruction and searches for innovative alternatives in the classroom" (p. 729).

These studies have drawn attention to the strengths of foreign-born teachers and have underlined the importance of exploring teachers' lived experiences to better understand the rationale behind

their teaching approaches. However, there has been little research on the transnational experiences of foreign-born teacher-scholars and the scholarship practices of transnational faculty. This exploratory study is in response to Foote, Li, Monk, and Theobald's (2008) and Mamiseishvili's (2013) calls for more research on the experiences of foreign-born faculty especially in humanities, social sciences, and education fields. While most of the existing literature on foreign-born teachers focus on teaching approaches, this study examines the intersection of faculty's transnationality and their teaching, research, and service approaches. As such, this study makes a contribution to the teacher-education scholarship by adding to the small but growing body of literature on transnational teacher-scholars' identities, lived experiences, and practices.

**Theoretical Framework**

This study used positioning theory to examine the lived experiences and subject positions of three transnational teacher-scholars in the US. According to positioning theory, individuals acquire a sense of self and interpret the world from that perspective. At the same time, positions are constrained by individuals' presumed rights, duties, and status within the particular context in which a communicative event takes place (Harré & Van Langenhove, 1999). In contrast to the concept of role, in positioning theory positions are not fixed and can be negotiated, contested, and co-constructed (Van Langenhove & Harré, 1999). Davies and Harré (1999) noted, "An individual emerges through the processes of social interaction not as a relatively fixed end product but as one who is constituted and re-constituted through the various discursive practices in which they participate" (p. 35). This discursive conceptualization of identity is illustrated in this study as the participants negotiated their positionalities through their accounts of their transnational experiences and approaches to teaching, research, and service as transnational faculty. Positioning theory, in combination with the teacher-scholar model and the concept of non-place migrant identity described above, enabled me to explore the participants' self-positioning as well as their perceptions of how their scholarship approaches may be shaped by their transnationality. In each positioning act that I identified in the data, I looked at what position was taken and what the positioning meant in terms of the participant's transnationality and/or scholarship.

**Research Questions**

The purpose of this interdisciplinary and exploratory study was to gain a better understanding of the positioning and practices of transnational teacher-scholars and the ways in which transnationality and scholarship my intersect. To that end, this study aimed to investigate the following two research questions:

1) How do the participants position themselves as transnational teacher-scholars?

2) In what ways do the participants' transnationality and scholarship practices intersect?

**Methodology**

This study was a part of a qualitative dissertation project that explored lived experiences, positionings, and scholarship approaches of foreign-born transnational teacher-scholars in the US. I collected data from July to November 2018 through an initial written questionnaire and two follow up semi-structured interviews with each participant, 60-90 minutes long each. In the questionnaire and during the interviews, I asked the participants biographical information as well questions about their transnational past, present, and imagined future, their lived experiences as a transnational faculty member in the US, and their approach to teaching, research, and service. I also asked them to recall several critical incidents and to describe a personal artifact that represented their transnational teacher-scholar identity. For the purpose of this study, a critical incident refers to any occurrence, positive or negative, that has significance for an individual for whatever reason (Tripp, 2012), and a *personal artifact* refers to any object such as artwork, family photo, an item received as gift or acquired during travel, that embodies memories and provides details of what the individual has experienced (Hocker, 2010). The participants' recounts of critical incidents and their narratives of personal artifacts, in conjunction with their responses to

biographical and contextual questions, enabled me to crystalize the study's findings (Richardson, 1997) and gave me a more in-depth understanding of the participants' lived experiences and self-positionings.

Data collection and data analysis were concurrent and informed one another. After the first interview with a participant, I transcribed the audio recording verbatim, did preliminary thematic data analysis, and developed follow-up questions for the second interview with the participant. After each second interview and transcribing it, I re-read the data from the questionnaire and the two interviews, and I repeated thematic analysis to identify instances in which the participants positioned themselves as transnationals, assessed their spatial identity and (non)belongingness, and examined how their transnationality may be intersecting with their scholarship approaches. To increase the trustworthiness of the study, I member-checked my preliminary findings with the participants and made the changes the participants requested to better represent their positionings.

