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THE EXPERIENCES OF EXPATRIATE TEACHERS IN
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS:
FIVE ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDIES

by

James S. Anderson

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education
University of San Diego

December 2010

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Abstract

An increasingly global economy has produced a growing demand for teachers to work in international schools. However, data about teachers who elect to move abroad and work in international settings are limited. The lack of research in this area is surprising, given the relatively large number of expatriate teachers who work in international schools.

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of how expatriate teachers perceive their experiences in international schools and the role that these perceptions may play in their decisions to continue at a school or to seek other employment. In order to explore these topics, I completed an in-depth study of five participants who had each worked in multiple international schools during the course of their careers. The study utilized the following three research techniques: semi-structured interviews utilizing an interview guide; a particularistic case-study analysis approach focused on participants' professional life histories; and a three part cross-case analysis of interview data that allowed for the emergence of preliminary ethnographic generalizations about the culture of international school teachers.

While only a small group of participating teachers was used for this research, rich qualitative data emerged that suggest the following: (a) The teachers in this study care deeply about how they are treated by their administrators and are more likely to leave a posting where they do not feel fully trusted to do their jobs. (b) The participants value transparency about working and living conditions during the recruitment process. (c) Participants indicated a need for easy access to communication with friends and family in order to feel fully supported by their school. (d) Participants suggested that they and other

international school teachers they knew seek novelty and adventure; consequently, teachers may leave even highly positive situations. (e) Overseas teachers appear to form an occupational culture that shapes their expectations of employment and the living conditions in international school settings. This study began to define what the culture of international school teachers looks like and the values and preferences that are associated with teaching in an international school.

Table of Contents

Approval Page	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Background of the Study	1
Purpose of the Study	3
Research Questions	4
Significance of the Study	5
Definition of Terms	5
Organization of the Study	6
Chapter 2: Literature Review	8
International Schools Overview	8
Defining International Schools.	8
Students Attending International Schools.	9
Current Crisis Facing International Schools.....	10
Teachers' Experiences and Challenges	16
Teacher Hierarchies in International Schools	18
The Culture of International School Teachers	18
Organizational Structure and Hierarchies in International Schools	19
Conclusion	22
Chapter 3: Methodology.....	23
Participants and Setting	24
Sampling Size and Sampling Plan	25
Data Collection Methods	26
Interviews.....	26

Interview Guide.....	27
Building Trust With Participants	29
Rapport building.....	29
Data Analysis and Methodological Approaches for the Five Case Studies.....	31
Case Study and Life History Methodology.....	31
Data Analysis.....	32
Data Analysis and Methodological Approaches for the Cross-Case Analysis	36
Quotation Matrix.....	37
Domain Analysis.....	38
Categories and Properties of the Interview Data.....	40
Researcher Reflections	41
Ethical Issues	42
Assumptions, Delimiting Factors, and Limitations	42
Products	43
Case Study Products.....	43
Cross-Case Analysis Products.....	44
Chapter 4: Professional Life Histories	45
Interest in Teaching.....	47
Interest in Living Abroad	47
Emma	54
Interest in Teaching.....	55
Interest in Living Abroad and Emma’s First Posting in Bangladesh.....	55
Emma’s Second International School	56
A Return Home	57
Emma’s Third Overseas Teaching Position.....	57

Concluding Thoughts.....	59
Skip.....	60
Interest in Teaching.....	60
Skip’s Current International School	62
Skip’s Thoughts on International Teaching.....	63
Concluding Thoughts.....	65
Ann	65
Interest in Teaching and in Living Abroad	66
Vietnam	67
A Return Home and Lingering Desire to Live Abroad.....	68
Bangladesh.....	68
Egypt	69
Peru	69
The Process of Choosing to Come to Africa	70
Ann’s Current Job in Africa	71
Ann’s Thoughts on Teaching Internationally	71
Thoughts on the lifestyle of an overseas teacher	
Concluding Thoughts.....	73
Jane	73
Interest in Teaching.....	74
Russia	74
A Time to Move On.....	76
Africa.....	76
Jane’s Thoughts on International Teaching	77
Concluding Thoughts.....	78

Conclusion	78
Chapter 5: Findings	79
How Research Participants First Learned About International Schools and Initial Motivating Factors That Led to Seeking Employment Abroad	79
How Research Participants Perceived Initial and Subsequent Postings at International Schools.....	82
The Role Played by the Research Participant’s Prior International Experience in the Assessment of His or Her Current School	87
What the Research Participants Now Know About the Network of International Schools and the Source of Their Information	89
Challenges and Positive Features the Research Participants Identified as Impacting the Longevity of their Employment at an International School	89
Administrators.	90
The culture clash challenge.	96
Positive features impacting longevity.	98
Conclusion	100
Chapter 6: Discussion	102
An Overview of the Previous Chapters.....	102
Discussion of the Findings.....	103
A Comparison of the Findings with Joslin’s Criteria for Self Knowledge Among International School Teachers.	103
The “Culture” of International School Teachers	105
Implications for Policy.....	106
Rethink the issue of timing in the teacher recruitment process.....	106
Educate administrators about what they do (or don’t do) that impacts retention.	109
Full disclosure sooner rather than later.	110
On-going responsiveness.....	110

Recommendations for Future Research	111
Researcher Reflections	112
Conclusion	114
References	116
Appendix A: Interview Guide	127
Appendix B: Informed Consent Letter	130
Appendix C: Cultural Influences Model	132
Appendix D: Data Analysis Worksheet Sample	133
Appendix E: Quotation Matrix	134
Domain Analysis	136
Categories and Properties of the Interview Data	138

List of Tables

Table 1. Predetermined Codes	34
Table 2. Evolved Codes	35
Table 3. Relationship terms and examples of use.	39
Table 4. Illustrative example of a domain analysis worksheet.	40
Table 5. Domain Analysis Worksheet 4 (Cause/Effect).....	81
Table 6. Personal/Cultural/Social Benefits of Overseas Teaching and Initial Reasons	82
Table 7. Domain Analysis Worksheet (Attribution).....	84
Table 8 Participants Comments About the Importance of Flexiility.....	85
Table 9. Domain Analysis Worksheet (Attribution).....	86
Table 10. Expectations and Reality Clashes	87
Table 11. Trust/Feeling Valued/Respected as Teacher/Community Support	91
Table 12. Communication with Home	95
Table 13. Negative Aspects of Teaching in International Schools.....	97
Table 14. Domain Analysis Worksheet (Attribution).....	99
Table 15.Property: Financial Stability	100
Table 16. Salary & Contractual Benefits	134
Table 17. Qualities of a Successful International Teacher	135
Table 18. Satisfaction with Current School	135
Table 19. New Teacher Support / Orientation.....	136
Table 20. Domain Analysis Worksheet (Cause/Effect).....	136
Table 21. Domain Analysis Worksheet (Cause/Effect)Worksheet.....	137
Table 22. Domain Analysis Worksheet (Cause/Effect)Worksheet.....	137
Table 23. Domain Analysis Worksheet (Means/End)	138

Table 24. Category 1: Professional Experience	138
Table 25. Category I: Professional Experience.....	139
Table 26. Category I: Professional Experience.....	139
Table 27. Category I: Professional Experience.....	140
Table 28. Category 2: Grounded Wellbeing.....	140
Table 29. Category 2: Grounded Wellbeing.....	140
Table 30. Category 2: Grounded Wellbeing.....	141
Table 31. Category 3: Wisdom for Decision Making	141
Table 32. Category 4: Good Fortune.....	141

Chapter 1: Introduction

Background of the Study

International schools are facing a crisis related to teacher recruitment and teacher retention (Broman, 2008). Consequently, a shortage of qualified teachers has prompted international school administrators simultaneously to recruit more aggressively and to actively focus on improving faculty retention. However, such recruitment and retention initiatives are taking place within what amounts to a knowledge vacuum, for there is limited research available that focuses on the perceptions of international school educators.

Teachers on the so-called “circuit” of international schools are a little studied group. Holderness (2002) posited that the literature on international schools has tended to ignore the experiences of teachers. Canterford (2003) and Joslin (2002) also have noted that little has been done to examine the experiences of teachers working in international schools. Odland and Ruzicka (2009) suggested that a good starting point for addressing the issue of high teacher turnover in international schools is to identify the underlying reasons that prompt teachers to leave these schools.

International teachers frequently discuss their experiences in the institutions where they have worked and are familiar with. These discussions become part of the folklore that often enhances or harms a school’s reputation. Nonetheless, this is insider knowledge that remains largely informal and minimally researched. Hayden (2006) discussed how teachers become knowledgeable about international schools mainly through “word of mouth” (p. 79).

Hayden postulated that:

Anecdotal evidence suggests that within the network of international schools world-wide there is an effective 'bush telegraph' which communicates a myriad of information relating to international school teachers' experience, including which are the good and not-so-good schools to work in, which teachers are likely to be moving on at the end of the year, and so on. (p. 79)

Odland and Ruzicka (2009) suggested that the independent nature of international schools has made more formal research on expatriate teacher turnover difficult.

Though limited, some compelling research on teacher turnover in international schools does exist. Hardman (2001) studied international school teachers regarding their motivation to continue at their current schools as expatriate faculty. According to Hardman, the highest percentage of teachers stayed because of professional advancement, financial incentives, and happy working conditions. Hardman additionally found that feelings of acceptance or rejection in the international school's host country impacts teachers' interest in continuing or discontinuing employment at a given overseas school.

Joslin's (2002) research specified that teachers' concern for culture and the cultural context of the international school contribute to their interest in extending or terminating employment at a particular overseas school. The factor of culture was considered important, according to Joslin, because teachers are not necessarily familiar with the culture of the country where they will be teaching before moving to the country. This analysis is supported in Farber and Sutherland's (2006) research. Farber and Sutherland reported that some teachers are ill-prepared to teach in international schools.

Another significant factor in retention, according to Farber and Sutherland, are teacher wages. Unlike Hardman and Farber's and Sutherland's studies, Joslin's research did not examine salary as an important factor in teacher retention. Joslin's research indicated that teachers were in the profession mainly because of their love of teaching.

Joslin opined that if teachers wanted to make money, they would have chosen another occupation. However, it should be noted that the issue of teachers' salaries was not built into Joslin's research design. Finally, Odland and Ruzicka's (2009) research found that the relationship between teachers and school administrators significantly impacted teacher longevity at international schools:

Faced with the challenges of culture shock, language barriers, potentially adverse living conditions, and a host of other possible challenges, international school communities come to rely heavily on support from within their own community. When relationships go sour, particularly between senior administrators and members of their staff, the potential for feelings such as those expressed in this study are perhaps higher in international schools than in other contexts. (Odland & Ruzicka, 2009, p. 22)

The existing research on teacher recruitment and retention in international schools has offered initial insight into some of the variables that teachers consider when making employment related decisions. However, the literature lacks the level of thick description necessary to more fully understand how these teachers perceive their experiences in international schools, and how these perceptions may impact the length of their tenure at a particular school site.

Purpose of the Study

Marton (1994) suggested that “we can understand (and even predict) teachers’ ways of acting if we find out their ways of thinking, making decisions, solving problems” (p. 29). Therefore, the purpose of the study has been to gain a better understanding of how expatriate teachers perceive their experiences in international schools, and the role that these perceptions play in their decisions to continue at a school or to seek other employment. Since the research indicates that there is a shortage of teachers in international schools and that there is a continuous process to recruit them, there is a need

to better understand how teachers perceive their experiences in these schools (Broman, 2008; Magagna, 2006).

Research Questions

The research questions for this dissertation focus on expatriate teachers' perceptions of their experiences in international schools. The following five research questions have been used to guide this study:

- (a) How did the research participants first learn about international schools and what were the initial motivating factors that led these teachers to seek employment abroad?
- (b) How did these teachers perceive their initial and subsequent postings at different international schools?
- (c) What role did a teacher's prior international experience play in the assessment of his or her current school?
- (d) What do teachers now know about the network of international schools, commonly referred to as the "circuit," and what is the source of their information?
- (e) What challenges and positive features do teachers identify as impacting the longevity of their employment at an international school?

The research questions assume that international school teachers evaluate their schools by relying on a body of knowledge obtained from prior experience within this professional circuit. I have additionally assumed that, at least in part, teachers will stay in a school longer if the reality of the school environment matches the expectations generated during the recruiting process.

Significance of the Study

Little has been written about how international school teachers experience their professional and personal lives while living and working abroad. Those within the pool of international educators tend to rely on folklore about this “circuit” or on somewhat generalized literature about living and working overseas. The teachers who have participated in this study have offered some important insight to school administrators, international school boards, and parent groups that aim to hire and retain excellent teachers. If international schools hope to retain highly qualified teachers, then a better understanding of how these teachers perceive and evaluate their jobs and experience could prove useful to school administrators.

Definition of Terms

Very specific terms are used to describe aspects of the international schools network. Some of these terms, especially those related to recruitment and retention, require explanation and are defined below:

Circuit. The loose connection between international schools through which teachers and administrators move during their careers abroad.

Contracts. Teaching contracts for international schools usually require an initial 2-year commitment. Teachers may then be offered the chance to extend the contract.

International schools. These schools provide English-medium education to the children of diplomats, foreign aide workers, multinational business people, missionaries, and other “expatriates” working abroad. Many of these schools also enroll host-country nationals who desire a Western-style education (Hayden, 2006).

International Schools Services (ISS). ISS is a large recruitment agency specializing in the

placement of teachers and administrators in international school positions (Hayden, 2006). ISS also provides shipping and financial services for international schools (Hayden, 2006).

Local hire (Host Country National) teacher. A local hire is a teacher who is hired “on-site” to work at a school. The teacher is usually a host country national (Garton, 2000).

Local hire expatriate teacher. A teacher who is hired “on-site” to work at a school. This designation usually implies a reduced-benefits package (Garton, 2000).

Expatriate overseas hire teachers. These are teachers who are hired remotely, either through recruitment fairs or by phone and/or the Internet. These teachers are expected to move from one position to the next approximately every 2 to 5 years (Garton, 2000).

Recruitment fairs. Teachers attend these conferences hoping to secure positions at international schools (Hayden, 2006).

Search Associates. A recruitment agency placing teachers in international school positions (Thearle, 2000).

The International Educator (TIE). A periodical focused on international school issues. Each issue of TIE also contains an extensive section listing teaching and administrative vacancies around the world.

The International Schools Review. A Web site aimed at providing reviews of international schools and their administrators for teachers considering relocation.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 includes a background to the study that encompasses its purpose,

guiding research questions, and an explanation of the significance of the research. The important terms used in this study are defined.

Chapter 2 includes the review of literature on the following topics: An overview of the expatriate teaching “culture” in international schools, the variables that attract teachers to international schools, and an overview of international schools, including their numbers, organizational structures, and teacher/student demographics.

Chapter 3 includes a description of the research participants, setting, sampling procedures, theoretical framework for the qualitative research design strategy, field work and notes, data collection and data analysis, an explanation of triangulation, limitations of methodology, expected findings, and a description of research products.

Chapter 4 includes the presentation of five Professional Life Histories. I have retold each participant’s story of their lives in international schools. Each chronicle was based on the transcribed dated form the participant’s two interviews.

Chapter 5 includes a review of the findings of this research. Each research question is addressed and graphic illustrations from the data analysis tools are woven into the discussion of the findings.

Chapter 6 includes a discussion of the findings, the policy implications that the results of this research suggest, recommendations for further research, and my own reflections on this study’s findings.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In order to understand the problems facing international schools in their ability to retain teachers and set the stage for the study, I have reviewed and discussed several bodies of literature. The research literature review includes (a) the characteristics of international schools, (b) the process of recruitment and retention of teachers for these schools, (c) the experiences of teachers at international schools, and (d) a description of the levels of occupational status found within many international schools.

This review begins with a discussion of literature that contributes to an overview of international schools, their organizational structure, and teacher/student demographics. The focus then shifts to what is already known about teacher recruitment and the challenges that schools encounter when attempting to retain teachers. Finally, the review concludes with literature discussing the occupational stratification often associated with teaching in international school settings.

International Schools Overview

Defining International Schools.

Providing an accurate definition of an international school can be problematic. International schools vary greatly in terms of curriculum, hiring practices, student populations, and governing structures. These schools may be for-profit proprietary schools, “national schools abroad, national government schools with international sections, independent schools offering national education, restricted enrollment multinational schools like the EC, and company/religious affiliated schools” (Jonietz, 1991, p. 2). A principal characteristic of an international school, according to Blaney (2000), is that English is the spoken language of the

school. Blaney has additionally identified the following characteristics that are common to international schools:

Their core purpose is to serve international families for whom the local schools are not suitable, often because of the language of instruction. They serve transitional, highly mobile families. Their governing Boards, faculties and staff also turn over frequently (it is not unusual for the membership of a governing Board to change completely within two or three years). They are academic preparatory schools for university. (p. 160)

Despite attempts to define international schools, a common descriptor is difficult to broadly apply. A testament to the diversity of international schools is a quote by Hayden and Thompson (2000): “A striking feature that most of us would associate with our own mental picture of international schools or international education is a lack of homogeneity” (p. 1). For the purposes of this study, however, the term “international school” has been applied to schools whose purpose is to deliver a primarily English-medium curriculum to students living and studying outside of their country of origin.

Students Attending International Schools.

Within the literature on international schools, a profile of the type of student who attends these schools emerges. Children enrolled in international schools represent professional families of the global elite, which includes diplomatic personnel and multinational corporate executives. Approximately 90% of high school graduates from international schools enroll in colleges or take other paths to higher education (Burns, 2003). Consequently, when working with children of such backgrounds, the challenge faced by international schools is “to keep the students educationally stimulated” (International Schools Review, 2005, ¶ 6). Students in international schools may or may not be comfortable with their national identities; however, they are neither immigrants nor persons seeking assimilation.

Although culturally diverse, international school students often share common measures of socioeconomic status. These students additionally share the commonly used identification of “third-culture kids” (McKillop-Ostrom, 2000, p. 74). According to McKillop-Ostrom, third-culture kids, “transcend a single culture and nationality, and experience a particular stress as a result of their mobility” (p. 74). Eidse and Sichel, as cited in Hayden (2006), have described the internationally transitional students who attend international schools in the following profound, if negative, description:

They are perpetual outsiders, millions of children around the world, born in one nation, raised in others, flung into global jet streams by their parents' career choices and consequent mobility. Some move often, from place to place, country to country. Others establish semi-permanent lodgings on foreign soil, returning to the place their parents call home for vacations or family events. They live unrooted childhoods. (p. 41)

While Hayden argued that this rather bleak assessment of a childhood spent abroad is not shared by all, it is a truism that the third-culture kids who attend international schools do experience life in ways that are outside the norms of a domestic childhood experience.

Current Crisis Facing International Schools.

International schools face a shortage of teachers that has reached dire proportions; *The International Educator* recently classified this situation a “crisis” (Broman, 2008).

