Experiences Of Latin American Au Pairs In El Paso, Texas: Perceptions And Challenges In A Border Context

Nathaly Carolina Hernandez Garcia

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EXPERIENCES OF LATIN AMERICAN AU PAIRS IN EL PASO, TEXAS: PERCEPTIONS AND CHALLENGES IN A BORDER CONTEXT

NATHALY CAROLINA HERNÁNDEZ GARCÍA

Master’s Program in Communication

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by

Nathaly Carolina Hernández García

2021
Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to…

My Almighty God because you stay true to your promises, and you surrounded me with people (my family, my husband, my professors, and friends) who supported, motivated, and encouraged me until I reach the highest mountain in my academic path: the successful culmination of my thesis project.

The Latin American Au Pair community, my community, for inspiring me to develop a voice and speak up in a foreign country in favor of us, brave young women whom one day decided to leave their home countries to find the best version of their selves.

My thesis committee. Dr. Perez, Dr. Peterson, and Dr. Vazquez's words are not enough to express my gratitude for guiding me and enriching my thesis journey. It is great to have the opportunity to work hand by hand with excellent professionals, but it is more valuable to learn from wonderful human beings such as you all.

Los sueños sí se cumplen...

¡Familia lo logramos!
EXPERIENCES OF LATIN AMERICAN AU PAIRS IN EL PASO, TEXAS: PERCEPTIONS AND CHALLENGES IN A BORDER CONTEXT

by

NATHALY CAROLINA HERNÁNDEZ GARCÍA, B.A.

THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at El Paso

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Communication

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

December 2021
Abstract

For the last three decades, the French term *Au Pair* has been used to name the exchange program that allows foreign young people (primarily women) the possibility to immerse themselves in American culture while living, working, studying, and traveling in the United States. Within the context of globalization in which we live, this program has experienced significant growth in Latin America and Europe, among others. The purpose of this exploratory study was to explore and make visible the concerns raised by female Au Pairs from Latin America who participate in the program in El Paso, Texas, a border community along the US-Mexico Border. Semi-structured interviews were undertaken via Zoom with a convenience sample of seven women to reconstruct their cultural exchange experiences, exploring their perceptions, challenges, and realities under intersectionality and acculturation theories lenses. The study provides meaningful results regarding the Au Pair program and identifies key challenges of living in a binational city.
**Table of Contents**

Abstract ................................................................................................................................. v

Table of Contents ................................................................................................................. vi

List of Tables .......................................................................................................................... ix

List of Figures ......................................................................................................................... x

Chapter 1: Introduction ......................................................................................................... 1

Context .................................................................................................................................. 3

The Au Pair program ............................................................................................................. 3

Autoethnography: My personal experience as an Au Pair ..................................................... 4

Chapter 2: Literature Review ............................................................................................... 9

How people construct places/spaces? .................................................................................. 10

Understanding intersectionality ......................................................................................... 13

Intersectionality and women’s migratory processes ............................................................ 17

Migrating to America: pursuing the American Dream ......................................................... 20

Addressing a Need: Exploring the transnational mobility of Latin Au Pairs and its
complexities ............................................................................................................................ 22

  Living the Au Pair experience in the era of Trump and COVID-19 ............................... 25

  Setting the Borderland/Frontera Context ...................................................................... 27

Chapter 3: Methodology ..................................................................................................... 32

From the au pair experience back to the academia ............................................................ 32

Data collection method and tools ...................................................................................... 33

Research Participant ............................................................................................................ 34