**Participants**

Three transnational teacher-scholars were selected through purposeful sampling. As my goal was to understand the positionings and lived experiences of foreign-born, transnational teacher-scholars currently in the US, the selection criteria were as followed: 1) be a teacher educator with teaching, research, and service responsibilities, and 2) self-identify as a transnational, in other words, have regular cross-border ties and be engaged in teaching, research, and/or service activities overseas. Self-identification in the selection process was aligned with the social constructionist ontology on which this study is grounded. Below is a brief overview of each participant. All names are pseudonyms.

Alia was born in Europe (per her request, I do not specify her country of birth) in the early 1960s. In the late 1980s, she accepted a scholarship at an American university and relocated to the US where she completed her master's and PhD. At the time of data collection for this study, she had become an American citizen, was a tenured professor and department administrator, and was living with her husband and children in a southern US state. She held leadership roles in professional associations and volunteered as a political appointee in her city. She maintained regular contact with her family, friends, and colleagues overseas and traveled internationally extensively for conferences, teaching, and research. She positioned herself as extremely mobile and was eager to relocate to any place that was culturally diverse and intellectually stimulating.

Maria was born in the mid 1970s in Brasil[2]. After completing her undergraduate degree in Brasil in late 1990s, she moved to the US to study English. Shortly after moving to the US, she began her master's degree, then completed her PhD, got married, and became a US citizen. At the time of data collection, she lived with her husband in a southern state and worked as a tenured professor and program administrator. She held leadership roles in professional associations, which provided her with many opportunities for international travel. She was also involved in several international research projects. She traveled to Brasil regularly, interacted with her family and friends abroad frequently, and had an extensive network of colleagues around the world. She positioned herself as extremely mobile and was willing to relocate anywhere that would offer her opportunities for professional growth.

Ismail was born in early 1980s in Turkey. He completed a master's degree and began his doctoral studies in Turkey. In late 2000s, he relocated to the US to pursue a PhD in an American university. At the time of this study, he was single and worked as an assistant professor in a southeastern state. He positioned himself as a global citizen and was particularly interested in social justice issues and global events. He did not travel internationally because of his pending US permanent residency status. However, he maintained transnational ties through his international research collaborations and regular interactions with his family and friends overseas.

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[2] To represent her Portuguese language and cultural roots, Maria requested that I spell Brasil and Brasilian with an 's'.

During this study, while I was an outsider looking into the lives of the participants, I was also an insider with many similar lived experiences and positionings as the participants. I am a foreign-born, transnational teacher-scholar currently residing in the US. I identify as a non-place migrant, have had numerous international relocations throughout my adult life, and pursue work and educational opportunities that have international components. My transnational identity was a catalyst for my discussions with the participants as our similar journeys allowed us to connect with each other and share our experiences.

## Findings

### The Intersection of Transnationality and Scholarship

All three participants positioned themselves as individuals whose transnational lived experiences influenced how they viewed the world and consequently how they approached their teaching, research, and service scholarship. More specifically, all participants claimed that their transnationality was a valuable asset in their teaching, research, and service scholarships. As transnationals, the participants in this study drew from and utilized traits, perspectives, and practices from different cultures and worldviews, creating a "migration mélange" (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007, p. 138) that led to complex, multifaceted, and intersecting transnational teacher-scholar identities (Angouri, 2012; Park, 2018; Yazan, 2018). In what follows, I describe the intersection of transnationality with each of the scholarship spheres (Boyer, 1990).