John Magagna (2006) of Search Associates, one of the most influential recruiting agencies for international schools, described the origins of the shortage as follows:

There are more and more new international schools springing up around the world and many existing international schools are getting larger. At the same time, the supply of teachers wanting to go abroad is declining. The spread of terrorism around the world discourages many teachers from wanting to travel, live and work abroad—even in highly stable countries in Western Europe. Fewer young people are entering the teaching profession, especially women, who now have so many more options to consider than in the past. Because of teaching shortages in many English-speaking countries, salaries and benefits have had to be raised to attract more candidates, thus making opportunities ‘at home’ seem more appealing

in comparison to teaching abroad. (§ 4)

The International Educator (2009) speculated that a lack of knowledge about international schools on the part of potential teaching candidates has additionally contributed to the shortage:

Those teachers who have committed their careers to teaching abroad find it is hard to understand why every teacher would not try to spend at least one term of teaching in an international school outside of their own country. The reasons for doing so are legion; and yet fewer than 2 percent of US, UK and Canadian teachers are even aware of our network of quality international schools. (p. 8)

Retention of teachers has also become a growing priority for international school administrators. Merrow (2000) suggested, “We’re misdiagnosing the problem as ‘recruitment’ when it’s really ‘retention’” (p. 1). Because most international schools operate independently, turnover rates are difficult to quantify. However, Julie Wagner (1991) has found significant variation in turnover rates in an informal survey of international schools’ heads. Wagner found that the average stay ranges from 2.5 to 12 years. Schools in North Asia, Africa, South America, Middle East, Southeast Asia, and Europe were represented in the survey. Teacher tenure ranged from the short stay averages of 2.5 years in North Asia and 2.9 years in Africa, to a high of 12 years in Europe. Wagner’s survey obtained responses from only 21 international schools; therefore, it appears that based on the limited data presented, there is a need for further inquiry and study. Bunnell (2005) discussed two studies that verified the problematic nature of teacher turnover in international schools:

Hayden and Thompson’s (1998) study into the perceptions of teachers as to what constitutes an international education showed that 40% had taught in five or more schools. A survey published on the Association for the Advancement of International Education’s Web site shows that the average tenure of teachers is 3.5 years whilst the range is from 2.5 years to 4.25 years. (p. 69)

While it is difficult to quantify teacher turnover rates in international schools, data does exist to illustrate that independent schools in the United States also face the issue of faculty attrition. Interestingly, the reported reasons for the loss of teachers in American private schools bear some similarity to the factors that contribute to teacher turnover in international schools. The U.S. Department of Education has reported the following:

According to principal reports . . . 21 percent of nonsectarian school teachers changed schools or left the teaching profession between the 1999-2000 and 2000-01 school years. Private school teachers who were reported to have left their schools (movers and leavers) were more likely than stayers to report relatively low levels of administrative support, satisfaction with salary, student discipline, control over classroom policies, and input in school policies. (McGrath & Pinciotta, June 2005, p. 1)

There appears to be little examination of experiential data provided by teachers concerning their views of an overseas teaching assignment (Joslin, 2002). Hayden and Thompson have stated, “One of the striking features of the field of international schools and international education is the dearth of written material available within the public domain” (as cited in Bunnell, 2004, p. 22). Holderness posited that “until recently insufficient attention has been paid to teachers in the international school literature” (as cited in Bunnell, 2005, p. 69). However, Hardman (2001) explored the motivations of international school teachers to either renew their contracts or, alternatively, resign and relocate.

Hardman's (2001) research on international school management and its response to recruitment and retention issues is one of the few studies of its kind, and therefore merits discussion. For this research, Hardman collected survey data from a variety of international schools as well as interview data from international schools in Buenos Aires. Data were provided by school managers as well as teachers. Eighty nine percent of

the teachers who participated in the survey had worked in at least two international schools. The study revealed that teachers primarily valued friendly working environments, strong competitive financial benefits, and opportunities to advance professionally when considering accepting a new job or staying in their current position.

While Hardman's (2001) research was enlightening, elementary school teachers working in international schools remain a little-studied group. This lack of knowledge is surprising, considering that the students of international schools tend to be drawn from highly accomplished and influential families. A need clearly exists to establish a better understanding of how teachers' perceptions regarding their job affect their longevity at international schools.

The recruitment and retention of teachers at international schools create some unique challenges for school administrators. Schools, for example, need to actively promote their institutions at international recruitment fairs and through advertising in niche journals. Hardman (2001) observed that, "the successful staffing of international schools, is [*sic*] arguably one of the most important functions in any manager's job description" (p. 123).

For teachers, the decision to accept employment at an international school is multifaceted. International relocation, housing, availability of adequate regional medical care, home leave, and tuition for dependent children need to be considered, along with the usual concerns about salary and class size, before a teacher commits to a school. Teachers often face a complex set of decisions prior to signing an initial contract. Hayden (2006) stated that,

When it is remembered that decisions being made will often involve a new recruit moving to a country never previously visited, possibly with spouse and children

in tow, it is perhaps surprising that as many appointments made under such circumstances are as successful as they appear to be. (p. 80)

Powell (2000) noted that the geographic locations of the international schools have influenced the attainment of a reliable faculty: “For international schools, often located in remote areas of the world, the recruitment of outstanding teaching staff is often easier said than done” (p. 191). Teachers will usually initially sign 2-year, rather than 1-year contracts. A commitment of 2 years at the beginning of a teacher's tenure at a school adds further complexity to the decision-making process.

Hardman (2001) argued that school administrators would benefit from endeavoring to keep teachers beyond their initial 2-year commitment. Hardman observed that a teacher's first year at a new international school involves a settling in process that detracts from “optimal” instruction. A teacher's second year, if it is the final year, is spent looking for a new position, again detracting from optimal instruction.

Hardman (2001) suggested that the recruitment process is challenging for both international school administrators and prospective teachers. Garton (2000) found that administrators often have to make spur-of-the-moment decisions when attending recruitment fairs to offer a candidate a teaching contract. Teachers may experience a similar sense of urgency to rapidly accept or decline an offer. Garton noted that, “This scenario itself creates major pressures on time which could lead to a negative outcome just because there are not the opportunities for reflection and discussion that could apply to interviews in a national context” (p. 91). When considering the international school recruitment process, both the administrator and the candidate may, according to Hardman, be confronted with the following questions:

- From the school's perspective:

- What are the key skills needed for the curriculum, both formal and non-formal?
- What balance of long-term/short-term contracts is best for the staff?
- Is there an educationally optimal contract length?
- If we want to keep good teachers longer, how can we persuade them to extend contracts?
- From the applicant's perspective:
 - What am I looking for in a teaching job in an international school?
 - Why should I apply to this school? What has this school got to offer me?
 - Might I be tempted to stay longer than my contract (if offered)? What might tempt me? (p. 125, bullets and dashes in original quote)

If both parties agree to contractual conditions, hopeful expectations will be developed by both the administrator and the newly recruited teacher. Teachers then arrive at a new school site maintaining the expectations developed during the recruitment process. Hardman (2001) advised school managers to be cognizant of the factors that keep teachers motivated to remain in their jobs. Yet, Hardman acknowledged that, “It is unlikely that managers will be able to ensure that all of the major conditions and incentives are in operation for all of their staff all of the time” (p. 129).

The challenge shifts from recruitment to retaining teachers beyond their initial 2-year contract once teachers arrive at the school site. As previously inferred, teachers, once recruited, often begin to make evaluative decisions about the length of their stay at the new school site. Marton (1994) has reasoned that, “teachers’ acts are affected—if not caused, or controlled—by the thoughts they have arrived at, the decisions they have made, the solution to the problems they have found” (p. 29). Teachers working internationally, in contrast to their domestic counterparts, engage in an evaluative process that takes into account more than on-site job conditions. Housing and home leave benefits, cultural adjustments, and, frequently, family transitional issues play into an international teacher’s overall assessment of his or her workplace. Kottkamp (1990) observed that most of the research on the attitudes of teachers has focused on, “some

aspect of work” (p. 86). However, an understanding of the thoughts and attitudes of international teachers would be incomplete using only school site-based research.

Teachers’ Experiences and Challenges

Teaching in international schools has been described as being “entirely different than *teaching* [*sic*] in America. The student population of an *international school* is normally made up of children from no less than forty countries” (*International Schools Review*, 2005, ¶ 6, italics in original text). Because of the rapid creation of new international schools, access to accurate statistics is limited. However, International Schools Services (2007) has reported that, “More than 270,000 children in grades K-12 attend American and international schools overseas, excluding U.S. Department of Defense Schools” (¶ 2). *The International Educator* (2008) has postulated that there are “over 900 K-12 overseas American, Anglo-American, British and international schools worldwide” and “5000 teaching overseas vacancies each year” (Section: Advantages of Teaching Overseas).

Issues surrounding the cultural adjustment of teachers may play a paramount role in a teacher’s initial evaluation of his or her setting. Mendenhall and Oddou (1985), in a review of the literature discussing expatriate adjustment, have affirmed that the entrance into a new culture can be stressful and suggested that those with the facilities to manage such stress fare better in their new environment. International school teachers, and others working abroad, face the challenges embedded in adjusting to a new culture, and they must also successfully adapt to a new work environment. The authors stated that:

All expatriates are assigned overseas to accomplish some kind of task—whether it be building a dam, running a business, converting others to one’s religion or

teaching English. Confidence in one's ability to accomplish the purpose of the overseas assignment—and possessing the necessary technical expertise to do so—seems to be an important part of expatriate adjustment. (p. 41)

It is easy to see how mental stress is compounded by the combination of a new job and a new country. As a definition of culture shock, Pedersen (1995) described an environment, both physical and psychological, where adjustment is mandated and “where previous learning no longer applies” (p. 1). Culture shock is thus experienced doubly as expatriate workers adjust to a new professional culture as well as to that of the host country. Joslin (2002) assumed that teacher behavior was affected by the interaction of the work culture with the newly experienced national culture.

Joslin (2002) explored in detail the process of acculturating to international schools through an extensive review of literature and from her perspective as a British expatriate teacher. In the context of that exploration, she arrived at a functional set of characteristics upon which teachers can evaluate their experiences at international schools. These characteristics are phrased as specific elements of self-knowledge for teachers to consider:

- [Their] own culture heritage
 - [Their] previous work culture/ ‘home’ country professional culture;
 - The school’s organization culture
 - The international school’s mission
 - The local community culture (e.g. expatriate community); and
 - The regional culture and the host nation’s culture/subcultures.
- (Joslin, 2002, p. 34, bullets in original quote)

The criteria suggest that the complex interactions of the aforementioned six characteristics, when cognitively processed by teachers, will allow them to form summative judgments about the suitability of their placement in a particular school. Because it provided a framework for the development of self-knowledge among

international school teachers, these criteria were central to this study and helped guide the process of data collection (Appendix C).

Teacher Hierarchies in International Schools

It is important to note that in many international schools, differentiations are made between types of international teachers. Because international schools serve a transient and globally influential clientele, teachers are, when possible, recruited from abroad.

While teachers will usually be hired locally as well, Garton (2000) observed that international schools are often under pressure to recruit internationally:

Parental and community opinion is frequently a factor of importance here, as there is plenty of anecdotal evidence to suggest that it is often the case that a number of parents would 'prefer' their child to be taught by a native-English-speaking 'Western-trained' overseas-hire expatriate, for reasons that may be founded rather more on prejudice than on well-informed evaluation. (p. 87)

The layers of occupational status for teachers in international schools can be rather confusing at first glance. Canterford (2003) cited Matthews' attempt to differentiate three principal types of teachers working in international schools:

1. Spouses of diplomats, military or employees of multinationals who are only there because of the occupation of their spouse and
2. 'Transients' who are usually young and inexperienced and are attached the sense of adventure associated with working abroad.
The latter usually provide the school with two or three years service before either returning 'home' or moving into the third group:
3. Career internationals, who can be divided into three subgroups: (a) local nationals; (b) those settled in a particular location; (c) those who move from international school to international school. (p. 49)

The Culture of International School Teachers

A variety of literature exists that supports my assumption that international school teachers, particularly expatriate teachers, are members of a unique and identifiable cultural group. Multiple definitions have been applied to "culture." For the purposes of

this research, I will jointly apply Merriam's (2002) description of culture as “the knowledge people have acquired that in turn structures their worldview and their behavior” (p. 236) and that of Spradley (1979), who defined culture as “*the acquired knowledge that people use to interpret experience and generate social behavior*” (p. 5, italics in original text).

International teachers would certainly qualify as a culture using these definitions. Like members of cultures that include surfers, military wives, or transgender people, international teachers are not necessarily born into the culture that they come to inhabit. They enter the culture, usually as adults, and are acculturated through formal training, casual gossip, adoption of common vocabulary, and general identification with the group and its beliefs. Spradley (1979), citing a study of air traffic controllers, noted that members of this profession, “like people everywhere, organize their cultural knowledge” (p. 228). As with the other occupational or lifestyle-based cultures, international teachers are members of many additional cultural groups, such as those determined by nationality, ethnicity, religion, etc. The focus of this research is on the occupationally determined culture of international teachers. More specifically, the intent has been to learn more about how teachers within this culture make decisions about accepting a new position or renewing their commitment to their current overseas school.

Organizational Structure and Hierarchies in International Schools

While teachers in international schools constitute a culture that is global in scope, it is important to briefly examine the organizational structures and internal lines of authority within the schools upon which this culture depends. Regardless of their size, international schools function in a manner that is, in many ways, akin to similar

educational organizations found in the United States. Although it is difficult to generalize about the highly varied structures of international schools, many share the organizational disruptions associated with the use of administrative authority and the impact that the use of this authority has on the recruitment and retention of teachers.

In order to accomplish the business of teaching and learning, all schools require some form of structure that is functional and, at times, situational. Hatch (1997) has stated that, “Organization theorists often claim that organizations form around tasks that are too large for individuals to perform themselves” (p. 162). Someone must be in the classroom, while others manage the day-to-day tasks that support each teacher’s work. The majority of this support is clerical in nature and involves administrative assistants, admissions officers, business managers, maintenance workers, etc. Yet, the positions of School Director and Principal require a more complex view of what constitutes “support” of teaching and learning. Administrators need to facilitate the work of classroom teachers through praise, the sanctioning of requested instructional materials, and protection from unreasonable demands by parents and students. However, because administrators must also advocate for students and evaluate teachers, most schools have developed a hierarchy that often attempts to reconcile the administrator’s dual role in an awkward manner. Ball (1978) stated that, “schools occupy an uneasy middle ground between hierarchical-work organizations and member-controlled organizations” (p. 9).

Because international schools often employ teachers from a variety of nationalities, faculty members can perceive “chains of command” in diverse ways. Hatch (1997) posited that, while some see hierarchies as an organic occurrence, to “others, hierarchy is a poorly disguised effort to legitimate the unfair distribution of power that

enables some individuals and groups to dominate others” (164).

This uneasy relationship is exacerbated in international schools, where administrators often socialize with, and live in close proximity to, their teaching staff. Because an organizational hierarchy does exist, Black (1997) observed that, “Into this climate of anxiety treads the school administrator. The players are both enemies and friends” (p. 25). The word “enemies” is probably an overstatement, but it illustrates the tension that is bound to exist when one person serves as another’s supervisor. Yet administrators are often drawn towards friendships with teachers, particularly in the isolated worlds of international schools and because, as Ball (1978) has posited, “schools differ from many other organizations in as much as the leader will virtually inevitably have risen from the ranks” (p. 9).

This study has revealed that organizational hierarchies in international schools often impact on the issue of teacher retention. Bolman and Deal (2003) proposed that, “a manager’s practices and assumptions about people can lead to either alienation and hostility or to commitment and high motivation” (p. xix). When dealing with management, Peterson (2001) stated that, “people care deeply about how they are treated” (p. 30).

Administrative decisions about hiring new staff can prove to be an additional source of tension in international schools. Administrators are also often tasked with recruiting teachers frequently and quickly, either through telephone interviews or at annual job fairs. The recruiting principal, or school head, must make a rapid hiring decision considering, among other factors, how well the new recruit will “fit in” with the existing staff. Hatch (1997) noted that, “The difficulties associated with complexity and change

both produce uncertainty (i.e., the lack of information) and can interfere with rational decision making” (p. 274). International school leaders, due to the time constraints of the recruiting process, can be prone to hiring mistakes. The recruiting administrator will be held accountable for poor hiring choices by teachers, parents, and often school boards.

International schools, while structured similarly to institutions in the United States, must contend with personnel issues not faced by their American counterparts. Rapid teacher turnover, and various cultural perceptions of authority, require strict attention to the balance between directive management and sensitivity to teacher concerns. Because international school teachers’ concerns extend beyond the classroom to housing and host-country issues, the balance becomes more intricate.

Conclusion

In this literature review, areas of interest in this study were outlined. First, a discussion of international schools introduced the topic and provided information about it that has already been ascertained through previous research. The problems surrounding teacher recruitment and retention were then discussed. In the subsequent section, this review concentrated on the study of teachers in international schools. A focus on teachers’ experiences is appropriate because they represent the nexus at which the objective observations of international schools and their problem of teacher retention meet. In order to better understand the “culture” of international school teachers, an explanation of occupational stratification within international schools and the teaching circuit was also given. Literature discussed in this section forms the foundational knowledge from which this research begins.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The methodology used in this dissertation has accounted for the following: (a) how the participants first learned about international schools and the initial motivating factors that led these teachers to seek employment abroad; (b) how these teachers perceived their initial and subsequent postings at different international schools; (c) the role that a teacher's prior international experience played in the assessment of his or her current school; (d) what teachers knew about the network of international schools, commonly referred to as the “circuit,” and the source of this information; and (e) the challenges and positive features that impacted the longevity of the teachers’ employment at an international school.

In order to research these topics and subsequently discuss the findings of this study, I primarily utilized the following three techniques: 1) semi-structured interviews utilizing an interview guide; 2) a particularistic case study approach limited to, and presented as, professional life histories; and 3) a three-part cross-case analysis of interview data that allowed for the emergence of ethnographic generalizations associated with the culture of international school teachers.

Clearly, this study has not taken a singular approach to this research, but rather attempted to produce results from a mixture of typological and ethnographic analysis methods. Hatch (2002) defined *typological analysis* as “dividing the overall data set into categories or groups based on predetermined typologies” (p. 152). Spradley (1979) quite succinctly described ethnography as “the work of describing a culture” (p. 3). As Homans (1988) reported, “there are neither good nor bad methods, but only methods that are more or less effective under particular circumstances in reaching objectives on the

way to a distant goal" (p. 257). This study has assumed that an initial insight into the culture of international teachers would emerge from both case studies of individuals who were part of the international school teacher culture and a cross-case analysis of the individual cases.

The topics discussed in this chapter and their order of appearance are: (a) research participants and site; (b) sampling size and plan; (c) data collection methods; (d) data analysis and methodological approaches for the five case studies; (e) data analysis and methodological approaches for the cross-case analysis; (f) researcher reflections; (g) ethical issues; (h) assumptions, delimiting factors, and limitations; and (i) products.

Participants and Setting

This research has principally taken place on the grounds of an American-oriented international school in Sub-Saharan Africa. I have given the school the following pseudonym: The International School of Sub-Saharan Africa (ISSA). The school is located on the outskirts of the capital city of an African nation. The grounds house both primary and secondary schools and have a total enrollment of approximately 500 students. Students are principally drawn from the expatriate community, though approximately 30% of the students are drawn from the local population. The school is comprised of multiple single-story buildings on a sprawling green campus.

The teaching faculty of ISSA is comprised of men and women from a variety of nations that mirror the cultural diversity found within the student body. As an administrator in the school's secondary division, I have not requested participation from any teacher under my supervision. All teacher participants have been, for the purposes of this study, recruited from the ranks of the non-locally hired primary school faculty.

Sampling Size and Sampling Plan

While Creswell (2007) indicated that five research participants are an adequate sample for case study research, this study cannot adequately represent the views of all teachers in international schools. This research is principally intended to initiate discussion on this largely unexplored topic. I limited this study to five participants in order to focus on depth rather than breadth in data collection and analysis. For this reason, a group of five elementary school teachers from ISSA—all of whom have taught in one or more other schools on the international school circuit—were selected for the study.

A non-probability, purposeful sampling method was employed in this research. I selected “information-rich cases” for examination (Patton, 2002, p. 242). In this study, “information-rich cases” were knowledgeable teachers capable of providing detailed responses on the topic of interest. The participants in this study were selected from the elementary school faculty of one international school in Africa. All participants were required to have been hired outside the borders of the school's host country, either through a recruitment fair or through Internet and/or telephone interviews. Each participant has relocated to the school's host country for the sole and specific purpose of employment at the school. This qualification excluded, for example, the spouses of expatriate workers who would have been in the school's host country regardless of the status of teaching vacancies at the school. While more than five individuals met the above criteria, I selected those who had experience in the most international schools.

I initially identified ten elementary school teachers who met these criteria for participation during the 2009/2010 academic year. Five participants from this eligible

group were selected. Each initial selection from the identified group of ten prospective candidates was based upon the teacher's willingness to participate and, as noted above, the teacher's years of experience in international schools. This implied that the teachers with the most experience working in international schools were the first to be requested to participate before those with relatively short tenures on the circuit.

Each teacher was first informally requested to participate in this study through an in-person communication. Following the participants' expression of interest, a formal communication was sent as a secondary, or follow-up request, using an informed consent form (Appendix B). All of the potential participants whom I originally approached agreed to participate in this research. Were I not to have received agreement from any of these participants, I would have attempted to replace the initially identified informants with teachers who may be described as having relatively rich experience in international schools.

Data Collection Methods

Interviews.