Sample section ..................................................................................................................... 34
IRB Approval Process ................................................................. 35
Data Collection ........................................................................ 35
Procedure .................................................................................. 35
Data Analysis ............................................................................ 37
Chapter 4: Analysis ................................................................... 39
The six-phases of thematic analysis ............................................. 39
Step 1: Become familiar with the data ....................................... 39
Step 2: Generate initial codes .................................................... 39
Step 3: Search for themes .......................................................... 41
Step 4: Review themes .............................................................. 41
Step 5: Define themes ............................................................... 42
Participants’ Perceptions ........................................................... 44
The process of becoming an Au Pair ......................................... 46
The American Experience .......................................................... 53
Benefits of the Experience ......................................................... 73
Step 6: Write Up ....................................................................... 75
Chapter 5: Conclusions and Suggestions .................................... 81
Study Limitations and Future Research Opportunities ................ 85
References ................................................................................ 87
Appendix A: My Au Pair Experience ........................................... 103
Appendix B: IRB Approval ......................................................... 108
Appendix C: Interview Guide Questionnaire (English) ............... 110
Appendix D: Interview Guide Questionnaire (Spanish) ............... 112
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix E: Demographic Survey (English)</th>
<th>114</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appendix E: Demographic Survey (Spanish)</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix F: Interviews Transcripts (English)</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview # 1: Pamela</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview # 2: Andrea</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview # 3: Sandra</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview # 4: Catalina</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview # 5: Sofia</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview # 6: Marcela</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview # 7: Gabriela</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix F: Interviews Transcripts (Spanish)</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrevista # 1: Pamela</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrevista # 2: Andrea</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrevista # 3: Sandra</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrevista # 4: Catalina</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrevista # 5: Sofía</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrevista # 6: Marcela</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrevista # 7: Gabriela</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum Vitae</td>
<td>266</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Tables

Table 3.1: Braun & Clarke’s six-phase framework for doing a thematic analysis ...................... 38

Table 4.1. Summary of demography survey .............................................................................. 40

Table 4.2. Advantages and disadvantages of living in El Paso, Texas ...................................... 64

Table 4.3. Examples of the participants country's perceptions ...................................................... 67
List of Figures

Figure 4.1: Thematic map .................................................................................................................. 43
Chapter 1: Introduction

One of the topics that the era of globalization has brought to the table is the need for cultural exchange experiences, especially for those who, like me, are born and raised in underdeveloped countries. I remember that once I graduated from my second career in Colombia, I was not concerned about applying for a job to gain experience as a journalist or photographer. I was worried about doing things that in the future would help me stand out of the crowd, leading me to better job opportunities and a better quality of life.

At that moment, I knew that I needed to go and live abroad to improve my English language skills and gain international experience if I wanted to become a competitive professional in the global market. However, from my group of friends/colleagues, I was the only one who was considering going abroad. The idea to go overseas was not even an option for many of my friends/colleagues. We live in a world that is constantly working in finding ways to integrate the nations. The paradox here is that in this global world that promotes interaction across international borders, the realities of countries like Colombia often limit its residents from direct experience with other cultures. In this country, the idea of traveling and living abroad is a utopia or a dream that will never come true for a significant percentage of the population.

I do not come from a wealthy family. I come from a middle-class family that nine years ago, as a graduation gift, paid for my participation in the Au Pair program to become an Au Pair in the United States to help me achieve my goals. The Au Pair program offers young adults the possibility to live, work, and study in the United States while living a cultural exchange experience. This program is affordable compared to other cultural exchange programs. In the last decades, the Au Pair program has influenced the immigration flow, women mainly, from different countries to
the United States. A study conducted to evaluate the Au Pair program in the United States by Eureka Facts (2020) states that in the last three decades,

“the Au Pair program has connected U.S. families with young adults who provide child care services for U.S. host families all while continuing their post-secondary education and experiencing life in the United States. This is a mid-size public diplomacy program, hosting 21,551 Au Pairs in 2019. This puts it on par with the size of the camp counselor, intern, and secondary student programs” (Eureka Facts, 2020, p. 3)

The Au Pair program's rapid growth in the United States and worldwide has raised the need and the awareness to explore this social phenomenon, especially after the Au Pair participants have been categorized in official reports as "young adults who provide childcare services." This type of affirmation has opened a debate towards the real nature and purpose of the Au Pair Program. Is this a real cultural exchange program, or is it an undercover form of domestic labor? (Chuang, 2013; Quecan, 2017). From this scene emerges the need to conduct research that can help understand how the Au Pair cultural exchange experience truly works for the program participants in specific contexts.

Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative research study is to explore and make visible the concerns raised by female Au Pairs from Latin America who participate in the program in El Paso, Texas, a border community along the US-Mexico Border. To provide some context to this project I first provide a brief description of the term “Au Pair” and its increasingly central role in contemporary society over the past few decades. After that, I offer a brief autoethnographic account of my personal experience as an Au Pair (see Appendix A for an extended version) to illustrate how personal concerns motivated me to develop this research study.
In Chapter 2, I identify and explore sociocultural theories and concepts that help explain this experience; in Chapter 3, I describe the research methods that I applied to answer the research questions; in Chapter 4, I develop an inductive thematic analysis followed by Chapter 5, where I present the answers to the research questions, addresses limitations, and I offer suggestions for future research.

**CONTEXT**

**The Au Pair program**

The French term *Au Pair* means “on par” or “equal to.” It has been used in the last three decades to name an exchange program that allows “. . . foreign nationals to enter the United States, live with a US family and experience American family life while providing limited childcare and attending a U.S. post-secondary educational institution” (Siskind, n.d., p. 1). It is designed to engage women and men between the ages of 18 and 26. This program, within the context of globalization or the global village in which we live, has experienced rapid and significant growth in Latin American and European countries, among others (AuPairWorld, 2012; ICEF Monitor, 2014; United States Department of State, 2015; IAPA International Au Pair Association, 2017). It represents for many of its participants, a majority of whom are women who enter the US with a J1 visa, the possibility of living the American dream for a maximum period of two years.

Most agencies that offer the Au Pair program in the applicants' countries of origin emphasize the possibility of a first-hand experience that will allow participants to experience American culture closely, while considerably improving their English language skills. It also offers the possibility of traveling through the different states and to study in a US academic institution. For example, Cultural Care and Au Pair in America are two of the most well-known agencies in Latin America. On its web page, Culture Care states that:
To be an Au Pair in the United States gives you the unique opportunity to broaden your horizons and explore a new corner of the world with the support of your host family and Cultural Care. Dare to discover the American way of life by fully immersing yourself in a new culture and country (translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, Cultural Care Au Pair, n.d.).

While Au Pair in America claims that:

Within the Au Pair in America program, you can combine your desire to travel with your passion for taking care of children and the opportunity to be part of an American family (translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, Au Pair in America, n.d.).

These characteristics are possibly quite striking for program participants, especially those who come from Latin American countries, who lack work and academic opportunities. The low economic remuneration in the workplace, leads many of the young population to migrate to other countries in search of new opportunities or to strengthen and develop skills that make a difference in our return to our country of origin.

**Autoethnography: My personal experience as an Au Pair**

In 2013, I came to the United States and lived in Lake Tapps, Washington, a beautiful place in the middle of nowhere, and a hard place to make friends. After living there for seven months and having only one friend, another Au Pair from Colombia, I heard about Au Pair groups on Facebook. I applied to the Seattle Au Pair group in January 2014, and thanks to it, I met Chloe, an Au Pair from France who used to live five minutes from my house in Lake Tapps. In the following years, I moved and lived in different states. The adaptation process in my experience has been complicated due to language barriers and cultural differences, adding up to feeling like an outsider. However, I always use the Au Pair network on Facebook to connect with people in every place.
Migrating from one place to another or “social mobility” implies recognizing a new space and the need to seek adaptation strategies (Aguirre, 2017). I use my experience as an Au Pair to make connections in the states that I visit. Although the Au Pair community is small, it extends across all US states, and over the years, it has established a reliable social network. Therefore, when I arrived in El Paso, Texas, the first thing I did was to post in the different Au Pair groups on Facebook, asking if there were Au Pairs living in this Texas city.