### Transnationality and Teaching Scholarship

Alia described that her transnational experiences enabled her to look at education from different perspectives: "I look at how different other countries organize [things] and so I say what if I look at it this way and how about looking at it that way? It works for Finland or it works for [another country]." For example, her home country in Europe had apprenticeship programs to prepare non-college-bound high school students for different types of careers. Having had knowledge of how these apprenticeship programs worked and what their benefits were, Alia worked to promote similar programs in her US state. For Maria, her transnationality or as she put it "being someone who lives between worlds" was "a real strength" because "it brings a different dimension" to her work. Maria described that she often tapped into her own international experiences in her teaching: "I use examples from teaching in Brasil, for instance, in my classes and contrast with my experiences as a teacher in [the US]." She added that her ability to draw on her own experiences and share them with her students was useful because "it validates what I do as a professor preparing future teachers." Similarly, Ismail's transnational engagements were integral to his self-positioning as a teacher-scholar: "I cannot imagine myself not maintaining my ties internationally … I would have kept my connections with Turkey at all expenses." In his teaching, Ismail noted that he tapped into his own lived experiences as topics of discussion: "I bring my transnational experiences/stories into my classes and discuss them with my students." He added that he often encouraged his students to look beyond local contexts and to learn about how English is used internationally: "I want my students to know things in different contexts because otherwise we're keeping ourselves in one context and one country, and bugged in those problems here we forget what's going on in the other countries." He also believed that his transnational experiences were an asset to his teaching because his experiences offered his students new perspectives: "I'm bringing something new to the table that I'm from another country. I have a different culture and linguistic background, and the students I'm sure they find something interesting in my story and my experience." These findings confirm the existing literature that transnational teachers tap into their own lived experiences and worldviews as assets to complement their teaching and to enable their students to view the world from more than one perspective (Alberts, 2008; Gahungu, 2011; Mamiseishvili, 2013; Menard-Warwick, 2008; Petrón, 2009; Petrón & Greybeck, 2014; Skachkova, 2007).

**Transnationality and Research Scholarship**

All three participants positioned themselves as teacher-scholars whose research was also influenced by their transnationality. Alia explained that she was interested in researching the experiences of teachers in international contexts, and her transnational ties provided her with opportunities to engage in research activities with collaborators in other countries. Foregrounding the importance of listening to different perspectives, she gravitated toward qualitative rather than quantitative research. She elaborated:

> You listen to the voices you create, you research based on what your participants say, and so I'm the learner of what they are saying, and that makes much sense to me, and all my international interest as a listener came with it.

Maria described that her research interests centered around effective instructional strategies for bilingual students, and she was engaged in several international research projects, for instance a collaborative project with South American K-12 teachers in areas of English language teaching in South America. Similarly, Ismail explained that he was interested in investigating the interplay of global and local in particular contexts. It was evident in the data that the participants' transnationality influenced their epistemological worldviews and their research scholarship.

**Transnationality and Service Scholarship**

The participants' positioning toward service was similar to their positioning toward teaching and service in that they all expressed interest in activities that had transnational components. Alia was interested in service engagements in which she could stay connected to the international community or where she could advocate for immigrants: "I'm always the voice of diversity in all my activities." Likewise, Maria claimed that in her service activities outside her institution, especially in her leadership role in a professional association, she always brought up issues related to non-US members, and she highlighted the importance of thinking about the association as an international one. Ismail, too, claimed that his service to the field of teacher education was "mostly the embodiment of [his] transnational ties."

**Positioning on the Continuum of Mobility and Belonging**

This study provides empirical support for a continuum of non-place identity and (non)belonging on which the participants positioned themselves at different points. At one end of the continuum is Alia who, despite having lived in the US for 29 years and having tenure and full professorship at her university, did not claim a spatial identity and rather positioned herself as entirely non-place and mobile:

> I've been here for a while. If I were to leave here tomorrow, I would probably not miss it … I'm not afraid of starting over somewhere else. So I have friends in Australia, in all kinds of countries, I would definitely keep that option. We even looked into other jobs abroad like in the Middle East … If I get a job that sustains me … titles don't matter to me that much, my house doesn't matter to me that much; I can give that up and leave.

To a lesser degree, Maria positioned herself as someone who had attachment to some places, but she also expressed a non-place identity by self-positioning as a highly mobile transnational who belonged to neither here nor there. Despite her emotional ties to Brasil and several cities in the US, Maria explained that she constantly feels as if she is in a state of in-betweenness or "being between worlds" and "feeling of almost not having a home and yet having two homes." She elaborated:

> I don't quite "fit" in the US or in Brasil any longer. I always feel like a foreigner in both countries … I don't think I will ever feel a sense of belonging in the same way as folks who are not transnationals.