Data for this research were primarily obtained from face-to-face interviews with five elementary school teachers employed at ISSA. Each participant was made aware that, at any point in the study, they would retain the right to opt out of the research without any subsequent consequences. Should a teacher have chosen to withdraw from the study, a substitute, one able to meet the initial selection criteria, would have been requested to join the study as a participant. After agreeing to participate in the study, the participants were contacted to set up convenient times and locations for interviews.

Interview Guide.

An interview guide was used to lend structure and consistency to the interview sessions (Appendix A). The guide began with a set of demographic questions to which the participants responded verbally. Topics included the participant's age, education, ethnicity, position, and years of experience. Each participant was additionally asked to chronicle his or her career in teaching both domestically and abroad. This process was intended to help establish rapport, provide additional demographic data, and establish a chronological framework upon which I could conceptualize each participant's professional history. Once this preliminary information had been collected, the interview session focused on each teacher's perceived experiences in international schools. Joslin's (2002) criteria for evaluating the experiences of teachers at international schools guided the formulation of the subsequent topical interview questions (i.e., a set of questions for each topic in the criteria was asked). Merriam (1998) noted that "classification schemes can be borrowed from sources outside the study at hand" (p. 183). The interview guide concluded with summative questions not directly related to Joslin's (2002) criteria. These summative questions were designed to correspond with the overarching questions that guided this research:

- How did you first learn about the network of international schools?
- What were your initial expectations regarding teaching in international schools?
- How and to what extent have your expectations been fulfilled or unfulfilled?
- How have you used your past experiences with international schools to evaluate your current school?

- How would you describe your challenges and positive experiences during your tenure at your current international school?

Teacher responses to each of the above questions were woven into each participant's professional life history. Follow-up interviews were conducted with each participant for clarification and validation purposes. According to Hatch (2002), "when multiple interviews are scheduled for the same individuals, then analysis of early contacts will inform the later interviews and spontaneous conversation will develop out of researcher-informant rapport" (p. 102).

Each of the questions was open-ended, so that the participants could respond in their own words. During the interview sessions, I recorded the responses using a digital recorder. Data collected using the interview guide were then reproduced in transcript form for each participant. Permission was obtained to record the interviews. For the purpose of accuracy and to transcribe the interviews, it was necessary to record them. Data also included field notes, defined by Bogdan and Biklen (2007) as necessary information written by the researcher after each interview. The field notes included impressions of the participants, notes of the setting, and any relevant information appropriate to use for the study.

After the data collection period was completed, the raw data from the interviews were transcribed for analysis. The transcribed information corresponded to the responses the participants provided along with their demographical information. Each individual in the document received an identification number to organize the participants with their corresponding responses in the study. A printed version of the transcripts was stored in a locked closet that is accessible only to me.

As an additional precaution, I have made a point of not discussing any information obtained from the study respondents with any other members of the administration, with any member of any other school's administration, or with any member of the expatriate community in which both the participants and I live. I have been mindful of not even non-verbally communicating any particular piece of data from the study, via hesitation of speech, smiles in response to comments in conversations that might regard one of the participants, indirect suggestions for action or awareness on the part of another member of the community, or other indirect means.

Building Trust With Participants

Throughout the interview process, I attempted to develop trust with the teacher-informants and consider this effort to have been an essential part of my research. Each participating teacher was assured that the information that they provided would in no way be transferred to other members of the administration or faculty, either overtly or covertly, explicitly or implicitly. During the process of each interview, I disclosed some of my own experiences as a teacher in international schools, as suggested by Hatch (2002). I additionally attempted to clearly communicate to each participant the goals and objectives of this research, as suggested by Spradley (1979).

Rapport building.

As I anticipated, the rapport building process, in addition to developing the necessary trust between myself and the participants, added valuable data to this study as the process was carefully observed and recorded in field notes. Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) suggested that the process of developing trust can, in and of itself, reveal a great deal about the relational dynamics within an organization. If trust between the researcher

and participant is lacking, or the researcher recognizes that he is influencing the responses to interview questions, this apprehension or caution on the part of the participant is noteworthy data. Emerson et al. posited that “relationships between the field researcher and people in the setting do not so much disrupt or alter ongoing patterns of social interaction as reveal the terms and bases on which people form social ties in the first place” (p. 3).

Data Analysis and Methodological Approaches for the Five Case Studies

Case Study and Life History Methodology.

This study can be characterized as case study research and, more specifically, as professional life history research. Creswell (2007) defined case study research as examining one particular question, concern, or problem within a specific setting through interviews with several participants. Yin (2003) suggested that “you would use the case study method because you deliberately wanted to cover contextual conditions—believing that they might be highly pertinent to your phenomenon of study” (p. 13). Case study methods, according to Patton (2002), additionally give helpful structural guidance during the process of reporting the results of the data.

A “particularistic” case study approach, as suggested by Merriam (1998), has been used in this study of the five participating teachers. According to Merriam, particularistic case study designs are well suited to address “practical problems” (p. 29), and the manner in which these problems are addressed. Each case must, according to Hatch (2002), be contained within specific boundaries. For this research, the boundaries of each case study were defined by the structure of the interview guide, the transcripts, and the professional life histories.

Each of the five cases discussed in this research is presented as a professional life history or, more simply put, story. Because this research assumed that international school teachers live and work within a unique culture, the stories that teachers told about their experiences directly addressed the questions that guide this research. Plummer (2001) stated that “to tell the story of a life may be one of the cores of culture, those fine webs of meaning that help organize our ways of life” (p. 395). Biott, Moos, and Moller

(2001) discussed how professional identity is formed through experience and indicated that the “stories about ourselves are important in terms of how we come to understand ourselves and act as embodied beings in the world” (p. 397). Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) suggested that “the life history approach offers a clear potential in terms of considering the ways in which culture is both represented and reproduced, and of how culture is molded, changed and created by individuals through time” (p.185). Biott, et al. further asserted that these stories “will always be presented in a social, cultural and institutional context” (2001, p. 398). As a consequence, life history cases also inform us about the social, cultural, and institutional context.

In this study, of course, the focus was on a professional culture, i.e., the culture of international school teachers. Therefore, the life history cases that this study has produced focus on the teachers' *professional* life histories. However, because there are often ambiguous boundaries between the professional and personal lives of international school teachers, a cautionary note is merited. Goodson (1995) proposed that, when they talk about school, “teachers constantly refer to personal and biographical factors” (p. 16). Goodson (1992) has further opined that, when interviewing teachers, “we need to listen closely to their views on ‘school life’ and ‘whole life’ for in that dialectic crucial tales about careers and commitments will be told” (p.16). Cultural and personal information has thus been included to the extent that it has been influenced by a participant's professional role.

Data Analysis.

Patton (2002) described the process of data analysis as a “data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core

consistencies and meanings” (p. 453). The topics covered in the interview guide have served as the structure for the narrative reporting of the data. In other words, as each teacher's professional history was told, potential “stories” unfolded, following the sequence of topics embedded in the interview guide. Thus, the interview guide essentially provided for a pre-coding of the data. Weiss (1994) observed that some “coding categories we bring to our studies before ever knowing what the interview will produce” (p. 155). As noted earlier, *typological analysis* “means that data analysis starts by dividing the overall data set into categories or groups based on predetermined typologies” (Hatch, 2002, p. 152). The typological questions added essential substance to the demographic and chronological data established in the early stages of each interview. Giele (2007) noted that “intensive life history interviews can go more deeply into the meaning and dynamics of variations associated with individual differences” (p. 7). Thus, the interview guide has provided a structural consistency to the interview process and additionally served as a vehicle to elicit rich qualitative data.

By referring to the interview guide, I developed a coding strategy that assisted in the more specific identification of data within each predetermined topic. It is important to note that new codes were developed as the interview transcripts were read. The codes that were developed, prior to and after examination of the data, are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Predetermined Codes

Item	Code
1. Demographic Information	DI
2. Work History	WH
3. Initial Interest in Teaching Abroad	II
4. Descriptions of Former Schools	DFS
5. Fond Memories	FM
6. Unpleasant Memories	UP
7. Reasons to Move	RM
8. Qualities of a Successful International Teacher	QSIT
9. Traits of Positive School Culture	TPSC
10. Importance of Mission Statements	IMS
11. Importance of Involvement with Expatriates	IIE
12. Importance of Involvement with Locals	IIL
13. Satisfaction with Current School	SCS

The coding process was intended to formally isolate pertinent data within the interview transcripts. However, Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) posited that “some form of analysis will take place simultaneously with data collection,” (p. 296) and that “data analysis is not altogether a separate process in qualitative research” (p.296). Following the production of the original transcript, the additional codes shown in Table 2 were generated.

Table 2

Evolved Codes

Item	Code
Initial Interest in Teaching	IIT
Benefits of Teaching Internationally vs. US	BEN
General Adjustment / Integration	ADJ
Expectation / Reality Clash	EXR
Housing, Living Arrangements	HOU
Bonding (with students, teachers, locals)	BON
Communication with Home	COM
New Teacher Support / Orientation	NTSO
Isolation / Alienation / Minority Experience	ISO
Cultural Dominance or Prevalence	DOM
Organizational Structure	ORG
A “True International” School	TI
Administration	ADM

Data Analysis and Methodological Approaches for the Cross-Case Analysis

A generalized, or summative, cross-case analysis followed the typological case-study analysis. Patton (2002) suggested an approach in which “the analysis would begin with the original case studies; then the cross-case pattern analysis of the original cases might be part of the data” used in the research (p. 447). Thus, data collected from the interview guide provided the foundational material for a cross-case analysis of data that aimed to develop ethnographic generalizations from the data originally used to examine the individual cases. Huberman and Miles (2002) observed that researcher bias can adversely affect the results of cross-case analysis and recommended that “the key to good cross-case comparison is counteracting these tendencies by looking at the data in many divergent ways” (p. 18). Consequently, three methods were used to analyze data for the cross-case analysis.

New, un-coded transcripts from the original and follow-up interviews were examined again for the purposes of creating a cross-case analysis. I first employed a “quotation matrix” followed by a modified domain analysis. For additional assistance in the triangulation of the data, the interview transcripts have also been arranged into “categories and properties.” This last technique was again applied, almost exclusively, to new and unmarked transcripts so that I would not be unduly influenced by a previous coding procedure. (Note: The quotation matrix was used to a slight degree during the creation of the categories and properties.) The use of the above noted three techniques proved very useful in the triangulation of the data.

Quotation Matrix.

The quotation matrix was created through the selection of quotes from each of the respondents. The identified words and phrases were then placed in a corresponding category. The organizational categories for the matrix were drawn directly from this study's research questions as well as from the interview guide. This analysis framework was organized thematically and isolated patterns that emerged across the series of interviews. Each category was labeled with the codes used for the analysis of the case studies. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested that two-dimensional data analysis matrices are the simplest to use and may be designed to accommodate direct participant quotes from the interview transcripts. When considering the amount of quoted data to place within the cells of the matrix, Miles and Huberman suggested that it is better to enter more data than less in order to more fully capture rich content.

When examining data from a matrix, such as the one in this study, Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested that the researcher consider the following:

1. Quickly scan the categories and cells of the matrix using a “squint analysis” in order to identify the data that stands out.
2. The impressions from the initial scan should then be verified or disconfirmed by a more focused examination of the matrix data.
3. During a post-“squint analysis” reading, the researcher should attempt to identify patterns, themes, contrasts, and comparisons that may emerge from the data.
4. Researchers should make careful notes as conclusions begin to crystallize from the data embedded within the matrix. (p. 242)

Miles and Huberman (1994) additionally offered the following advice for writing up conclusions drawn from the data:

In writing the semi-final text explaining your (checked, confirmed) conclusions,

include specific illustrations from written-up field notes. In doing this, avoid the temptation to sprinkle the text with vivid or interesting examples to spice up the narrative. Rather, look for genuinely representative *exemplars* of the conclusions you are presenting (p. 243, italics used in original text).

Domain Analysis.

The summative cross-case analysis triangulated the findings obtained from the quotation matrix with those resulting from an ethnographic domain analysis. Spradley (1979) suggested that initial foundational data, such as that obtained from the interviews, is a prerequisite for beginning ethnographic inquiry. The data were used to identify what Spradley (1979) referred to as “domains” (p. 100). Spradley defined the term “domain” and discussed the process for the identification of domains in the following manner: “Any symbolic category that includes other categories is a domain. All the members of a domain share at least one feature of meaning” (p. 100).

Spradley (1979) additionally noted that “domains are the first and most important unit of analysis in ethnographic research” (p. 100). Harris (2007) stated that “cultural domains are represented by cover terms which provide names for each domain” (p. 40). Spradley has described a cover term to be “a category of cultural knowledge” (p. 100). Domains also contain multiple included terms that “belong to the category of knowledge named by the cover term” (Spradley, 1979, p. 100). Domains additionally have “semantic relationships that link the included terms together” (Spradley, 1979, p. 100). Lastly, domains contain boundaries that are established when informants exclude an included term from a domain (Spradley, 1979).

Using the data collected from the interview guide, domains were identified through the search for “universal semantic relationships” (Spradley, 1979, p. 100) within each topic and across topics. These hypothetical domains were fashioned with the use of

a data analysis worksheet (Appendix D). Spradley identified nine semantic relationships. I have, for the purposes of this study, employed the following three semantic relationships: (a) Cause-Effect, (b) Means-End, and (c) Attribution. The examples in Table 3 and Table 4 display the use of the three relationship types that have been employed in this research, which is adapted from Harris (2007).

Table 3

Relationship terms and examples of use.

Relationship type	Semantic relationship	Cover term
1. Attribution	X is an attribute of Y	Friendly faculty (is an attribute of) a good international school
2. Cause/Effect	X is a cause for Y	Poor administration (is the cause of) searching for a new job
2. Means/End	X is a means to Y	Recruiting early (is a means to) getting a better job

Note. Adapted from D. Harris, 2007, p. 43.

The first semantic relationships to be explored were gleaned from the transcribed data. The following is an example of a domain analysis worksheet using the semantic relationship “Cause/Effect,” first presented generically and then displaying the cover term as well as some of the included terms that appear later in this research.

Table 4

Illustrative example of a domain analysis worksheet.

Examples of a completed domain analysis worksheet		
1 Semantic Relationship: Cause/Effect		
2. Form: x (is a cause for) y		
3. Example: The desire to travel is a cause of interest in overseas teaching		
Included terms	Semantic relationship	Cover term
Job dissatisfaction at home Desire to travel Chance exposure to idea	Cause	Interest in Overseas Teaching

Note. Adapted from D. Harris, 2007, p. 43.

A data analysis table was created for each of the three semantic relationship types that have been used in this study. Eight domains were produced. Following completion of the domain analysis process, I presented each domain to each participant with the intent of their obtaining their views on the validity of each domain. A discussion of the domains, and the reactions of the participants to these domains, has been woven into the summative cross-case analysis along with the findings from the quotation matrix and the “categories and properties.”

Categories and Properties of the Interview Data.

In order to increase the reliability of the data during the cross-case analysis process, an alternative, third schema evolved from the transcripts. I called this analysis tool “Categories and Properties of the Interview Data.” Dick (2005) has defined “categories” as representations of themes, and “properties” as sub-categories of these themes. While similar in nature to the Quotation Matrix, the Categories and Properties tool and the procedures associated with creating it required a fresh examination of the

transcripts, although some reference was made to the earlier cited, and previously completed, matrix. Dye, Schatz, Rosenberg, and Coleman (2000), have noted that category development assists in the refinement of data. Strauss and Glaser (2009) postulated that “by comparing where the facts are similar or different, we can generate properties of categories that increase the categories’ generalities and explanatory power” (p. 24). This additional method, though abbreviated, supported the results of both the Quotation Matrix analysis and the Domain analysis. Each category and property was defined and assigned its own code in the schema.

Illustrative examples from the Quotation Matrix, Domain Analysis, and Categories and Properties tools were used to reinforce the findings related to each question in Chapter 5. Additional data generated from the three above-mentioned tools are woven into the discussion in Chapter 5 and are displayed in table form in Appendix E.

Researcher Reflections

In Chapter 6, I have included some reflections of my own based the data. As insights from the interviews emerged, I recorded information based upon my own feelings and reflections about the data and its results. Patton (2002) suggested that “self-awareness, even a certain degree of self-analysis, has become a requirement of qualitative inquiry” (p. 495). These reflections have been partly in the interest of rigor for the methodology. I was making sure that my own experiences as a teacher, as well as those of being an administrator and researcher are noted, so that the reader can see the possibility of how these observations, reflections, and experiences might have influenced the data gathered. Patton has suggested that the heart of intellectual rigor can be found in the attempt to “do one's best to make sense of things” (p. 570).

Ethical Issues

I had easy access to this study's participants. LeCompte and Schensul (1999) have suggested that a "hallmark of ethnography is that ethnographers must become intimately involved in the natural settings where they do research" (p. 10). LeCompte and Schensul have acknowledged the need to develop trust with research participants, with the warning that this trust cannot be developed quickly. I assured participants that their responses to the interview questions would remain confidential and that their identities would be protected in the publication of this dissertation. The teachers' names employed in the data to follow are pseudonyms. A document was prepared describing the study and the procedures for safeguarding confidentiality (Appendix B). This document was given to each of the participants, or co-researchers, as part of an ethical consideration for each of them. Because a transcriptionist was used to document the interviews in this study, a confidentiality agreement was additionally prepared for the transcriptionist.

Assumptions, Delimiting Factors, and Limitations

It is assumed that the participants for this study have answered the research interview questions honestly and have been forthright with their knowledge of working as expatriate teachers in international schools. It has further been assumed that these teachers are broadly familiar with the "culture" of international schools and specifically knowledgeable about the norms and expectations of the school in which they currently work.

This study has been delimited to teachers at one international school in Africa. The study has been further delimited to elementary school teachers currently employed at the target international school. Because I am an administrator in the target school's

secondary division, secondary school teachers were not studied because of their professional relationship with me. Because they do not move through the international circuit of teaching positions, teachers who are native to the region were not studied, either.

As noted above, my role as a principal in the targeted school site posed a probable limitation to this research. I did not involve any teachers under my supervision in this study. However, I may have, as suggested by Spradley (1979), initially been viewed with some suspicion due to my current position as a principal who recruits and evaluates teachers. Another limitation has been the use of only five teachers for a study that, at least in part, has endeavored to produce some ethnographic generalizations.

Products

Data gathered for this research has principally been used to produce five professional case studies. The individual case studies have been followed by a summative discussion of the culture of international teachers based upon the findings from the three part cross-case analysis. The products of this research have been divided into two sections.

Case Study Products.

The results of the initial phase of this research have been written in the form of five case studies that are presented in the next chapter. I have, following the coding procedure, produced what Spradley (1979) referred to as a translation of the data. Each translation was written as a story detailing the “protagonist's” subjective accounts of his or her career in international schools. I have represented myself as the narrator of the stories embedded within each case study. I have attempted to honestly represent the

essence of each participant's story. Direct quotes were used appropriately, authentically, and often.

Cross-Case Analysis Products.

The summative findings from the cross-case analysis have been written with the aim of presenting an ethnographic “snapshot” of the culture of international school teachers. These findings are discussed in Chapter 5 and built around the research questions that guided this study. Hatch (2002) explained that ethnography generally refers to “the writer's intent to represent cultural knowledge in some form” (p. 21). The decision to use an ethnographic approach in producing this product has clearly been based on the assumption that international school teachers, as a whole, constitute a “culture” of shared knowledge. Data for the ethnographic account has emanated from the Quotation Matrix, the Domain Analysis, and the schema that I have labeled Categories and Properties of the Interview Data.

Chapter 4: Professional Life Histories

This chapter provides a series of biographical accounts of teachers' experiences working in international schools. These "professional life histories" provide an understanding of the individual participants in this study. Understanding the individual participants in this study, combined with the cross-case analysis findings in the next chapter, together create a picture of the culture of teachers in international schools.

Measor and Sikes (1992) have postulated that "life history, like other biography, offers one respectable way of indulging our wish to have evidence from the lives of others that we are not alone in our difficulties, pains, pleasures and needs" (p. 210). The professional life histories recounted below were written with a strict faithfulness to the transcripts, as each story was constructed, in varying degrees, around the topics that formed the foundation of the interview guide. Consequently, each professional life history has been pre-coded using the following guiding topics from the interview guide:

1. Demographic information
2. Employment history
3. Initial decisions to become a teacher
4. Initial decisions to teach internationally
5. Descriptions of the schools worked in, either at home or abroad
6. Unpleasant memories from schools
7. Views of the ideal characteristics of a successful overseas teacher
8. Experience in international schools through a "home culture lens"
9. Experience of international schools' organizational cultures
10. A school's mission statement as a reflection of experience
11. Experiences of expatriate communities
12. Experience of the local cultures
13. Sense of loss and gain in international schools
14. Additional information on teachers' personal lives

While faithful to the pre-coding of the data, some new codes evolved as each story unfolded. During the process of writing each participant's story, I took great care to "hear" the totality of each participating teacher's experience of working in international

schools and living abroad. This integrated perspective is reflected in the professional life histories recounted below. The professional life histories, in their entirety, address the following research questions:

- (a) How did the research participants first learn about international schools and what were the initial motivating factors that led these teachers to seek employment abroad?
- (b) How did these teachers perceive their initial and subsequent postings at different international schools?
- (c) What role did a teacher's prior international experience play in the assessment of his or her current school?
- (d) What do teachers now know about the network of international schools, commonly referred to as the "circuit," and what is the source of their information?
- (e) What challenges and positive features do teachers identify as impacting the longevity of their employment at an international school?

Susan

Susan is a British teacher in her early sixties. She is divorced and has one adult son who currently lives in the U.K. Susan is a veteran teacher who began her career in England. Following her first year of teaching, Susan traveled to Turkey where she met, and eventually married, a Turk. The couple settled in Turkey and Susan did not teach during this period. However, when her marriage ended, Susan returned to the U.K. with her young son and once again began to work as a teacher. She taught for over a decade in England. Once her son became independent, Susan sought employment at an overseas school. Her current school is her third on the international teaching circuit. Prior to

coming to Africa, Susan worked in two schools in Vietnam.

Interest in Teaching

Becoming a teacher didn't seem to be in Susan's plans during her childhood. In fact, she disliked school. Referring to her secondary school experience, Susan said that high school “wasn't a hit with me, but I wasn't a hit with it.” Susan rebelled against the snobbish attitudes that she perceived in her classmates at her all-girls boarding school. Susan said that her “sister remembers me coming home crying . . .” Susan felt that she received little support from her teachers during these tumultuous school experiences.

However, during early adulthood Susan began to think that teaching was something that she might be interested in. Initially, she thought that she was simply following the lead of a boyfriend at the time who was training to be a teacher. She later realized that her motivation to teach ran much deeper. It was actually her negative high school experience that probably formed the underlying reason that she entered the teaching profession.

So I didn't get much out of school, and surprisingly, I got enough out of school to be able to go to college when I wanted to. But then I think back and I think what could I have got out of it had I had some support. And I think that was the motivation, because to me, that was wrong. And therefore, I was going to be a teacher and I was never going to be like that.

Interest in Living Abroad

Though Susan taught in the U.K. following her teacher training, she yearned to see the world. While she didn't travel as a child, she recalled listening to the stories of exotic Africa as told by her grandparents. The majority of Susan's extended family, on her mother's side, had relocated to South Africa in search of work. Years later, when her grandparents returned to England, their tales whetted Susan's appetite for adventures

abroad.

Her first experience overseas consisted of a trip taken with her sister while Susan was in her early twenties. Susan had, prior to this trip, taught for one year in the U.K. It was while the two women were in Turkey that Susan met the man who was later to become her husband. Susan remained in Turkey for the next 12 years and didn't teach during this period abroad.

A Return Home and Lingering Desire to Live Abroad

Susan left Turkey for the U.K. with her son following her divorce. She began teaching again. Yet the memories of living abroad lingered:

We settled in and I stayed there 14 years while he got educated, and my plan always was I'm going to go live abroad. And in the meantime, I'd heard about international schools and I thought that's the way for me to go.

Susan's brother, who was also a teacher, knew about the world of international schools and had earlier ventured out with his first teaching contract abroad. Susan had also visited an international school while living in Turkey, and thus had some first-hand experience as well. After raising her son in the UK, Susan followed in her brother's footsteps and accepted a teaching contract in Vietnam.

Susan's First International School

Susan loved living in Asia, particularly Ho Chi Minh City. "It was dynamic. It was developing and developing fast and very beautiful and diverse." She loved her luxurious accommodations, meeting new people and, perhaps after living in the UK, the climate of Southeast Asia. Her housing complex was right next to the school, which she found to be very convenient. She also found it easy to make friends, as many of her colleagues were living in her building and were quite sociable. While she had her own

private apartment, this felt like communal living to Susan. All of Susan's new colleagues were foreigners like her, and relationships were easily developed around a shared sense of expatriation.

Susan did see a drawback to living "communally" however, as many of her students and their parents also lived very close to the school. She was uncomfortable, and felt somewhat restrained, by the lack of privacy in a living situation that is more insulated than a teacher would experience in the UK, Europe, or United States. She described the situation as "a bit of a fishbowl." Interestingly however, she noted that teachers do make adaptations. Discussing her situation in Ho Chi Minh City, she remembered that she and her colleagues, "got breakfast in the restaurant overlooking the river every morning. So you'd go to breakfast and all the teachers tended to be outside on the terrace and all the parents and kids were inside trying to keep some distance."

Susan's experience with administrators in Vietnam was also positive. "The director was one of the old boys, so he knew what he was doing, and you knew he knew what he was doing. And I worked with one of the best secondary principals I've ever worked with." This director became a model upon which Susan would judge other administrators in the future.

To Susan, it was clearly important that an administrator be perceived as caring about people and additionally be supportive of his or her teachers. The administrator at the school in Ho Chi Minh City clearly measured up to these expectations. This positive perception of senior school management continued as Susan moved from Ho Chi Minh City to another international school in Hanoi. It was in Hanoi that Susan had what she described as the best professional experience of her teaching career.

Susan's Second International School

Susan felt that her teaching experiences in Hanoi were both positive and professionally challenging. Her sense of accomplishment was higher than it had ever been, and she was very comfortable with the broad mixture of nationalities within the student body.

Though working in Hanoi was professionally satisfying, Susan disliked the weather and missed the communal style housing that she had experienced in Ho Chi Minh City. "Communal housing agrees with me as a single person," Susan said as she told her story. While in Hanoi, Susan also missed the vibrant nature of Ho Chi Minh City. Hanoi felt dull by comparison and this sense was compounded by Hanoi's position as "the conservative heartland of the Communist Party." At the end of her contract in Hanoi, Susan left Vietnam for her current posting in Africa.

Susan's Current Job in Africa

While Susan has grown accustomed to her current school, the transition was problematic. She found it very difficult to get things done in Africa, although she found the people to be warm and friendly. Susan also didn't feel that her current school was "international" enough. While Susan tried to accept the realities of her current school, she felt that there was too much American influence in the school's governance. Discussing her current school, Susan stated:

Because this is an American one and I'm British, I think to some extent I'm at odds with what I would say is quite an extreme level of positiveness [sic]. I don't even know what to call it. I come from a country that's more understated. And so there are lots of things I wouldn't say or do. It doesn't mean that I'm being negative. It means that I'm just not used to being so overtly positive.

Susan additionally believed that the staff and student body at her current school

were not as “international” as she would prefer. She also felt that her present school was not only dominated by an overly American ethos, but by a large number of staff and students who are “local.” This combined American/local influence made the school, in Susan's mind, less truly international.

Susan has been disappointed with the house that she's been given at her current school, although she felt that she has grown accustomed to it. She also believed that her ability to communicate with “home” had been hampered by slow Internet speeds, and remarked that expatriate teacher colleagues have left her current school due to this frustration.

Susan did not feel that she was given accurate information about the high cost of living associated with her current school. While Susan knew that her current posting would be expensive, she said, “if somebody had said to me, ‘You will pay as much for food as you do in the U.K.’ I would have thought twice because that would have meant something to me.” Currently, Susan does not feel challenged at work. Yet she remains.

Susan stayed in Africa for two principal reasons. First, she felt that it would be difficult to find a new international job at her age. (She plans to retire when she leaves Africa.) Second, Susan felt the workload was much more manageable at her present school than it was in Vietnam.

Susan’s Thoughts on When to Leave and Qualities of Successful Overseas Teachers

Susan seemed to have no set criteria established to help her decide when it is time to leave one school and begin teaching at another. She did, however, speculate hypothetically about this matter. She said, “If I got in a situation where I no longer feel challenged, then I would want to move on. If it becomes routine, then I would want to

move on.” Susan also seemed to feel the workload, or pace, of a school would factor into her decision-making process. For example, she perceived that the pace of Asian schools is a bit too fast for a woman of her age.

While she defined no set criteria for a successful international teacher, she believed that a helpful trait is the ability to approach an overseas job with an open mind and a civil nature. She also thought that caring for the people that one works with is an important factor, as overseas teachers live far away from family members.

Susan believed that support from friends is essential and that “your friends become much more important, the friends that you make because they’re the ones from whom you’re going to get the support.” She also highlighted the importance of flexibility and resourcefulness. Susan had fond memories of two international teachers who were particularly helpful in teaching her to navigate the landscape of her new school site during her first venture teaching abroad. Beyond guiding her through the norms for this particular school, these two friends helped her to understand the broader culture of international teaching, such as which schools are “good,” which are “bad,” and learn how to access the informal network that communicates job openings in schools around the world.

International vs. National Schools

Susan found that it was an adjustment working in the non-unionized environment that is common in international schools. Susan made the following comparative observation:

To me the biggest difference between a national and an international school is the setup, the organization. In a national system, your principal is an employee just like you are and here in an international school, it’s not quite the same. There’s more of a hierarchy. And whereas at home, they’re trying to flatten their

hierarchies. In an international school it's there and there may not sometimes even be any consultation at all. Or you just may be told, "You're going to do this; you're going to do that. You're going to come in on Saturday."

Susan stressed that international school administrators more profoundly impact the personal and professional lives of teachers than would be the case in a national system. She illustrated this by discussing the lack of input that international school teachers often have with regards to the type of housing that they are given and the amount of requests that are made of them beyond the normal school day.

Expatriate Life

Susan's relationship with the expatriate cultures of international schools was complex. She felt that there were various levels of expatriate status and that, as a teacher, she fell within the lower ranks of this group. Susan felt more comfortable with fellow teachers than with the broader expatriate community. Susan believed that international school teachers have a great deal in common. They do the same, or similar, jobs and often live close to each other. They share the common burden of being not only foreigners, but excluded from the ranks of the more high-paid expatriate society. Susan noted with interest that "classes" of new teachers, those who enter a school at the same time, tend to form especially close bonds as they will have arrived and gone through an orientation together.

Trust as an Issue in International Schools

Susan believed that an important variable in keeping her in an overseas school is whether or not her expectations have been met. In other words, are the job and host country truly as they were described during the interview process? Of special concern was the cost of living in a country.

Trust, Susan believed, is also “important because if you feel trusted, you feel valued. And that’s what it comes down to. I always think of it in terms of value. Am I as a teacher valued?” She would consider the issue of trust, or lack thereof, when thinking about whether or not to stay in a given international school.

Concluding Thoughts

Susan has worked as a teacher in three international schools within two countries. Her long tenure teaching in the U.K. has impacted her perceptions of working abroad greatly, both in terms of expectations and relative “exoticness.” She has continued to be motivated by a sense of adventure and an aversion to “top-down” management as well as to what she viewed as a “truly legitimate” international education. Due to her age and experience, Susan was able to share her views on international teaching very insightfully, with a perspective that I found to be very illuminating for the purposes of this research.

Emma

Emma, like Susan, is a woman in her early sixties. Emma is an American who has spent the majority of her career teaching in both Texas and Alaska. She has two grown daughters, both of whom live in the United States. Emma began teaching in Texas, was married, and relocated to Alaska where she taught for many years. When her daughters left home, Emma divorced and began to consider teaching abroad. Her first international school job was in Bangladesh. This post was followed by a teaching position in Thailand. Emma then returned to Alaska, where she worked as a traveling mentor-teacher, flying throughout the state, often to very remote regions. She decided to return to the international school circuit and is now teaching in Africa.

Interest in Teaching

Emma was raised in a family of teachers. Entering the teaching profession was, for Emma, akin to joining the family business. The number of teachers in her family was quite astounding:

So 50 of us, cousins, uncles, aunts. There were five on each side and all my dad's sisters. So it was a big fat deal to be a teacher, and that's what you just assumed you were going to be, especially at my age. You only knew that there was [sic] two professions, nurses or teachers back then -- for a woman.

Fortunately, Emma has always loved teaching. This was evident in her boundless enthusiasm for her job.

Emma finished teacher training at the age of 20 and began her career teaching PE in rural Texas. She also taught typing, and noted with humor that she “didn’t even know how to type.” This was a challenging assignment for a young teacher whose students were close to her in age. Emma described at least some of these students as, “Cowboys, yeah, with their cowboy boots.” Emma taught for seven years in Texas and, following her marriage, moved to Alaska where she taught for 21 years.

Interest in Living Abroad and Emma’s First Posting in Bangladesh

Emma’s divorce seemed to have triggered her decision to try overseas teaching:

And I wanted to get out of the town because my ex was there and my girls had just graduated. I waited until they got out of high school and went off to college. So then my friends say, “You know what? You could teach anywhere. You could teach overseas.” And some other friends had just come back from Vietnam teaching, and so they gave me the International School System, ISS catalog, and I went to that first fair and that worked out. I got Bangladesh.

Emma was not initially aware that this first overseas teaching job in Bangladesh was such an incredible opportunity. Within the world of international education, the school in which Emma was placed is considered to be a flagship institution with high

standards and extremely lucrative benefits for teachers. Emma was in awe of the benefits attached to her contract in Bangladesh. Her house was near the school and “was huge, four bedroom, four baths for one person,” and “they gave me a car, which, that’s huge.”

Emma also felt extremely positive about the administration that she worked with in Bangladesh:

because they’ve got a goal, they work hard as the teachers, that kind of thing. And I just totally respect them. They’ve got vision. And they tell you something, they mean it. That kind of thing. Organized. I love it. They’re awesome.

Because this was her first assignment abroad, Emma thought that all international schools were similarly attractive for teachers. She was to find that this was not necessarily the case.

Emma’s Second International School

Following her posting in Bangladesh, Emma taught at an international school in Thailand. While she found the country to be beautiful and loved many aspects of Thai culture, she viewed the school to be problematic in many ways. In Thailand, Emma felt as though she had to fend for herself. She did not perceive the school to be very helpful with finding and maintaining a house, which she found stressful. In the classroom, teaching materials were in short supply. Emma said, “I walked into the class and it was totally empty of materials and stuff.” The administration, though friendly, was not particularly effective. Relative to the wonderful teaching experience that she had had in Bangladesh, the school in Thailand was something of a disappointment.

Emma was also disturbed by the ubiquitous nightclubs and open prostitution that she observed in the city of Bangkok. She said, “In Thailand I was kind of ready to leave because of the sex trade.” Emma stayed in Thailand for only two years.

A Return Home

Emma left Thailand and then traveled the world for a year, living off of her pension from 21 years of teaching in Alaska. However, deciding that she needed more money to live comfortably in retirement, she returned to Alaska. She re-entered the profession as a traveling teacher mentor. She traveled extensively within Alaska, which suited her sense of adventure and also helped her towards her goal of a more comfortable retirement. The mentoring position in Alaska, as Emma described it, paid “beaucoup bucks.” While this job helped her to get closer to her goal of having more substantial financial assets, Emma missed the social aspects of living overseas, and left the US again for the position she currently holds as a special needs teacher in Africa.

Emma’s Third Overseas Teaching Position

Emma wanted to work in Africa when she was ready to return abroad. It was a close friend, and former colleague from Bangladesh, who encouraged Emma to come and work at her current school. Emma remembered that it was the joyous way in which this friend spoke about her own experiences in Africa that finally convinced Emma to come and work at her current school.

Emma has been very happy in Africa and, like Susan, plans to retire after she leaves. Emma has taken advantage of the outdoor activities available to her and has led a very active social life. She likes her housing arrangements and her colleagues. However, she has found aspects of living in Africa to be problematic.

She spoke of the difficulty, in her current post, of sending mail (there is a flat-mail only restriction placed on teachers who wish to use the diplomatic pouch). Emma stated, “I’m one that likes to buy little gifts and make them and send them to my friends and

birthday gifts and stuff like that.” She is not able to do that currently, which she finds frustrating. She has also had trouble receiving shipments of essential medications. Yet, in a manner typical for her, Emma turned what has been a frustrating series of events into a positive statement: “Although between the time we interviewed last and now, I have received my medication from the states, a year’s supply, which was awesome. It took three months. But I got it. It was awesome.”

Emma’s experience of the expatriate culture of her current school has been, like most of her experiences, quite positive. While she seems to have gravitated towards a primarily American group of friends, she is comfortable with expatriates from around the globe. Her interest in the local, or “host country” population is high, and she interacts with them respectfully and with enthusiasm. To Emma, learning phrases from the local language is important. She is a rarity among expatriate teachers in this regard. Emma appears perfectly content to make her current school her last. She is very happy and seems to believe that she will retire with positive memories of her African experience.

Emma’s Thoughts on International Teaching

Emma’s interactions with administrators in international schools have generally been positive. She remembered her first principal in Bangladesh with particular fondness. To Emma, an international school administrator who is goal oriented, organized, and hard working is worthy of respect.

Interestingly, and perhaps ironically, Emma’s only negative memory of working overseas centered on unpleasant interactions with a quasi- administrative department head who was constantly ranting against other administrators within the school. One of Emma’s currently-expressed reasons for staying on the job that she has now is that she

likes the administrators whom she currently works for.

Concluding Thoughts

Emma has always been aware that teaching overseas is a part of the final phase of her career. Consequently, her opinion of employee benefits tended to center on salary and the saving potential in each of the countries in which she has lived. She expressed very few complaints about issues such as housing. Emma's main concern, in each international school, was the ability to communicate easily with the "outside world."

Professionally, Emma felt most comfortable in an international school that has a predominantly American orientation. This fit with her decades of teaching experience in the United States. However, culturally and by extension socially, she appeared to have integrated nicely into a British dominated school as well.

The majority of Emma's memories about living overseas were very pleasant. Her social nature seems suited to life abroad, where expatriate teachers bond quickly and easily and the social life with colleagues is accessible. The travel opportunities available to teachers working internationally are also very attractive to her. Emma is a woman who has been constantly on the move in search of new adventures.

Emma believed that the most important criterion for a teacher who is contemplating working overseas is flexibility. Emma felt that overseas teachers need to be flexible because it is often quite difficult to know what to expect when moving to a new job and country, where it is frequently difficult to predict the reality of day-to-day living.

Emma's main criteria for choosing a new school tend to be based upon seeing new places and experiencing new things. While she knew that she was taking a risk when

she moved, Emma has tended to rely on the advice of friends.

While Emma entered the world of international teaching relatively late in her career, she used her age and experience as assets rather than liabilities. Emma's sense of adventure, inexhaustible energy, and vast teaching experience have made her a much sought after teaching candidate in an arena that can, and often does, discriminate against older applicants.

Skip

Skip is a middle-aged American teacher with many years of elementary teaching experience both at home and abroad. He is married and his wife also teaches. While Skip has grown children who no longer live at home, as do Susan and Emma, his two sons have lived with Skip and his wife on earlier assignments abroad. Both sons are now in their early twenties. Also like Susan and Emma, Skip and his wife Heidi (pseudonym) have moved between teaching domestically and teaching abroad.

After a brief period of teaching in the United States, Skip and Heidi entered the international circuit by taking their first overseas jobs in Mexico. They subsequently taught in Romania and Indonesia before returning to Colorado. The urge to re-enter international teaching then reemerged, and the couple, now with grown sons, took the jobs that they currently hold in Africa.

Interest in Teaching

Skip said, "I guess I fell into teaching." As a young adult, Skip had wanted to become a pilot. But when his money began to run low, he took a job teaching vocational education. This was a position that didn't require a credential. He found that he enjoyed teaching. After working for three years at an eastern boarding school, Skip decided that

he wanted to make teaching his career:

We were surrounded by kids and quite happy with the situation and working with children. And stayed there three years and then moved to Colorado. When I moved to Colorado, we liked teaching so much that I decided to go back to university, get my degree, and get my teaching certificates and been doing it ever since.