Maria also described her willingness to relocate to any place that presented her the opportunity for professional growth:

> I go where the opportunities are for me and where I feel that I'm going to grow as a professional. If I feel that there's constraints in where I am at the university or my department or the school then I want to move, I want to go somewhere where I can improve as a professional.

Positioning himself to a lesser degree on the continuum of mobility and belonging, Ismail expressed a sense of non-belongingness in the US: "I don't think it's gonna happen. I mean I don't feel myself being completely part of the community here." However, despite this sense of non-belonging, Ismail was not considering relocation. He had received a job offer from a Turkish university, but he had turned it down. He explained:

> I have commitments to my job and I started my research agenda here. If I moved back to Turkey I'm probably going to teach 4 courses, I'm teaching 2 here; it's a pretty sweet deal. [In Turkey I'll have to] do a lot of other things to be able to make the money that I'm making here.

Although not planning to relocate at the time being, Ismail was open to the idea of living somewhere else if the right opportunity presents itself: "I'd like to live in other countries, perhaps some place where I don't know the majority language and have to learn it. I'm thinking a Spanish speaking country, but it's just in the dreaming stage."

As the excerpts above show, the participants positioned themselves on the continuum of non-place identity to different degrees, expressed varying levels of belonging to the US and their home countries, and expressed their desire to relocate to new places for professional and personal growth. These findings mirror the experience of the participants in Craith's (2012) study where the participants described themselves as being in-between places. However, despite their sense of being in-between places and 'neither here nor there', the participants in this study claimed a flexible and functional identity, as described below.

**Transnationality and Functional Identity**

In this study, the participants' transnational social fields extended beyond their countries of origin and host, a finding shown in the literature (Lee, 2011; Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007; Sperling, 2014; Trotz, 2006; Voigt-Graf, 2004). While maintaining a transnational social field, Maria, Alia, and Ismail self-positioned to varying degrees as *non-place migrants* (Hanauer, 2008), expressed (non)belongingness to both their home countries and the US, and negotiated a *functional identity* that allowed them to live in different countries in pursuit of professional opportunities (Hanauer, 2008). This was evident in Alia's willingness to let go of her house and her tenured position in the US for new opportunities overseas. Also, self-positioning as having the ability to thrive in either the US or Brasil, Maria stated: "It's a feeling of not belonging to either country and yet still functioning well in both." Ismail, too, referenced his adjustment process and his commitment to his work which enable him to better *function* as an assistant professor:

> I'm here, I just get to know the context, I get to know the schools, I get to know the students, I get to know the colleagues I'm working with for a function, right? To function here as an assistant professor or researcher.

This data shows that the participants' non-place, functional identities allowed them to create liminal spaces (Bhabha, 1994) between countries, languages, and cultures to work as transnational academics. As Hanauer (2008) explains, for these transient migrants "the legal systems of national and supra-national entities become a 'supermarket' of options that can be manipulated to serve one's own purposes" (p. 210). Thus, a functional non-place identity was an identity option that allowed Maria, Alia, and Ismail to freely navigate within their transnational social fields by foregrounding their professional identities, rather than their national identities or their locally-

situated group memberships.

**The Impact of Self-Reflection**

This study prompted the participants to share their positionality and scholarship approaches, and by doing so they inevitably reflected on their identities as transnationals and teacher-scholars. All three participants stated that they had not engaged in this type of reflection prior to their participation in this study and that this journey of self-reflection had a transformative impact on their sense of self and potentially their practice as transnational teacher-scholars. Through self-reflection, the participants began to theorize their identities through a transnational lens, and began, for the first time, to see their transnationality as an asset. Alia explained that her reflections led her to see her transnational identity as a strength and gave her greater self-esteem:

> I've been thinking about my identity as an international researcher or service provider … the interconnection of transnational ties and teaching, research, and service … I decided … to capitalize on my skills and be proud of my skills too to actually build bridges and represent the United States abroad … I kind of feel an obligation and responsibility to use my insights for all these things, so … I feel more valued now than I did before.

Looking back on her own journey of self-reflection, Maria considered introducing the term *transnational* as a new identity option to her students:

> Having a chance to think through some of these things and to remember somethings that happened in the past and how they influenced who I am today, I think it's been incredible … reflecting about where I have come from and what I have done up to this point and where I'm going, and so I think it has been really incredible … Those students who are transnational themselves, I think I would probably emphasize that more. Even the term transnational, I never thought about using it and here I am using it all the time …

The self-reflection journey also enabled Ismail to contemplate on his identity as a transnational and on his experiences of crossing borders:

> I hadn't talked much about my experience before your first interview. It was really thought-provoking and gave me the space, and discursively and experientially you gave me the space to talk about myself, my experience as a transnational scholar which made me think about my positionality … the idea of crossing the borders ... how do I cross the borders?

**Conclusion**

Coining the term superdiversity, Vertovec (2007) argued that traditional categorization of people based on categories such as ethnicity, race, class, and gender are no longer sufficient to adequately describe the diversity of this globalized world. This study provides empirical support that factors such as transnational identities and cross-border ties are also constructs that must be taken into account in teacher identity discourse. While some identity markers such as race, gender, culture, and (non)nativensss have been the topic of much scholarly discussion in teacher identity and teacher education research, transnationality has received little attention. As Varghese, Motha, Park, Reeves, and Trent (2016) stated, teacher education programs can engage in identity work if they "disrupt or at least question the identity categories that teacher candidates come with as well as in what ways such categories are privileged and/or marginalized" (p. 557). The insights gained in this study can be used to that end.

In order to engage transnationality as a positive identity category in teacher education programs, student-teachers can be invited to examine their own transnational journeys, identities, and life histories. Prior studies show that engaging teachers in identity work helps them "exercise professional agency, and thereby maximize their potential for development and growth" (Clarke, 2009, pp. 186-187). Data in this study also confirmed that when transnational teacher-scholars engage in reflection about their own transnational positionings, critical incidents, and the

spatiotemporal dimensions of their identities, they come to a better understanding of their strengths as transnationals and how their transnationality may be used as an asset in their scholarships. As Park, Rinke, and Mawhinney (2016) argued, "having teachers construct their life histories … can lead to unpacking the forms of capital" (p. 4). Activities that engage transnational teacher-scholars and student-teachers in self-reflection can lead them to view their transnational identities from a resource-rich perspective, which they can then model for their students.

One way to engage transnational student-teachers and faculty in self-reflection is regular, facilitated discussions about their cross-border ways of life and how their transnational activities enrich their lives, both personally and professionally. Just like participants in this study engaged in discussions with the researcher about their transnational lives, transnational student-teachers and faculty can be invited to reflect on their own cross-border journeys and how they can use their transnational lived experiences as a resource in their professional activities. Prompts such as these below can help facilitate such discussions.

> ● Describe your current transnational activities/interactions and how often you engage in these activities/interactions?
>
> ● How do your transnational activities/interactions make you feel, and how important is it for you to sustain them?
>
> ● In your opinion, what are the pros and cons of being a transnational?
>
> ● What are some critical incidents you have experienced or witnessed that have impacted you in some way, negative or positive?
>
> ● How does being a transnational make you who you are?
>
> ● What have you learned from your transnational experiences?
>
> ● What would you say you bring to your institution as a transnational student/faculty member?

To promote deeper reflections, it is important to keep the questions open-ended and to allow the participants to respond in any way they wish. These discussions encourage them to focus on their transnational lives and how their transnationality may impact and be impacted by their teaching, research, and service scholarships.

Another way to include self-reflection in teacher education programs is by encouraging student-teachers and faculty to write a dialogic journal and/or autobiography focusing on how their transnational past and present—including their cross-cultural interactions, linguistic experiences, and international academic activities—have shaped them into the person, student, or faculty they are today. These dialogic journals and autobiographies can then be used as springboards for further reflection, elaboration, and discussion. These reflection practices will help transnational student-teachers and faculty to look at their past and present experiences through a transnational lens, a lens they will then be able to teach to their own students.

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