He eventually became a fully-certified teacher. Although he began his career in the United States, the desire to teach abroad surfaced while Skip was working towards his credential: “I had decided while getting my degree and my certificates and then talking to my wife and kids that when I finished this up we were going to go off overseas and work overseas.”

As a father, Skip saw merit in living overseas with a young family:

We had kids and they were entering school age and we really wanted the enriched cultural experience of meeting people from other countries, having friends, seeing the world. I wanted my own kids to have the experience that I didn’t have.

Skip’s International Schools

Skip’s first posting was at an international school in Mexico. He looked back fondly on those years. While the school was international in name, Mexican students comprised the majority group. “It wasn’t so much an international experience. It was a different national experience.” The school provided a relaxed teaching environment and the nearby beach was a huge benefit. However, the devaluation of the Mexican currency made continuing beyond their first contract seem impossible for Skip and his family. “That one was all about money. If they paid better, I would still be in Mexico.”

The family’s next overseas teaching assignment took them to Romania. This job also evoked pleasant memories. The exciting social atmosphere was viewed positively, and Skip remembered that “It was very vibrant, very fun, going out on the town, going to

parties. Just having a grand old time.” However, crime was a growing problem and Skip and his wife decided that Indonesia would be a better place for their children.

Working in Indonesia proved to be a mixed experience. Good travel opportunities abounded, but Islamic fundamentalism was on the rise, and this was impacting the comfort levels of Westerners in Skip’s view. Although he saw Indonesia as a good place for younger children, the eventual decision to move on was based on the perception that an observable drug and “clubbing” culture wasn’t what Skip and his wife wanted to expose their kids to. Additionally, Skip recalled, “school life was – I don’t know – it wasn’t very dynamic. We didn’t have a very dynamic administration.”

A Return Home

Skip and Heidi decided to return to Colorado following the end of their last school year in Indonesia. Skip began teaching and Heidi became a principal in a rural school district. While the couple appeared to have reintegrated nicely in to their new lives, both Skip and Heidi missed the adventure and novelty that comes with teaching internationally. Consequently, they resigned from their jobs and took a year off in order to pursue various personal interests and decide what to do next. The couple travelled to Africa at the end of their “sabbatical year.” They stayed with an old friend from their days in Romania who encouraged them to consider coming to work at their friend’s current school. They liked what they saw and heard and decided to venture abroad once again.

Skip’s Current International School

Skip enjoyed many things about his current assignment. He is an avid outdoorsman and appreciates the ability to easily mountain bike and camp. He and Heidi

have also made some good friends and have achieved a comfortable balance between social activities and time alone as a couple. However, there have been many things that Skip has found frustrating in his current school.

When Skip first arrived to begin teaching at his present school, he was displeased with his assigned housing. He felt as though he had been misled into believing that he would receive a larger and more private house than the one he had been assigned. Neither was Skip comfortable with some his administrators. Skip did not feel that his years of experience were valued. He was additionally upset by his perception that his efforts in the classroom were not acknowledged:

And you could work your ass off and get very little compliments. And I'm also under a very tight curriculum management. We have a separate curriculum coordinator that we have to meet with for an hour every week. She pretty much runs the meetings. And then on top of that hour per week, you get all this extra work and it's approached and given to me as tasks I must perform to satisfy set curriculum, but there's never any discussion or rationale given for why this is helping me in the classroom do a better job. Why this is helping the kids?

At the time of our interview, Skip was considering leaving his current school due to his differences with administration. He didn't feel encouraged by one of his administrators and would rather not continue in this manner. His wife, however, was very happy in her job and wanted to stay. In the end, a compromise was reached that allowed Skip to remain at the school. He continues to, in the broadest sense, enjoy living in Africa.

Skip's Thoughts on International Teaching

When dealing with school administrators, Skip has found that a difficult aspect of moving frequently is that teachers constantly have to prove their competence in the classroom to supervisors who don't know them. Skip's overriding theme during our

interviews was that relations with school administrators in international schools are of immense importance:

And all teachers know that every principal and every director used to be a teacher. And the administrators we respect and that we want to keep working for are the ones that still appreciate how difficult and how rewarding and how frustrating it can be to be a teacher.

While teaching abroad, Skip has had administrators who were completely "hands-off" and others who micro-managed in a manner that undermined his autonomy in the classroom. Both styles appear to dampen his enthusiasm. Skip was aware that he is contrarian by nature and also felt that, as a male whose colleagues are primarily women, there were bound to be differences in his manner of reacting to authority.

Skip had some very clear ideas of the characteristics needed to succeed as an international school teacher:

The first one is obviously you've got to want to do it, and every international teacher I've met has. They want to get out of their own country and see the world and experience it. You have to be open and you have to understand yourself I think because going international it tests who you are. So you've got to know who you are while at the same time be open to understanding who other people are and be able to accept all that.

He also believed that younger teachers are well suited to working abroad "because I think they bring the enthusiasm and the vibrancy – I keep using that word – that . . . the kids in the classroom want and need."

Expatriate Life

Skip, in his current post, has found it difficult to work with members of the local White population that are part of the school community. He sensed that there is a lingering colonial attitude that he finds uncomfortable. Skip saw a duality of identity in his current school, which he views as "American" in name, but Southern African in

dominance:

There's a very strong British, South African, Afrikaners group that is by far more dominant and are very opinionated and can at times be quite anti-American, either kind of under the radar or often they're quite direct about it. I've found that many of the Brits here feel quite free to just rip on my home culture. I actually get uncomfortable by it because I don't do it to them. So in the school, there's very heavy local higher population who are predominantly Brits that have made their home here . . .

Additionally, Skip would like to be more closely involved with local Africans, but believed that this is a difficult cultural barrier to cross.

Skip always enjoyed the camaraderie and quick friendships that develop between international school teachers. Yet he also acknowledged that there are risks involved in being matched, and having to live in very close quarters with, colleagues that one might not normally elect to socialize with under other circumstances. Skip was pleased that he has made some substantial friendships in his current school. This is a comfort to him.

Concluding Thoughts

Skip remembered his experiences overseas with a fondness that has kept him on the circuit. He believed that teaching internationally is worthwhile and he has clearly loved the novelty and excitement that each move brings. Many of Skip's complaints about overseas teaching revolved around contractual benefits and poor relationships with administrators. Skip seemed to understand that these concerns were circumstantial, rather than broadly embedded in the system of international schools.

Ann

Ann is an American woman in her early forties who has spent the majority of her career teaching abroad. Ann obtained her certification and first teaching position in the United States, but began looking for international opportunities shortly after starting her

domestic teaching career. Ann was single when she first ventured overseas.

Her first international job was in Vietnam. After a brief return to the United States following the job in Vietnam, Ann moved on to work in Bangladesh. She then relocated to assume a teaching position in Egypt. It was while working in Cairo that she met her future husband Mike (pseudonym). Ann and Mike later accepted positions in Peru and eventually moved on to their current school in Africa. The couple came to their present posting with their young daughter, who was a toddler at the time of their relocation.

Interest in Teaching and in Living Abroad

Ann believed that she always had an interest in teaching:

I just always had a natural interest in it and an inclination towards it. And I loved school, so I always had a positive experience. But all my teachers tried to talk me out of it. By the time I graduated from high school, they had, so I didn't go off to school planning on being a teacher by the time I finally went to university. So it was about six years after university I finally decided to come back to it and went to graduate school and finally went into teaching in my late 20s.

Despite being told that was told that she was “too smart” to become a teacher, Ann followed her instinct about teaching. While she enjoyed her initial years of teaching in the United States, Ann felt as though she needed to grow beyond the borders of her “comfort zone.” The chance to work abroad seemed like a way to do just that.

When she first learned about the world of international schools, Ann realized that this network might address her long-held desire for challenge and adventure:

I think it's just having grown up in a very small town. I always really wanted to get out of that very small town, and I knew I didn't want to just travel overseas. I knew I really wanted to go live overseas. It was a small town and it was a very kind of waspy [sic] heterogeneous, homogeneous town. There was no diversity in this community at all. And I don't know really where I got the drive to go experience that, but I did, and I remember being in high school, just I couldn't wait to get out of high school and go off to college and go off and be far, far away.

Ann learned about international schools while having lunch with a woman who

was on her way to a teaching post in Poland. Ann immediately began researching, and found a job at an international school in Vietnam. Before leaving her teaching job at home, her principal sensed that this was the right move for Ann:

After I was offered my first job, my principal pulled me aside and said, “You know, you’ll never come back. Don’t you? I guarantee we’ll never see you here again. I’m sorry, but we won’t.” And I said, “No, no, no. I’ll come back.” And then two months into my first international teaching job, I sent a letter to the school officially resigning.

Vietnam

Ann loved her new school in Vietnam. She said, “Vietnam was phenomenal because people say that your first place you go overseas it always has a special place in your heart, and it does for me for sure.” Ann loved the atmosphere at the school, which encouraged teacher input into curriculum, policy, and procedures. Because the school was new, teachers were even able to offer advice on the development of the physical plant of the school:

So it was like being in graduate school. It was just sitting around a conference table every day with eight colleagues hashing out our different experiences and our practices and bringing all of our resources together and saying what do we think works, what’s best for kids.

Despite her generally positive experience in Vietnam, Ann struggled with her principal. She found these interactions to be more than she was prepared to take:

Part of the reason I ended up going back to the states for a year, it was flat out the principal. It was frankly an emotionally abusive environment in which to teach. I won’t go into all the details, but there was no professional respect and no collegiality and no sharing or buying into decision making at all. And really inappropriate comments made in social situations. It was really awful.

Ann stayed in Southeast Asia for three years. She then returned home. This move also proved problematic.

A Return Home and Lingering Desire to Live Abroad

Ann returned to the United States following her first overseas position and experienced what she described as “reverse culture shock.” She was surprised to learn that very few people were interested in her experiences abroad:

And they didn’t ask me questions about how I’d changed as a person or the cultural experience I’d had living in Southeast Asia. None of that mattered. And so it was like they erased three years of my life, which to me, had completely changed me as a person and as a teacher. And then the comment that was kind of the last straw with this one particular school, she said, “Well, okay, so you’ve had that kind of different experience and that’s all well and good, as long as you don’t talk about the Buddhism stuff here at our school.”

Ann very quickly began planning to go overseas once again. Her next international school was located in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh

While very different from the school in Vietnam, Ann greatly enjoyed her new position in Bangladesh. This new school was well established and also served as a nucleus of social activity for the whole expatriate community. Ann noted that the school served this purpose, in part, because there were few social options for kids outside of the expatriate cocoon of the school community. She enjoyed the school’s focus on community service as an aspect of learning and liked the school’s parent population. At the school in Bangladesh,

the parents there are all NGO workers, so that to me was a whole new world too. That was interesting to see how that affected the kids and how it affected how the parents supported me as a teacher and supported what their kids were doing in school. They wanted their kids to be very open-minded and involved in the community, so a lot of community service. So that was a really good experience, and it was an established school.

Ann eventually began to yearn once again for new adventures. She “went recruiting” and was hired for a new position in Egypt.

Egypt

Ann's memories of her time in Cairo are very pleasant. She had a principal that she greatly respected and felt that it was in this school that she experienced her most significant professional growth. It was in Egypt "where I really, really felt like I came into my own as a teacher." Ann met Mike in Egypt. They eventually married. Mike appeared to share Ann's desire for novelty and traveling through the circuit. Ann and Mike later found new teaching jobs in Peru.

Peru

Ann's time working in Peru was not particularly pleasant. As her daughter grew, Ann became increasingly concerned with the poor air quality and lack of "green space" in Lima. Also problematic for Ann was her school, which she perceived as being "international" in name only. Ann felt that this school was so densely populated with local students that the sense of internationalism was stiflingly absent. This lack of students from around the world was a reason to leave this posting.

As an expatriate teacher in this particular school, Ann's relations with her local colleagues were strained. She made the following observation regarding the local teachers:

People knew we weren't going to stay. We heard those comments, "they" come in, "they" try to change everything, and they're only here for a couple of years, and then they go and leave this mess for us to clean up.

Mike had worked in Africa before he met Ann and wanted to return to the continent. Ann certainly felt ready to leave Peru. This eventual departure led Ann and her family to their current positions.

The Process of Choosing to Come to Africa

Ann felt satisfied with the decision to move to her present school. However, this feeling of satisfaction was the result of a very deliberate and focused job search. Ann said that she had learned from experience on the circuit which questions to ask when looking for a new job. Prior to coming to Africa she had asked about housing, and a healthy environment for her young daughter. Ann was worried that, during the interview process that led to her present job, the majority of her questions to the school administration centered on concerns for her daughter's wellbeing rather than work-related issues:

Safety, medical facilities, what's the school going to be like for her, what's our home going to be like, where will we be living with her, how close to campus was our commute, how much time am I going to spend with her, what's the school day in terms of when I'm going to be home to see her in the afternoon. I like the fact that it started early and ends early. That works with young kids. I feel like that's all I asked. So it was crucial to us, this move. We knew this move was really about family because this is the only time she's going to be little little [sic]. I mean, we didn't want to go to a horrible school. I don't mean it wasn't at all important, the professional situation either. But it was half the picture of what we were looking for with this move. It was crucial. It wasn't oh that would be nice if we had a nice place to live. It was we have to have that.

Also important during the recruiting process was finding a school that had a mixture of nationalities within the student body. Because of the "local" nature of her school in Peru, Ann was additionally looking for a school that was, in her view, international in nature.

One of the things that appealed to us about this school was it seemed like the expatriate culture was going to be more like I had experienced in Bangladesh, which I really liked there because people were there for embassy, yes, but a lot of NGOs and a lot of UN agencies, there were a lot of people who were just trying really hard to do good... And so the idea of coming back to that kind of a community was very appealing because Cairo had been all about embassy and oil money.

Ann's Current Job in Africa

Ann expressed feeling satisfied with her current school. She was pleased with her housing, liked the multinational population of the school, and felt that her colleagues were friendly and supportive. While she expressed feeling like an American minority in an "American" school, this was not something that concerned her. Ann expressed her admiration for the host country nationals that she had encountered:

They just seem to have a great sense of humor and joy. And whenever I live in a country that's as poor as this one is, you can't understand how people can maintain that. But they do. It's the, oh well, what can you do? Gotta [sic] make the best of it kind of attitude. And I could be miserable or I can decide to be happy and just really friendly, outgoing, warm, helpful, love kids, very family-centered.

Ann's primary complaint about her current school was centered upon the difficulties that she experienced communicating with friends and family members who live outside of her host country.

It's very frustrating. Our landline is dead, and even when we get it fixed, we don't have international calling on it. Our Vonage phone isn't working. We haven't spoken to home in about six weeks and it's very frustrating. So funny you should ask that. Both of our mothers won't pick up Skype, so we can't Skype our moms. So neither one of us has talked to our moms in several weeks.

However, Ann is happy with her job, colleagues, and family life at her current posting.

Ann's Thoughts on Teaching Internationally

Ann's worst experience while teaching abroad was connected to a conflict with an administrator. This situation, as Ann described it, was so bad that she not only considered leaving her then overseas posting, but contemplated the idea of leaving teaching altogether.

It was I cannot work with his human being. I cannot be with this person in my life. I have to get out. So I mean, out of my entire teaching career, that's the negative thing that stands out of all of it, it's having to have a working

relationship with that person.

Ann believed that there should be a healthy sense of trust between teachers and administrators. Ann expressed that, apart from the negative relationship with school administration mentioned above, the majority of her encounters with supervisors have been very positive: “I guess I’ve been very, very lucky.”

Ann’s expectations of a new school center on the trust that she will be looked after and helped when settling in.

So I guess my only expectation is that schools recognize that as teachers we’re coming into new jobs, new homes, new cultures and that that’s a lot to assimilate. And that if I’m here to be the best teacher I can be, the more the school can support me in handling some of those other things, then I’ll be a better teacher; I’ll do a better job here. If I’m home frustrated because they’ve shut off my phone and nobody’s going to help me get it turned back on . . . those kinds of things, they undermine what you do during the day. They cut your energy. They cut your attention.

Thoughts on the lifestyle of an overseas teacher. Ann felt fortunate to now be part of a “teaching couple,” as she remembered the difficulty of being single on the international teaching circuit. Dating was problematic because teachers encountered colleagues and parents everywhere. There was no sense of anonymity.

Today, Ann’s choices about postings have a great deal to do with the health, safety, and happiness of her young daughter. As mentioned earlier, easy modes of communication with loved ones while abroad were also important to Ann.

Generally, Ann has been quite pleased with the professional, and by extension personal, lifestyle of the international teacher. This is a way of life that she has chosen. She hoped to remain on the circuit indefinitely.

So I’m usually just nothing but thankful for the way we’re allowed to live and the salaries we’re given and the fact that things like houses are provided and that we don’t pay taxes. And all of these things allow us to live a very comfortable

lifestyle where at home, we'd be stressed out and anxious and working two extra jobs and all of those things. So really, I'm overwhelmingly just thankful for the benefits that we get as overseas teachers. I usually have great medical packages. My salaries are very comfortable.

Concluding Thoughts

Ann had fond memories of all of her international school experiences. Egypt stood out as the most positive, however. She attributed this to the travel opportunities available from Cairo, due to its close proximity to Europe and the Middle East. She also enjoyed the people that she met there and found that the students at the school fit her definition of "international." When deciding on her next position, Ann was more interested in a school having an international nature than she was in living in one particular country. Overall, Ann expressed a very high level of contentment with international teaching: "I just feel like the luckiest person in the world in that regard. It's ridiculous."

Jane

Jane is a married Canadian teacher approximately forty years of age. She and her husband, Sean (pseudonym), who is also a teacher, have three school-age daughters. Jane began her teaching career in western Canada. Following Jane's marriage to Sean, the couple accepted jobs in Canada's most northern region, where they worked with the local Inuit population.

This experience seemed to have whetted their appetite for further adventure, and Jane and Sean subsequently recruited for their first international jobs. The couples' first posting abroad was in Russia, which they found to be both exciting and difficult. They came to Africa in search of a healthier environment for their family. Jane believed that

she made the right choice in coming to her current school.

Interest in Teaching

Jane always enjoyed working with young people. A woman whom Jane considered to be an aunt was a teacher and this woman's influence had a significant impact on Jane's later decision to teach. Like many children, Jane "played school," and eventually, as a young adult, earned a teaching certificate. While still in university, Jane met her husband Sean, who was also headed towards a career in education.

The young couple then held a number of teaching jobs, none of which offered secure long-term contracts. After teaching in more "conventional" Canadian schools, Jane and Sean accepted teaching positions in the country's far north in order to work with the indigenous population. While the work was difficult, Jane enjoyed the "newness" of the experience. Eventually the couple decided to try teaching even farther afield and attended a recruitment fair. They obtained their first overseas jobs in Russia.

Russia

Jane and Sean, who had children when they arrived in Russia, were initially disappointed that the schools' facilities were not what they had hoped for or expected. Jane said that because of this disappointment, she would ask questions about a school's facilities during future job interviews. However, Jane felt that the school provided all new teachers with a thorough orientation, which she believed was very helpful during her family's settling-in process.

As she began to teach in Moscow, Jane found that she was uncomfortable with her direct supervisor. She did not feel supported. Rather, Jane believed that her principal was overly authoritarian and subtly threatening.

It always felt like he was trying to catch me doing something that he didn't approve of. And I possibly didn't think that because I knew him socially and we knew who he was. But just his demeanor and his manner and what he thought was important came across as trying to catch you behaving and trying to catch you misbehaving and not anywhere in between.

Jane discussed how the constant evaluative visits from her supervisor affected her interactions with both students and parents. Jane said, "There's no way there was any trust."

Difficulties: Communication With Home and Urban Living

Jane also found it difficult to communicate with Canada while living in Moscow. Her parents felt that living at such a huge distance from their daughter was very challenging. Jane, who is very family oriented, found this situation distressing. The school eventually provided Internet connections for their teachers' apartments, which Jane attributed to an attempt to retain teachers.

Also problematic was the heavy traffic in Moscow, and the subsequently grueling daily commute. Housing was also important to the young family. Their lives in an apartment complex were less than satisfying:

And then housing, we wanted a yard for the kids to be able to come and go much more freely without dealing with elevators and if they wanted to ride their bikes being able to park their bikes a little more readily without wrestling back up the elevators and that kind of thing.

Many international schools market themselves as places where overseas-hire teachers can save a great deal of money. Tax-free status and free housing are common enticements given to recruiting teachers. Jane and Sean certainly wanted to improve their financial security, but found that the remuneration in Moscow was counterbalanced by a high cost of living.

A Time to Move On

The couple's decision to leave Moscow was based primarily upon an issue of employee benefits. Jane and Sean had three daughters at the time that they faced the question of staying on or leaving their first overseas school:

We really enjoyed Moscow, but it was expensive. So now that we know the international school scene a little bit better, we realized maybe the cost savings package needed to be looked at a little closer based on where in the world did you go. It wasn't so much how much more salary you'd have, but at the end of the day, what's left in your pocket.

The school in Russia would only provide tuition benefits for a maximum of two children, which is typical practice in private international schools. Consequently, Jane and Sean would have had to pay the school fees for their third child themselves. This proved to be unaffordable, so the couple opted to "go recruiting."

While tuition benefits were foremost in their minds, Jane and Sean had other criteria in mind while searching for their second international school positions. The couple preferred to work for a school that offered the three International Baccalaureate programs, which they thought would fit nicely with their teaching philosophies.

Jane learned that, when choosing to accept a new overseas assignment, patience and caution were important. Jane recounted the story of some fellow international teachers that they had known in Moscow who had accepted contracts too hastily.

They were really sick about what they'd decided to do for their own safety, whether or not they'd made the right decision. Should they have waited longer to see if something else with more of what they wanted came up?

Africa

The family was able to secure their current jobs in Africa only after negotiating for the tuition costs to be paid for all three of their girls. The rest of Jane and Sean's

criteria were also, for the most part, met. Certainly, Jane is currently very happy with the large house and accompanying yard that her girls now enjoy. Jane commented that she and Sean knew immediately that they had made the right decision. Upon arrival, “we just loved it,” and “We felt at home the day we got off the plane.” Jane observed that the people in her current post “feel as warm as Canadians.” Jane was also pleased that White Africans, or long-term residents, choose to send their children to her current school.

Here, I find it really interesting because there’s a lot of people that come and stay here for a long time and there’s a lot of people that this is home. You know, they look like expats at first breath, but they’re really second or third-generation [identifying nationality removed]. And I like it. It’s a bit of a breath of fresh air that not everybody’s leaving in two years or three years.

Jane’s main area of concern is the lack of cultural life in her current school’s larger community. However, on the whole, Jane was very happy with the life that she and her family had been able to make for themselves following their move to Africa.

Jane’s Thoughts on International Teaching

Jane viewed herself as a teacher who has little trouble working in a variety of school settings, regardless of the dominant culture that may hold sway. Her only bias seemed to be directed towards the British style, as she viewed it, of evaluation, which she is not comfortable with (this bias became evident when Jane spoke about her troublesome experience with an administrator in Moscow who was a UK national).

Jane recounted that the school in Moscow was more “American” in nature than her current school. She found humor in the fact that the school she now works for, while nominally “American,” is directed by a Southern African.

I have to say I think it’s because Steve [pseudonym inserted] is not American that he truly forgets things like American Thanksgiving, which I find really funny. Funny in an international sort of context . . . When you don’t have an American head, then certain things like that go by the by because it’s really not important to

him. Even though he'd probably like to think that he's got that whole American lens sorted out and that whole Canadian lens sorted out.

Jane felt that, on the whole, she and Sean could work in most international school environments, regardless of the school's national affiliation.

Concluding Thoughts

Jane and Sean will probably work in two or three more overseas schools before returning to Canada. Jane expressed overall satisfaction with the choices that they had made to live and work abroad. While their current post represents only the second international school in which Jane and Sean have worked, Jane clearly felt that her first experience usefully informed the decision to move to the place where she and Sean now live and work.

Conclusion

The above stories of the participating teachers' experiences give snapshots into individual lives and the experiences of living and teaching on the circuit of international schools. Some elements in these stories were consistent among the participants. This shows up more clearly in the next chapter, in which cross-case analysis of the data, using three different techniques, highlighted the consistencies of experience of these international school teachers.

Chapter 5: Findings

While the professional life histories in the previous chapter described the individual participants in the study, in this chapter, the answers to the five research questions guiding this study are explored through a cross-case analysis of the data gathered. For ease of understanding, statements translated directly from the research questions guide the presentation of findings here. Relevant examples generated by the various analysis strategies and tools described in Chapter 3 are presented to triangulate the narrative descriptions of the cross-case-analysis findings. Analysis products that could not be woven into the responses to the research questions are displayed as tables in Appendix E.

How Research Participants First Learned About International Schools and Initial Motivating Factors That Led to Seeking Employment Abroad

The teachers who participated in the study learned about the world of international schools through friends. For example, after a friend introduced her to a woman who was teaching in Poland, Ann thought, “You can actually do that?” Emma had a similar experience when her friend, following Emma’s divorce, said, “You know what? You could teach anywhere. You could teach overseas.”

It is not surprising that teachers often learn about the world of international schools almost accidentally through informal conversations with a friend. The International Educator (2009) reported, “Fewer than 2 percent of US, UK and Canadian teachers are even aware of our network of quality international schools” (p. 8). Although the research participants initially learned about international schools through chance encounters with friends, once the seed was planted, the participants in this

research followed-up with more purposeful actions. This sense of purpose undoubtedly was related to the fact that participants in this study tended to research and consider entering the world of international schools when they were either at a crossroads in life or simply needed a change of environment. Jane and her husband, for example, reached a point of frustration with the Canadian educational system and its perceived lack of job security. Two others entered international school teaching after divorces.

Although most of the participants indicated that they went abroad in response to being at crossroads in their lives, most also indicated that, once they learned about the option of teaching abroad, they also were intrigued by the possibility of having an adventure. Indeed, in some cases,, the lure of the exotic was a major motivating factor. Skip stated, “I think we initially jumped into the international experience to enrich our own family life.” Susan recalled, quite simply, “I thought, ‘I want to go abroad. I want to go see another place, another country.’” Ann similarly experienced a desire to teach abroad that she couldn’t necessarily define: “I really wanted to go live overseas . . . And I don’t know really where I got the drive to go experience that, but I did . . . I couldn’t wait to . . . go off to college and go off and be far, far away.”

The process of initially learning about possibilities related to teaching abroad tended to progress in stages. Teachers would usually hear about these opportunities through informal conversation first and then continue with their own research. The next steps usually involved contacting one or more of the various recruiting agencies that the participants found out about on the Internet and beginning the application and registration for job fairs.

The various factors associated in developing interest in overseas teaching are

demonstrated most clearly in the professional life histories, but they also appeared in both the domain analysis and the quotation matrix, both of which were described in Chapter 3. In the domain analysis, for example, one of the domains built around the semantic relationship of “was a cause of” illustrates how the participants viewed the factors that led them to want to teach overseas. (See Table 5.)

Table 5

Interest in Overseas Teaching

Included term	Relationship	Cover Term
Job dissatisfaction at home		
Desire to travel		
Chance exposure to idea	are causes of	Interest in Overseas Teaching
Influence of other person(s)		
Contribute to the world		

Note. Through the collective analysis of the interview transcripts, the participants have identified the included terms above as causes for interest in overseas teaching.

Similarly, in the quotation matrix built around the ideas of reasons for pursuing overseas teaching, the factors summarized above also can be seen. Indeed, this particular quotation matrix displays the reasons articulated above in rather bold relief.

Table 6

Personal/Cultural/Social Benefits of Overseas Teaching and Initial Reasons for Pursuing Overseas Teaching

Ann	I knew I really wanted to go live overseas . . . And I don't know really where I got the drive to go experience that, but I did . . . I couldn't wait to . . . go off to college and go off and be far, far away.
Emma	I always wanted to go overseas because I loved the social. There's no social in Alaska when you're mentoring. You work 24/7.
Jane	We're in a good place with the girls, the stress level that we used to deal with in Canada, which is part of the reason why we went overseas . . . completely is solved by coming here.
Skip	I wanted my own kids to have the experience that I didn't have. And so I think we initially jumped into the international experience to enrich our own family life and yes, our first job was Mexico. After doing the stint in the public schools, my children went to university and my wife and I were free to travel again. And so we went back overseas. And the reason we did was because there were more ideas out there.
Susan	And then I thought, "I want to go abroad. I want to go see another place, another country."

How Research Participants Perceived Initial and Subsequent Postings at

International Schools

Initial perceptions about international teaching were usually formed at the first job fair that the participants attended. It was at this point that the participants first encountered many of the names and faces of both hiring administrators and other teaching candidates. Prior to attendance at the first job fair, teachers tended to think about and research overseas teaching in isolation. Through the human interaction that occurred while attending a job fair, the still-theoretical notion of international teaching came to be perceived as a more concrete reality.

This first exposure however, while exciting, also often was quite stressful. As Garton (2006) noted, the chances of accepting the wrong contract in the wrong place are

high, due to the quick decisions that need to be made.

The participants in this study all had very clear memories of their first overseas posting. Interestingly, these recollections tended to be almost exclusively positive, which may explain why the participants have continued to remain on the international circuit. However, the initial excitement of the exotic was mixed with expected, though varied, levels of culture shock. For example, the usually positive Jane reported her distress in Russia after learning that her phone was “tapped so you could always hear the clicks on the line and you could hear when they were recording your conversations.” Pedersen (1995) noted that culture shock is normally experienced in environments, both physical and psychological, where adjustment is mandated. Thus, the notion that the participants experienced some degree culture shock is not surprising.

When moving to a new international school, personal as well as professional adjustment is, indeed, required. The participating teachers in this study placed the responsibility on themselves as well as on the new international school to help them integrate successfully. While the participants usually “did their homework” about their new schools, they were also aware that a true sense of what an international school and its environment are like could only be gained upon arrival. One domain analysis built around the covering term *positive adjustment/integration* and the semantic relationship *are attributes of*, which is summarized in Table 7, lists the factors that participants associated with successful adjustment.

Table 7

Positive Adjustment/Integration

Included term	Relationship	Cover Term
Fit / gut feeling		
Good cultural experience		
Easier to live in developed nation		
Free time		
Good for your kids		
Comfortable housing		
Language accessibility		
Available mentorship		
Ease of moving	are attributes of	Positive Adjustment /
Personal liberty		Integration
Chance for physical activity		
Pleasant physical environment		
Preference over public/national school		
Social opportunities		
International nature of school		
Positive feelings about school's host country culture		

Note. Through the collective analysis of the interview transcripts, the participants have identified the included terms above as attributions of positive adjustment to and integration into a new school setting.

The participants wanted the international school to help them adjust by providing

comfortable housing, guidance on social and recreational activities, and mentorship.

Schools that had students, parents and teachers from around the world were perceived as easier to adjust to than schools that were dominated by entrenched local populations.

Yet the participants were also aware that that they themselves, in order to integrate successfully, had to approach a new school with an open mind. The term “flexibility” was used often as a quality for success in international schools. This can be seen in the matrix that highlights comments that participants made about the topic of flexibility that in this document is Table 8.

Table 8

Participants Comments About the Importance of Flexibility

Emma	Very flexible . . . Because you have this preconceived idea about what could go on or what is going to be at the school. You have to kind of be flexible or else you’re going to be unhappy . . . You have nowhere to go . . .
Skip	If I were a director, I would go out of my way to hire younger people with less experience than I would older people because I think they bring the enthusiasm and the vibrancy . . .
Susan	You’ve got to be flexible you’ve got to be quite resourceful because it’s not like home.

While the participating teachers in this study understood the importance of flexibility, there were some commonly held views on the obstacles to a comfortable international teaching experience that could not be overcome simply by being flexible. The professional life histories illustrated that all of the participating teachers had experienced negative interactions with overseas administrators. Teachers were also concerned that negative relations with the host country’s population would adversely affect their perception of their school. Both of these points, along with some additional

factors, surfaced in the domain analysis built around the covering term *difficult adjustment/integration* (See Table 9).

Table 9

Difficult Adjustment/Integration

Included term	Relationship	Cover Term
Cultural divisiveness		
Difficult for kids/family		
Trouble with local language		
Cultural discomfort	are attributes of	Difficult Adjustment /
Difficulty of moving		Integration
Poor quality of school/teaching		
Poor salary, benefits		

Note. Through the collective analysis of the interview transcripts, the participants have identified the included terms above as attributions of negative adjustment to and integration into a new school setting.

Other aspects that affected adjustment and integration involved clashes between expectations and the reality that was discovered once teachers arrived at their new schools. As noted above, because decisions are often made quickly, there often can be a mismatch between teachers, on the one hand, and either the country or the school and/or the school's administrators, on the other. Table 10 contains comments by the participants about participants' perceptions of gaps between what they expected to be the case in an overseas posting and what actually occurred.

Table 10

Expectations and Reality Clashes

Ann	So I guess my only expectation is that schools recognize that as teachers we're coming into new jobs, new homes, new cultures and that that's a lot to assimilate.
Emma	Everything's pretty expensive. Really expensive here . . . I thought that the savings would be a lot more . . .
Skip	We were told directly that we would be in this housing . . . We shared the pictures and our enthusiasm with our family and friends. And then in May, we were sent a rather curt e-mail that said that housing is no longer available . . . And truthfully, my wife was very upset by it.
Susan	[In] Vietnam, I really didn't have any expectations. [Working in Africa was] something of a shock because the schools I'd worked in had been all my life both nationally and internationally had been highly professional, highly accountable.

The Role Played by the Research Participant's Prior International Experience in the Assessment of His or Her Current School

Interestingly, the participants tended to base the assessment of their current school on criteria that were formed around positive or negative aspects of their previous postings. More often than not, factors in the posting immediately before the current posting were the source of criteria with which a participant judged his or her current school. For example, if the housing in the previous school was unsatisfactory, the current school would be evaluated, primarily, though, of course, not exclusively, on the quality of housing provided.

The professional life histories in the prior chapter demonstrate this tendency to judge the current situation through the prism of past postings. Susan, for example, discussed how her current school had less of an international flavor than she had experienced in past postings. From her perspective, this was a deficiency. Others used perceived deficiencies in previous schools to conclude that their current situation was a

good one. Jane, for example, had housing and weather problems in the past, and these became the reasons that her current situation, in her mind, was good.

Skip's interview also revealed a decided tendency to view the current situation through a deficit-of-the-past lens. He contrasted working at an international school with very little administrative supervision with working in another school that he described as an "almost Nazi regimen." He indicated that he did not like working in either of these environments and would judge any international school as excellent if that school's administration avoided both of the extremes that he had experienced.

It is arguably Ann's comments, however, that most clearly highlight the deficit thinking and link it not only to a decision to leave a school but also the decision about which school to move to. Ann posited that the overly "local" flavor of her past school prompted her and her husband to move to a new school that had an international student body and very few local students.

Experience in international schools also appears to have taught teachers to be wary of administrators. The participants, to varying degrees, have all had negative encounters with administrators in overseas schools. A certain cynicism towards principals and directors certainly seems to have developed in the minds of the participants over the course of multiple postings in different international schools. This acquired wariness not only assists teachers in deciding when to leave a school; it also helps in the initial assessment of a possible new posting because of an informal network that operates to inform teachers about administrators the teachers may never have meet. However, despite the fact that teachers' prior experiences with problematic administrators alerts

teachers to be cautious about selecting a new school, the task of “recruiting” and selecting a new principal is not an exact science. As Susan said, choosing a principal requires a “big leap of faith.”

What the Research Participants Now Know About the Network of International Schools and the Source of Their Information

Each of the participants in this study had worked at more than one international school and, in most cases, multiple schools. The participants’ understanding of the “culture” of international schools began with their initial attendance at a job fair and expanded with each subsequent international posting. The participants were able to recognize that, from the beginning, they were being inculturated into a professional group that, while global in scope, shared a similar set of expectations and a common lore.

Interestingly, this realization that international school teachers were members of a distinct and unique group was consciously held, even if the participants did not specifically refer to a “culture” of international teachers. The sense of belonging to a very specialized, if widely dispersed, group became solidified in the minds of the teachers as they realized that, in each of their postings, they had more in common with other overseas teachers than they did with their locally hired colleagues.

Challenges and Positive Features the Research Participants Identified as Impacting the Longevity of their Employment at an International School

The research question about factors that impact, positively or negatively, the decision to remain in a school has the most extensive answer and, consequently, requires the lengthiest response. Participants identified a number of challenges they had experienced in the course of working in international schools. The first of these, the

challenges resulting from having to deal with problematic administrators, stood out strongly, and has already been discussed, albeit briefly, above.

Administrators.

The data clearly indicates that working with a bad administrator is the most commonly identified challenge faced by the participants. The participants' definition of a "bad" administrator included four basic elements:

1. Overly directive as a result of not trusting teachers' professionalism;
2. Non-consultative when making decisions that directly affect teachers' working conditions and personal lives;
3. Insincere or deceptive during the recruiting process;
4. Detached from the realities of teaching.

The use, or perceived misuse, of administrative authority clearly impacts teacher decisions regarding recruitment and retention. Ann's comment was typical: "Part of the reason I ended up going back to the states for a year, it was flat out the principal. It was frankly an emotionally abusive environment in which to teach." The sentiments expressed by Ann are consistent with Bolman and Deal's (2003) assertion that "a manager's practices and assumptions about people can lead to either alienation and hostility or to commitment and high motivation" (p. xix).

Skip's comments also tended to reinforce Bolman and Deal's (2003) point. He noted, for instance, "[My supervisor] directly affects my motivation when I get up in the morning, my feelings about how long I want to stay at the school." Hardman (2001) urged school leaders to remember that keeping teachers motivated assists in the process of retention. While it is perhaps a truism, the participants in this study reflected

Peterson's (2001) argument that "people care deeply about how they are treated" (p. 30).

Feeling both supported and trusted by school administrators seemed to be the most significant determinant related to a teacher's longevity at a school. The word "trust" as it appeared in the transcripts could be easily translated to "respect" without losing the power of the term's meaning. The following comment from Emma neatly encapsulated the sentiments of many of her co-participants: "Professional trust. If that trust was lacking, [it] would be a reason to leave a place." Table 11, a quotation matrix developed from the transcripts, demonstrates how big an issue trust/respect was for the participants.

Table 11

Trust/Feeling Valued/Respected as Teacher/Community Support

Ann	<p>The first one, and part of the reason I ended up going back to the states for a year, it was flat out the principal. It was frankly an emotionally abusive environment in which to teach . . . So if not for that, I probably would have stayed.</p> <p>He [a principal] gave us choices . . . And I think people stayed – I had the feeling – and we would have stayed to keep working for him because you felt more supported.</p> <p>[In Peru] our principal who was fabulous. And our PYP coordinator, he was a guy who was one year out of the classroom. So he was really realistic about implementation of program. And we had a great assistant principal. They were all wonderful.</p> <p>[It is important that an administrator is] not somebody that's looking over my shoulder, questioning what I'm doing, second-guessing or micromanaging what I'm doing.</p> <p>The only time I have felt like I wasn't trusted as a teacher, as a professional was with that gentleman I talked about the last time in Vietnam. And he would call teachers down to his office and ask really strange off the wall questions that he flat out doubted you. He didn't trust his teachers and it was really clear, and it just always put you on the defensive.</p>
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Table 11 (continued)

Emma	<p>Professional trust. If that trust was lacking, would be a reason to leave a place . . .</p> <p>[Principals that have] a goal, they work hard as the teachers, that kind of thing.</p>
Jane	<p>But it's one thing for me to reflect on my own teaching. It's another to be completely supervised every day on whether he thought it was right and he thought it was wrong.</p> <p>The first principal that was there was from the British system and he was quite quick to teacher evaluate in terms of he'd do quick walkthroughs and then he'd send you kind of notes of support or reprisal. And they would stay on your file, and then when we got to the point of the evaluation in May, all of that came out. And it would be okay if you were doing okay, but my colleagues who he decided he had an issue with, the way it was managed was . . . very difficult. It didn't feel positive you know.</p>
Skip	<p>I've been told by my director in private conversations that there's a buzz about me, that parents love me, that the kids love being in my class . . . And yet, my direct supervisor who is not my superintendent but my principal, has never talked to me in that way. And that definitely directly affects my motivation . . . my feelings about how long I want to stay at the school.</p> <p>In Indonesia, I expected to be treated the way I had in my previous school, with respect, as a colleague, as a professional. And on the surface level, I was. But deep down, there was not even any really that much conscious thought about how new teachers are coming into the school, their orientation, their expectations, their hopes, their fears.</p> <p>I kind of characterize my supervisor here as not being sincere, that he was just performing a role almost as if he's playing a role in a movie on how to be a principal . . .</p> <p>[A former international school] had a complete lack of administration. [Administrators] just didn't know what they were doing and didn't want to do anything. They just had big giant houses and chauffeur-driven cars. And they could hide out . . .</p> <p>The respect that they [teachers] are given, the trust that they are given. Are they trusted to do their job? Are they respected that they have one of the hardest jobs in the world for an extremely low salary given their responsibilities? And if teachers gripe, that is mainly what they gripe about is how they are treated by their immediate supervisors.</p>

Table 11 (continued)

Susan	<p>If you feel trusted, you feel valued. And that's what it comes down to. I always think of it in terms of value. Am I, as a teacher, valued?</p> <p>If you feel that you're micromanaged and not given the opportunity to use a certain amount of professional judgment, then you don't feel trusted.</p> <p>I don't know if it's specific to teaching overseas. You have to have a lot of trust from administration to teachers. They don't see what we're doing all day; I don't see what they're doing all day. There's a big leap of faith you take that we're both working in everyone's best interests. I guess the trust part overseas comes more – for example, the first time I went overseas, my brother was panicking because I was moving off to Vietnam and he said, "What if they don't honor your contract? What if you get there and they don't pay you? What if . . . ?" And it sort of had never occurred to me that that could happen.</p> <p>To me the biggest difference between a national and an international school is the setup, the organization. In a national system, your principal is an employee just like you are and here in an international school, it's not quite the same. There's more of a hierarchy. And whereas at home, they're trying to flatten their hierarchies. In an international school it's there and there may not sometimes even be any consultation at all. Or you just may be told, "You're going to do this; you're going to do that. You're going to come in on Saturday."</p>
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Another challenge: Communicating with home.

Another significant challenge that was identified by participants in this study was the problem some had experienced in some settings with communicating with home. The participants in this study were very concerned that their ability to communicate via email, Skype, telephone, and conventional mail be, if not perfect, at least generally available and reliable.

I did not expect such strong comments about the importance of this concern, and, in fact, questions about communication with home were not included in the interview guide I employed. The issue emerged, however, in the course of interviews with all the participants. At times, participants' comments on the communication issue were quite emotional. A sample of the participants' comments on the challenge of communicating with home is presented in Table 12. Clearly, access to communication with home is something that gives great comfort to international school teachers. In addition, the lack of this access can cause significant frustration.

Table 12

Communication with Home

Ann	<p>It's very frustrating. Our landline is dead, and even when we get it fixed, we don't have international calling on it. Our Vonage phone isn't working. We haven't spoken to home in about six weeks and it's very frustrating.</p> <p>[In] Bangladesh, I did have overseas calling and I had Internet, but it was very spotty because it's Bangladesh. So power would come and go . . .</p> <p>[In Vietnam] They censored everything because it was a communist government. And phone calls were censored and would sometimes cut you off in the middle. So that was a little hard.</p>
Emma	<p>I think really I only got into e-mail when I moved overseas.</p> <p>I have received my medication from the states, a year's supply, which was awesome. It took three months. But I got it.</p> <p>[Lack of an Internet connection] was tough. It would have been nice to have Internet out there already . . . every day I worked hard at getting Internet out there . . .</p> <p>In Thailand, I never didn't receive a package. And the people at the desk at my service hotel, I'd say, "Here, I want to send this." They would take care of it and just give me this is how much whatever.</p>
Jane	<p>[Having an Internet connection] . . . lowers the anxiety.</p> <p>I think I'd feel really homesick if I didn't know that I could be in my living room and Mom could Skype me.</p>
Skip	<p>[In Africa] Internet communication has been off and on, sporadic. But I kind of expected that . . .</p>
Susan	<p>The phone doesn't work. The Internet's down. What am I going to do? There have been times when I've not been able to get my son and I'm anxious and I'm worried until I can make that connection.</p> <p>[In Africa] The regular mail is but it's not 100% reliable.</p> <p>Tried two days to get in touch. And you just can't think about anything else. You think, "I just need to talk to them. Somebody to tell me what's going on." It's a huge one.</p>

The culture clash challenge.

While culture clashes were mentioned above as external barriers impacting participants' ability to adjust to a particular school and posting, they also showed up in responses to questions asking participants to describe factors that impacted their longevity at a particular school. Excerpts from these responses are included in Table 13. Table 13 demonstrates how the culture of a host country, and even the perceived nature of the expatriate community itself, can create problems for teachers, problems that can, at times, generate motivation to leave a posting.

Table 13

Negative Aspects of Teaching in International Schools

Ann	<p>It was a major language issue in this school because of that that caused big problems. It was a lot of “us” and “them” kind of mentality on the staff and with the kids that made it uncomfortable.</p> <p>You live overseas and you get tired of saying goodbye to people. You get tired of extending yourself and putting energy and love into relationships and friendships and then people go. It’s hard. And I think it’s always harder to be the person left behind, and that’s what these people always are. They’re always the one left behind.</p>
Emma	<p>So I do feel like a minority here . . .</p> <p>[In Bangladesh] I was irritated at all the staring.</p>
Jane	<p>In Thailand, I was kind of ready to leave because of the sex trade.</p> <p>And it was crazy the amount of money that flowed and that dictated how they [the parents] entertained. It was crazy. It was crazy. It was something we couldn’t keep up with.</p>
Skip	<p>The language became a very divisive factor. It wasn’t just the cultural differences. Even if you spoke Spanish, you didn’t speak it well enough, kind of thing. I saw kids ostracized from the playground because of that, and that bothered me.</p> <p>Well, it’s extremely difficult to move to a new country.</p> <p>Romanian kids would accost them and try to -- sorry not Romanian -- gypsy kids would accost them and try to steal their bikes. It wasn’t safe for them to be out on the streets.</p> <p>Also on Java there was a big rise – our timing has not been good – rise of Muslim extremists busting into hotel rooms, wanting to see people’s passports. That kind of that stuff.</p>
Susan	<p>I almost have to walk around and be apologetic that I’m American.</p> <p>[Wealthier expatriates are judgmental of teachers.] Is she going to be going to the reception afterwards? Will I see her there or not? Is she one of the chosen few?</p> <p>I would say I left my last school because I was going too fast. I was working too much. And I thought at my age I can’t go on like this at this pace.</p>

Positive features impacting longevity.

As expected, the participants in this study identified numerous positive features of teaching and living abroad. The lure of the novel and the exotic ranked high among participants' reasons for teaching abroad. There was a general sense in the data that the participating teachers were very consciously following their dreams of adventure while still practicing a profession that they loved. It was additionally clear that the opportunity to teach abroad provided the development of new friendship networks of like-minded people that would not necessarily be available in the participant's country of origin. The participants generally enjoyed the ability to develop closer relations with colleagues than they would be able to do at home. Often teachers, during one or more of their postings abroad, lived in a "communal" setting, be it an enclosed compound or a shared apartment block. While this was mostly satisfying, the participants acknowledged that this close proximity to co-workers could, at times, feel somewhat claustrophobic.

The above sentiments were summed up nicely in a domain analysis, shown below as Table 14. This analysis simplifies the different categories of positive features as *attributes* of the benefits of teaching internationally.

Table 14

Teaching Internationally vs. Teaching at “Home”

Included term	Relationship	Cover Term
Cultural experience		
Kids/family		
Foreign language exposure		
Opportunity for travel	are positive	Teaching Internationally vs.
Preference over public/national schools	attributes of	Teaching at “Home”
Quality of school/teaching		
Salary, benefits		

Note. Through the collective analysis of the interview transcripts, the participants have identified the included terms above as attributions of the benefits of teaching internationally versus teaching in their country of origin.

One aspect that participants cited as a benefit of teaching overseas that is not reflected above was the opportunity for training and professional development. The majority of the participating teachers in this study appreciated the exposure to the new training opportunities that they encountered in international schools. This professional development was primarily linked to the Primary Years Program (PYP) offered by the International Baccalaureate. This training often included travel opportunities outside of the host country.

The ability to save money while working abroad also was seen as a benefit of overseas teaching. Tax-free status and benefits that included housing factored highly among the reasons for this positive appraisal. Most of the participants in this study had previously lived in developing countries and all are currently doing so. The benefit

associated with this was the availability of household help, which allowed the teachers to spend more time on work, family and friends rather than on domestic chores. In short, the participants in this study expected that teaching overseas would be financially rewarding. Table 15 demonstrates this fact:

Table 15

Financial Stability

Emma	My savings power there was amazing in Bangladesh and Thailand really.
Jane	We realized maybe the cost savings package needed to be looked at a little closer based on where in the world did you go. It wasn't so much how much more salary you'd have, but at the end of the day, what's left in your pocket. ... we had unfortunately one too many dependents to be able to stay in Moscow affordably.
Skip	Do you want me to go into why we left? ... Okay. Well, this one's actually really easy. It was all about money.
Susan	... I cannot save as much money as I hoped I would be able to.

Conclusion

The positive aspects of teaching abroad voiced by the participants in this study concur with Hardman's (2001) study, which concluded that teachers place a high value on amicable working environments, competitive financial benefits, and opportunities to advance professionally when a move or contract renewal are considered. Ann nicely summarized the general sentiment of the teachers who participated in this research: "So really, I'm overwhelmingly just thankful for the benefits that we get as overseas teachers."

Despite expressing an understanding of the challenges that overseas teachers face, the participants in this research were generally pleased with their decisions to work abroad. The participants understood that the reasons to leave a school were usually based

upon the perceived circumstances in a particular school, rather than on a rejection of the system of overseas schools in its entirety.

Chapter 6: Discussion

The purpose of the research was to gain a better understanding of how expatriate teachers perceive their experiences in international schools, and the role that these perceptions may have played in their decisions to continue at a school or to seek other employment. This chapter will begin with a review of the preceding five chapters. This summary of the preceding chapters will be followed by five different discussions of the findings.

First, there will be discussion of Joslin's (2002) criteria for self-knowledge among international school teachers and the ways in which these criteria were supported--and, in some cases, not supported by the findings of this research. Second, the findings will be used to begin to generate an understanding of the culture of international school teachers, an understanding that hopefully will be expanded by other studies and a much larger number of research participants. Third, I will discuss my own reflections related to the purposes of this research and how my experiences are similar to and different from the experiences of the study's participants. Fourth, there will be discussions of the implications for future policy and, finally, recommendations for future research will then be discussed.

An Overview of the Previous Chapters

Chapter 1 provided background to the questions examined in this research. The problems related to recruitment and retention of teachers in international schools were discussed and specialized terms defined. The study's purpose, significance, and organization were presented, as were the research questions that lent fundamental guidance to the aim of this research.

In Chapter 2, several bodies of literature were reviewed. The discussion of the literature included an examination of research on the characteristics of international schools, the process of recruitment and retention of teachers for these schools, and the experiences of teachers who are working abroad. Also examined was scholarly work related to the levels of occupational status present within many international schools.

In Chapter 3, I explained my use of the following techniques: (a) Semi-structured interviews utilizing an interview guide; (b) a particularistic case study approach limited to and presented as professional life histories; and (c) a three part cross-case analysis of the interview data that allowed for the emergence ethnographic generalizations associated with the culture of international school teachers.

Chapter 4 was an initial review of the data in story form. Each of the participants' professional life histories unfolded in this chapter as I retold them, always attempting to be faithful to the data generated from the interviews. The professional life histories allowed me to represent the data in story form, using the interview guide as an outline and, consequently, a form of pre-coding.

Chapter 5 provided a review of the findings of this research. Each research question was addressed and graphic illustrations from the quotation matrix, the domain analysis worksheets, and the categories properties tool were woven into the discussion of the findings.

Discussion of the Findings

A Comparison of the Findings with Joslin's Criteria for Self Knowledge Among International School Teachers.

The interview guide that served as a framework for this research intentionally

employed questions based upon the criteria that Joslin (2002) used to gauge self-knowledge among international school teachers. The criteria suggested a complex set of interactions between elements of the criteria that allowed teachers to form summative judgments about the suitability of their placement in a particular school. Thus, it was a useful tool in assisting with the framing of this research.

This research was not meant to evaluate Joslin's (2002) criteria. However, due to the importance that I gave to Joslin's work in creating the interview guide, a discussion of the criteria relative to my results seems appropriate.

As noted in Chapter 3, Joslin outlined the following characteristics upon which teachers may use to assess the goodness-of-fit between who they are and an international school environment in which they might work:

- [Their] own culture heritage;
 - [Their]...previous work culture/ 'home' country professional culture;
 - The school's organization culture;
 - The international school's mission;
 - The local community culture (e.g. expatriate community); and
 - The regional culture and the host nation's culture/subcultures.
- (Joslin, 2002, p. 34, bullets in original quote).

The data collected for this research, the results of which are displayed in Chapters 4 and 5, with additional details in Appendix E, indicate that teachers can, indeed, use the categories above to analyze their situations and their relationships to their situations. For example, the teachers in this study did acknowledge that their own cultural heritage and national work culture affected their decisions to stay or not to stay at a particular international school. Not surprisingly, the participating teachers in this study tended to be most comfortable in school settings that mirrored those found in their country of origin.

This was particularly evident in the cases of both Susan and Skip. Susan, who

began her career in the U.K., struggled with what she viewed as the American orientation of her current school. Skip expressed a clearly U.S.-based value system and felt as though his current school, the same school that Susan described, was not “American” enough in its orientation.

The organizational structure of an international school also played a role in choices at contract renewal time, though, for the participants in this study at least, the focus was less on structure and more on the actions and attitudes of administrators within a given organization. Each participating teacher used examples of past administrators as tools to help them to form their views of subsequent principals and directors. The participating teachers in this study, however, showed very little interest in discussing a school’s mission statement and, through body language or lack of response, appeared to judge this aspect of Joslin’s criteria to be relatively unimportant.

This study’s participants did, however, very consciously evaluate their feelings about both the expatriate and local communities when making decisions related to relocation. Local communities formed a large part of the overall assessment that a teacher assigned to any of his or her international schools. If the participants had positive impressions of the local populations, they were more likely to feel good about their work environment.

On the whole, Joslin’s (2002) criteria held up quite well when compared with the results of this research. Joslin’s criteria certainly proved to be a useful tool with which to frame a portion of this study.

The “Culture” of International School Teachers

The question of whether or not international school teachers constituted a culture

was an implicit concern of this research. The domain analysis component of the study suggested that, at least among the participants in this research, a common language and set of assumptions linked the participants together in a way that members of a culture are linked.

The assumption that a shared language and the shared set of meanings represented by this language is indicative of a shared culture was discussed in prior chapters. The assumption is based, in part, on work by Merriam (2002) and Spradley (1979). Spradley, along with other cognitive anthropologists, in fact, developed the domain analysis techniques employed in this study. Such techniques, according to Spradley, can produce a “cognitive map” of a culture (p. 7). The beginnings of such a map have been produced here. Additional work needs to be undertaken, of course, to determine whether the terms and meanings employed by five teachers who currently work in one school (though who previously worked in many different schools) are shared by other members of the culture of international school teachers. It would also be interesting to focus on the dispersed nature of a cultural group that, quite literally, lives all over the world.

Implications for Policy

To the extent that the data from this study reflects elements of the culture of international school teachers—and, given the consistency across participants and the fact that the five participants had worked in a total of seventeen international schools, there is reason to believe that it very well might—this study has a number of policy implications. These implications will be discussed in this section.

Rethink the issue of timing in the teacher recruitment process.

The process of recruitment for international schools is costly and time consuming

for both teaching candidates and the schools that hire them. Expenses for both teachers and recruiting schools are principally related to the travel and accommodations costs implicit in job fair attendance. Lengthening the recruitment process through early digital communications prior to job fairs may significantly reduce these costs.

Additional time for decision making outside of the rapid, and often high pressure, arena of a job fair may also increase the likelihood of a “best fit” for both candidate and school and increase the chances that a teacher will remain at a school beyond his or her initial 2-year contract. Hatch (1997) discussed the difficulties of making rational choices under the current practice of rapid recruitment.

If hiring continues to be done at job fairs, some modifications in the process are needed. The reason that teachers are pressured to make a quick decision is that school personnel are fearful of losing good candidates to the competition and teachers are fearful that, if they delay their decision, the position may be filled with someone else. Thus, a commitment to changing the timeline between the making of an offer and accepting it would require that job-fair participants sign a pledge to make no decisions until a specified period after the job fair is over.

The data in this study of international teachers tend to support Merrow’s (2000) suggestion that “we’re misdiagnosing the problem as ‘recruitment’ when it’s really ‘retention’” (p. 1). This study began with Broman’s (2008) assertion that international schools are facing a crisis related to teacher recruitment and teacher retention. This research has suggested that by understanding how teachers view their work in international schools and that by addressing the core issues that concern teachers within this culture, schools can avoid frequent turnover.

While better retention rates are synonymous with less need for recruiting, international schools will always need to recruit some new teachers. The data in this study, in fact, support the assumption that a desire of international teachers to move through the circuit is central to the novelty-seeking impulse embedded in the culture of international school teachers. Yet, data from this study also suggest that more transparent recruiting by school administrators will delay the inevitable exiting process and increase retention rates. The data in this study suggest that recruiting administrators should begin the process of retention during the recruiting process itself by representing the realities of their school as honestly as possible before a contract is signed. The participants in this study have very clear memories of what they were told by school representatives during the recruiting process. These recollections were compared and contrasted to a school's reality once the newly hired teacher arrived and assessed his or her actual environment.

In short, the emotional groundwork for retention appears to be established in a teacher's mind within the first few days at a new school. If there is a discrepancy between what was promised and what is found upon arrival, retention is likely to be problematic. In addition, the quick assessments of their situations that teachers tend to make suggest that international school administrators should pay careful attention to the planning and implementation of "new teacher orientation" programs. All of this is important because less frequent relocation of teachers saves international schools significant amounts of money and lends consistency to a school's staff and program development.

Educate administrators about what they do (or don't do) that impacts retention.

Because this study asserts that poor relationships between teachers and administrators tend to limit retention, it is recommended that principals and school heads become sensitized to the type of teacher beliefs articulated in this study. There is undoubtedly also a need to help principals think through how they can respond to the issues teachers raised in this study with respect to their relationships with administrators, as well as how they can manage situations when they cannot give teachers what they desire.

After all, international school administrators face multiple challenges if they are to effectively respond to the concerns expressed by the teachers who participated in this study. Because of teacher expectations of fairness and support, coupled with the complex management of extraordinary benefits, particularly housing, a principal or director's job is difficult. Yet, as Hardman (2001) argued, "It is unlikely that managers will be able to ensure that all of the major conditions and incentives are in operation for all of their staff all of the time" (p. 129). This difficulty is exacerbated when a school employs teachers from a variety of nationalities: Susan and Jane, while speaking from a teacher's perspective, have reinforced the notion that national differences can prove problematic for administrators as well as teachers.

The relatively recent establishment of the Principals Training Center, an institute aimed directly at international school administrators, is potentially a positive development in this regard. Armed with new information about how teachers evaluate their administrators and what administrators can do to improve their relationships with

teachers, could, as Hardman (2001) has suggested, significantly improve the retention of teachers beyond their initial 2-year commitment.

Full disclosure sooner rather than later.

An international school would also be wise to fully inform prospective teaching candidates about the management style used in the school. Advance notification is important because overseas teachers come from a variety of educational and management-style backgrounds. This study has suggested that a teacher who is led to believe that he or she will have great professional autonomy will expect this to be true upon arrival. If the teacher later senses that the new school has a very directive administration, the teacher will be more likely to feel misled and, consequently, consider leaving.

Similarly, an international school should honestly represent its benefits package when attempting to recruit new teachers. At least for the participants in this study, housing appeared to be an overseas teacher's most important contractual benefit. If the housing is small, it should be represented as such during the interview process. In addition, a realistic presentation of a host-county's cost of living, and consequent savings potential, also should be accurately reported to candidates for teaching positions during the recruitment process.

On-going responsiveness.

Once teachers arrive, and throughout their tenure at an international school, administrators need to be viewed by overseas teachers as responsive to their needs. As noted above, this study has indicated that these needs usually relate to the allocation and maintenance of housing, as well as to the facilitation of communication with a teacher's

home of origin. While the participating teachers in this study understood that they needed to be flexible, they nevertheless wanted empathy from their administrators if direct and immediate action was not possible.

Recommendations for Future Research

This was a small study that possibly revealed a great deal about the culture of international school teachers who have been on the circuit for a significant amount of time and, consequently, can be seen as initiated members of the culture. But, because this was a modest effort with a relatively small sample, further research on the culture of international school teachers is needed. I suggest that this line of study focus more on the cultural norms of international school teachers within a research format that is not principally driven by recruitment and retention issues. When overseas-hire teachers are not making decisions about longevity, they are serving on panels that write IB curriculum, attending or presenting workshops at international conferences, or traveling to other international schools as coaches, chaperones, and program advisors. Mostly, they are teaching. An examination of how the culture of overseas teachers manifests itself in these settings could prove illuminating.

It would also be useful to look at how international teachers may differ from their domestic counterparts in terms of attitudes about pedagogical practices. This could be an extremely useful study to inform both administrators at international schools, and administrators in the countries of origin, such as Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Another possible line of research could focus on how widely-dispersed teachers communicate their cultural knowledge through various publications, both online and on

paper, and whether or not these publications mirror the actual sentiments of international teachers or shape the commonly held “wisdom.” Of particular interest would be how international teachers, as Spradley (1979) stated, “organize their cultural knowledge” (p. 228) through the use of niche media.

Further study that examines the choices that international school administrators face regarding their own tenures at an international school would also be warranted. For example, do they hold similar views to teachers on the advantages and disadvantages of working in international schools? What, if any, different vantage points do administrators have when thinking about staying in a school or leaving? What types of recruitment and retention decisions issues do administrators have and what criteria do they use in resolving these issues and in deciding on whether to stay in a school or leave. This recommendation suggests a study similar in nature to this one, but with administrators rather than teachers as the participants.

Researcher Reflections

I have worked in international schools for over 15 years as both a teacher and an administrator. Consequently, it seems appropriate—and, according to some methodologists, necessary—that I publicly reflect on how the findings of this study relate to my experiences.

In fact, the majority of the data collected for this research resonated with me. The views expressed by the teachers who participated in this study mirror many of my own feelings about the process of recruitment and retention. I clearly remember my second international school head telling me that we, international educators, are always looking for the next job. Although there is, of course, some variation in this generalization, I

believe his statement is what I would term a “soft truism.”

In addition, like the participants in this study, I have faced the difficult decisions about staying in or leaving a school frequently, and with great anguish, during my career abroad. There was a difference in this regard between my experiences and the experiences discussed by the research participants. My family circumstances require that this choice cannot be easily made. In my case, there was a tension between my preferences and the preferences of my former wife. I seek novelty and wish to move frequently within the circuit. At times I have additionally wanted to return to the United States and have fantasized about what it would be like after over 15 years abroad. My former wife, who also taught, could be described as a “nester” who generally preferred to stay for extended periods in one location and has no desire to return to the United States.

While the issue of conflicting spousal preferences only marginally surfaced in this study, I would hazard to guess that many “teaching couples” on the international school circuit face similar dilemmas. Such choices are further complicated if, as in my own case, the teaching couple has children or has gone through a divorce. Yet, however layered one’s choices about relocation are, experience within the culture of the circuit can increase one’s comfort level when facing these decisions. Experience, I believe, leads a veteran international teacher to more fully understand his or her options and to have developed a truly global network of both support in the decision making process and “insider” information on job openings. This inference was supported by the participants in this study.

My occasional desire to return to a domestic career has been tempered by a popular, and to me credible, “urban myth” within the culture of international teachers.

This belief, often phrased in a variety of ways, states something to the effect that, “If a teacher returns home, they always come back overseas.” The data from this study supports this notion. Skip, Ann, Emma, and to some extent Susan, had all returned home after living abroad and subsequently opted to return to international living. I suspect that, should I return to the United States, I would eventually follow this pattern. For me, teaching abroad has proven addictive.

Conclusion

Outside the somewhat cloistered world of “the circuit,” little is known about the world of international schools and those who teach abroad. Those who know this specialized network of schools best are the overseas teachers themselves. This knowledge base is developed more profoundly as a teacher moves from school to school. An international school teacher’s developing understanding of the circuit eventually morphs into membership into a professional and lifestyle culture. The data from this study began to define what the culture of international school teachers looks like and the values and preferences that are associated with teaching in an international school.

While this study reinforced previous research in this area, it has also yielded some potentially new findings. First, the necessity of establishing the emotional groundwork in recruiting for retention had not appeared before in the literature, though it showed up strongly in this study. Second, the importance of being able to have good communication with family and friends in a teacher’s country of origin carried a level of emotional impact that was unexpected and was not even hinted at in the literature. While these findings may confirm common sense assumptions, they add substance to the idea that recruiting with retention in mind and later providing easy means of contact with home are

ways in which schools can improve retention rates. Third was the finding that part of the culture of international school teachers can be described as adventure seeking, so a certain amount of turnover is to be expected. This finding, in particular, is something that needs to be taken into consideration by international school administrators, both in figuring out how to entice teachers into staying longer than the initial contract and in planning for certain amounts of turnover.

This study supports the idea that the retention process begins with recruitment, which needs to be enhanced by the recruiting administrator offering as accurate a picture of the school and situation as possible. Retention rates can be improved by sound administrative and supervisory practices. Consequently, this study suggests a strong need for administrators who are skilled at balancing their support of teachers with the requirement to support students. Teacher benefits, particularly accommodations, have a greater significance to facilitating teachers' all-around functioning than may have been assumed in the past. Host-country culture seems to have the least amount of effect on retaining teachers. This does not make the host-country factor insignificant, merely less important than the other aspects. As hoped, this study has opened a window into the culture of teachers on the international school circuit.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide

Lin (2005) presented an interview guide that has been adapted for the purposes of this study below:

1. Demographic Information (DI)

- Name
- Pseudonym of choice
- Nationality
- Birthplace
- Time in current location
- Prior teaching experience

2. Employment History (EH)

- How did you decide to become a teacher?
--Probe for details of early motivations
- How did you decide to teacher internationally?
--Probe for details factors leading to the decision to go abroad
- How would you describe the schools that you worked in, either at home or abroad, that you've worked in previously?
--Probe for discussion of benefits, school climate, leadership, physical plant, etc.
- Describe some of you best memories from a prior school.
- Are there some memories from a prior school that are actively unpleasant?
--Probe for factors that may have influenced choosing to come to a different school and/or different country from that of the first school.
- What, in your view, are the ideal characteristics of a successful overseas teacher?

3. Experience of International School Cultures (EISC)

Experience through home culture lens

- Have you found that a dominant national cultural ethos exists/existed among the faculty in any of the schools where you've worked?

----Probe: If so, how have you managed to work within these cultures?

Experience of school's organizational culture

- How have you experienced the organizational structure of the schools that you've worked in?

----Probe: What organizational traits stand out as positive?

The School's Mission Statement as a Reflection of Experience

- How well do you think that the schools you've worked in have "lived" their mission statements?

---Probe: If the mission statements have not reflected reality, which parts or phrases are least consistent with your actual experiences?

--Probe: Have any of the schools you've worked in been either more, or less, consistent with their mission statements?-

Experience of the Expatriate Community

- How would you characterize your level of involvement with the expatriate communities that you have worked with and lived among?
- What were/are your broad impressions of these expatriate communities?

Experience of the Local Culture

- How would you characterize your level of involvement with local people at your current school and how does this involvement compare to that of past schools?
- What were/are your broad impressions of the local people in the places you've worked?

Sense of Loss and Gain

- Is there anything that you miss about your last location? Any past posting?
- Have you experienced any thing uniquely positive about your current location?
- Is there anything else that stands out to you as significant at your current school when remembering past experiences at international schools?

Additional Information on Personal Life

- How satisfied are you or have you been with your personal life while working in international schools? Are there aspects of this that have not been covered in what we have discussed so far, that you are willing to share? If there is something you wish had been different or could change about any of the international school that you've been associated with what would that be?

4. Summary Questions (SQ)

- 1) How did you first learn about the network of international schools?
- 2) What were your initial expectations regarding teaching in international schools?
- 3) How and to what extent have your expectations been fulfilled or unfulfilled?
- 4) How have you used your past experiences with international schools to evaluate your current school?
- 5) How would you describe your challenges and positive experiences during your tenure in your current international school?

Appendix B: Informed Consent Letter
The Experiences of Expatriate Teachers in International Schools:
Five Ethnographic Case Studies

James Anderson is a doctoral student in Educational Leadership at the College of Education and Leadership Sciences at the University of San Diego. You are invited to participate in a research project he is conducting for the purpose of exploring how teachers perceive their jobs while working overseas.

The project will involve an interview that asks you to reflect on your past and current experiences in international schools. The interview will last about 60 minutes and also will include some questions about you, such as the number of years that you have been teaching. The interview will take place at a time and place convenient for you. Participation is entirely voluntary and you can refuse to answer any question and/or quit at any time. Should you wish to withdraw from this study, all your information will be destroyed right away. Your employment status will not be affected by your decisions to participate or to quit after beginning. There will be a follow-up interview for each participant in order to verify responses.

The information you give will be analyzed and studied in a manner that protects your identity. A code number will be used for identification and your real name will not appear on any of the study materials. All information you provide will remain confidential and locked in a file cabinet in the researcher's office for a minimum of five years before being destroyed.

The interview process may make you feel tired, and you may experience some psychological discomfort. If so, you may decline to complete the interview and withdraw from the study.

Remember, you can stop the interview at any time you feel tired, uncomfortable, or for any other reason.

The benefit to participating will be in knowing that you helped educators learn how to better evaluate teaching conditions in international schools. If you complete the study, you will receive a restaurant gift certificate valued at approximately \$50.00 USD.

If you have any questions about this research, please contact Jim Anderson at

(760) 632-7695 or Dr. Robert Domoyer at the University of San Diego: (619) 260-7445.

Following the completion of this study, information that has been provided in interview data will be deleted to protect the identities of the participants after a six month waiting period.

I have read and understand this form, and consent to the research it describes to me. I have received a copy of this consent form for my records.

Signature of Participant

Date

Name of Participant (Printed)

Signature of Principal Investigator

Date

Appendix C: Cultural Influences Model

Figure 1. Joslin's (2002) "model of multi-level cultural influences that impinge on an individual teacher in an international school" (p. 35).

Appendix D: Data Analysis Worksheet Sample

1. Semantic Relationship: <u>Strict Inclusion</u> 2. Form: <u>X (is a kind of) Y</u> 3. Example: <u>An oak (is a kind of) tree.</u>		
Included Terms	Semantic Relationship	Cover Term
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="border-left: 1px solid black; width: 80px; height: 40px; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div> <div style="border-left: 1px solid black; width: 80px; height: 40px; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div> <div style="border-left: 1px solid black; width: 80px; height: 40px; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div> <div style="border-left: 1px solid black; width: 80px; height: 40px; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div> <div style="border-left: 1px solid black; width: 80px; height: 40px; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div> <div style="border-left: 1px solid black; width: 80px; height: 40px;"></div> </div>	<div style="font-size: 3em;">}</div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div style="font-size: 2em;">}</div> <div style="margin: 0 10px;">→</div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <u>IS A KIND OF</u> </div> <div style="font-size: 2em;">→</div> </div>	<div style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 30px;"></div>
Structural Questions: _____		
Included Terms	Semantic Relationship	Cover Term
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="border-left: 1px solid black; width: 80px; height: 40px; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div> <div style="border-left: 1px solid black; width: 80px; height: 40px; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div> <div style="border-left: 1px solid black; width: 80px; height: 40px; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div> <div style="border-left: 1px solid black; width: 80px; height: 40px; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div> <div style="border-left: 1px solid black; width: 80px; height: 40px; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div> <div style="border-left: 1px solid black; width: 80px; height: 40px;"></div> </div>	<div style="font-size: 3em;">}</div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div style="font-size: 2em;">}</div> <div style="margin: 0 10px;">→</div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <u>IS A KIND OF</u> </div> <div style="font-size: 2em;">→</div> </div>	<div style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 30px;"></div>
Structural questions: _____		

Figure 2. Spradley's (1979) example of a domain analysis worksheet (p. 113).

Appendix E: Quotation Matrix

Nine quotation matrices were created to organize the data around the principal themes that drive this research. Each thematic section not displayed and discussed in Chapter 5 is shown below. The topic headings in the quotation matrix served as guideposts to the research questions that have been explored in this dissertation.

Table 16

Salary & Contractual Benefits

Ann	[Ann's brother in-law] is a teacher and she watches them struggle financially and with time and stress. Why would you go back to that? So the people that have come to visit us completely understand now that that's part of why we choose to do this. It's the reality that it creates a very nice life.
Jane	Housing . . . I would say it's the reason people would leave . . . When the international schools bring anybody on, single teachers or families, it comes with a consideration around housing.
Skip	Okay. Well, this one's actually really easy. It was all about money. Housing makes a world of difference. So the next job had to pay more money . . . If they paid better, I would still be in Mexico.

Table 17

Qualities of a Successful International Teacher

Emma	I think someone has to be flexible because sometimes there's not the materials that you're used to.
	Very flexible . . . Because you have this preconceived idea about what could go on or what is going to be at the school. You have to kind of be flexible or else you're going to be unhappy . . . You have nowhere to go...
Skip	If I were a director, I would go out of my way to hire younger people with less experience than I would older people because I think they bring the enthusiasm and the vibrancy . . .
Susan	Well, there's the obvious ones like civility, open-mindedness.
	You've got to be flexible . . .
	You've got to be quite resourceful because it's not like home.

Table 18

Satisfaction with Current School

Jane	We're in a good place with the girls . . .
Susan	Because this is an American one and I'm British, I think to some extent I feel I miss certain elements, certain international elements here. Not just because it's an American school, but because the student population, a huge chunk of them are long-term residents.

Table 19

New Teacher Support / Orientation

Ann	I think you always need some orientation in your new country and your new school and all that. But the first couple of postings I had, it was really important.
Emma	[Upon arrival] I loved what y'all did. Took me right to the house. I knew where it was. There was the guards there. And y'all had some food there and you already had talked to me about the automobile. That was nice.
	For a week, they put you in a service apartment, so that's pretty nice.
Skip	[New teacher orientation] is beneficial to the entire school climate to keep teachers longer because those initial phases of getting used to a new culture, the housing, buying cars, getting used to the food, all that jazz, once that passes, then the teacher can concentrate more and get more enthused themselves and therefore motivate their students more through teaching . . .

Domain Analysis

Using the data collected from the interview transcripts, I created domains of cultural knowledge by identifying “universal semantic relationships” (Spradley, 1979, p. 100). The following domains, which have not been integrated into Chapter 5, are listed below:

Table 20

Interest in Overseas Teaching

Included term	Relationship	Cover Term
Job dissatisfaction at home		
Desire to travel		
Chance exposure to idea	are causes of	Interest in Overseas Teaching
Influence of other person(s)		
Contribute to the world		

Note. Through the collective analysis of the interview transcripts, the participants have identified the included terms above as causes for interest in overseas teaching.

Table 21

Unpleasant Memories of Overseas Teaching

Included term	Relationship	Cover Term
Difficult administrator		
Poor salary		
Non-collegial peers		
School pace too fast	are causes of	Unpleasant Memories of Overseas Teaching
Bad housing		
Unpleasant / difficult segments in local population		

Note. Through the collective analysis of the interview transcripts, the participants have identified the included terms above as causes of unpleasant memories of overseas teaching.

Table 22

Teachers Feeling Supported

Included term	Relationship	Cover Term
Administrators	are causes of	Teachers Feeling Supported

Note. Through the collective analysis of the interview transcripts, the participants have identified the included terms above as causes of teachers feeling supported.

Table 23

Bonding with Colleagues, Students, and Locals

Included term	Relationship	Cover Term
Communal living	are means to	Bonding with Colleagues,
Recreational opportunities		Students, and Locals

Note. Through the collective analysis of the interview transcripts, the participants have identified the included terms above as a means to bond with students, colleagues and local people.

Categories and Properties of the Interview Data

As explained in Chapter 3, the interview transcripts engendered “categories” which are representations of themes, as well as subsequent “properties” which are sub-categories of these themes. New codes were created for this piece and examples were displayed.

Table 24

Positive Recollections Views of Administrators

Emma	[Emma loves administrators who] . . . work hard as the teachers.
Skip	I’ve been told by my director in private conversations that there’s a buzz about me, that parents love me, that the kids love being in my class, that he has gotten praise for hiring me and bringing me into this school system.
Susan	The commitment came from the top. [In support of Susan’s program.]

Table 25

Professional Experience: Discomfort with Administration

Ann	I wasn't comfortable with him [her principal] being near my students. That's how bad it was. So if not for that, I probably would have stayed.
Jane	[The principal's] demeanor and his manner and what he thought was important came across as trying to catch you behaving and trying to catch you misbehaving and not anywhere in between.
Skip	Basically, my supervisor gives me directive e-mails that I have to open. They're sent to everybody. They're not just sent to me. That I have to open. I have to go to a printer, print them out, and then follow the directions.
Susan	In a national system, your principal is an employee just like you are and here in an international school, it's not quite the same. There's more of a hierarchy. And whereas at home, they're trying to flatten their hierarchies. In an international school it's there and there may not sometimes even be any consultation at all. Or you just may be told, "You're going to do this; you're going to do that. You're going to come in on Saturday."

Table 26

Professional Experience: Synergistic Teaching

Emma	. . . I feel good about what I do.
Jane	. . . it was just good energy to be around the kids.
Skip	I think in general teachers were pretty happy, felt they were respected as teachers, and when you feel that, you kind of do a better job.

Table 27

Professional Experience: Movement for Change and Challenge

Ann	Again, there were a lot of things I was sad to leave Cairo for. Loved the school, loved my friends there, loved the country and the travel and the experiences we had. So that was personal as well I guess. We just felt like it was a good time as a family to go do something new together.
Skip	...after doing the stint in the public schools, my children went to university and my wife and I were free to travel again. And so we went back overseas. And the reason we did was because there were more ideas out there. ...you've got to want to do it, and every international teacher I've met has. They want to get out of their own country and see the world and experience it. You have to be open and you have to understand yourself I think because going international it tests who you are.
Susan	I just needed a change of environment and school and a new challenge.

Table 28

Grounded Wellbeing: Personal Stability

Ann	So really, I'm overwhelmingly just thankful for the benefits that we get as overseas teachers. I usually have great medical packages. My salaries are very comfortable.
Emma	I mean, they [Emma's colleagues] were fabulous and we were all friends and family. We were family. And we went every other weekend, Sally (pseudonym) and I, went to a different place and other people would join us. So we made plans. We had a calendar.

Table 29

Grounded Wellbeing: Reflective Change

Emma	I wanted another continent. I didn't want to do Asia because I'd really traveled a lot there.
Skip	... we had kids and they were entering school age and we really wanted the enriched cultural experience of meeting people from other countries, having friends, seeing the world.

Table 30

Grounded Wellbeing: National Identity

Ann	There's this commonality. Yeah. There is something about the commonwealth countries. So I do feel like a minority here . . .
Skip	I almost have to walk around and be apologetic that I'm American.
Susan	. . . because this is an American one and I'm British, I think to some extent I'm at odds with what I would say is quite an extreme level of positiveness [sic].

Table 31

Wisdom for Decision Making: Trust and Respect as the Impetus for Motivation

Ann	. . . part of the reason I ended up going back to the states for a year, it was flat out the principal. It was frankly an emotionally abusive environment in which to teach. I won't go into all the details, but there was no professional respect and no collegiality and no sharing or buying into decision making at all. And really inappropriate comments made in social situations. It was really awful.
Skip	. . . there just wasn't a lot of enthusiasm coming out of administration or how the school was run. So it kind of dampens your own enthusiasm.

Table 32

Good Fortune: Easy Living Conditions

Ann	[Ann's husband's] mother came to visit us in Peru, and she was another really hoping, hoping that we were coming back. And she came in this beautiful house we had, and met our phenomenal nanny, and somebody's cooking our meals. And she said, "You guys would be crazy to come back home."
Susan	[In Vietnam] Most stuff works. Most stuff's done well. So in that sense, it was very easy to live there.