To my surprise, I received only one response from a participant, who like me, is Colombian, and who had been living in El Paso for a few months. Through her, I met other participants in the program, mostly women from Brazil, Colombia, Venezuela, Italy, and Thailand. During the two years that I have lived in El Paso, I have learned that the local Au Pair community is tiny and that generally, the participants are from Latin America. From this situation emerged the motivation to conduct a study that examines Latin American Au Pairs’ affairs in a border community context (for a more detailed account see Appendix A).

Currently, I am not an Au Pair; I am an international student in the United States. In August 2018, I moved from Alexandria, Virginia, to El Paso, Texas, with the intention of continuing my English as a Second Language (ESL) studies and later starting my graduate studies at the University of Texas at El Paso. I moved to El Paso in the company of my “host family” with whom I lived during my last year as an Au Pair in Dupont, Washington. They also welcomed me into their home under my F1 student status, with the intention to help me to achieve "The American Dream." In my case, it has been to study for a master's degree in communication at a US university. Today, I am writing from my perspective as a young Latina, who lives and studies in a border community. My experiences as an Au Pair, living in many states throughout the nation have
contributed to the construction of my multiple identities, in which I have experienced both discrimination and privileged positions.

New York Times reporter Jordan Salama notes that about 20,000 young people — mostly women — come to the United States each year to live with families and take care of their children (25 July 2020). A study that evaluated Au Pair programs in the United States states that “each year, Au Pairs care for over 50,000 children across 50 states and the District of Columbia” (Eureka Facts, 2020, p. 1). This information reflects the great reception that the Au Pair program has in young communities (especially in Latin American, European and Asian countries), and in the North American context. The Au Pair program has become a social phenomenon. It has rapidly spread around the world throughout the current era. However, it tends to be invisible to many:

it seems that Au Pairing has grown alongside other forms of paid domestic work but has been relatively invisible in both official statistics and academic research… However, despite the lack of official data, there is substantial anecdotal, academic and industry evidence that Au Pairing has been growing globally in recent years. (Cox & Busch, 2018)

In the past few years, several bad experiences by current and former participants have been exposed by various media, academic research, and in court. In addition, during COVID-19 pandemic times, the Au Pair social phenomenon have been highly affected.

As I discussed in a previous research paper (Examining social connectedness and sociocultural adaptation through the use of Facebook by Latin American Au Pairs in the United States in times of pandemic COVID-19, 2021) the pandemic increased American families' childcare needs due to the school and daycares lockdowns. As the American television personality, Ainsley Earhardt, pointed out, “Many families rely on childcare from other countries…” (Earhardt, 2020, as cited in Darby, 2021, p. 1). However, the Trump administration “issued an executive
order suspending many foreign work visas... The order included the J-1 visa program, under which the Au Pair program, managed by the State Department, is categorized” (Salama, 2020, p. 2). Many Au Pairs were unable to enter the country, forcing the host families to search for available Au Pairs that were already in the country or to find other childcare options. COVID-19 has been exposing the Au Pairs to new and challenging work and living conditions, keeping in mind that they leave their home countries to work and live in the same place. This situation has led to confrontations between Au Pairs and Host families, overwork and lack of compensation have triggered most cases, Au Pairs’ isolation due to social solid-distance rules established by the host parents are also part of the problem.

These aspects have helped the Au Pair program gain visibility and become an object of study, interest, and discussion in the various disciplines. Several studies have analyzed Au Pair issues, such as marginalization (Aguilar, 2013), domestic work (Hess & Puckhaber, 2004), childcare (Bihoka, 2015), migration (Correa, 2017), family assistance (Bihoka, 2015), gender (Chayutse, 2017), and cultural exchange (Løvdal, 2015). However, no previous studies appear to focus on lived experiences of Au Pairs in border cities, especially those Latin American Au Pairs, who have decided to live their cultural exchange program in the El Paso, Texas - Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, border region.

In this study, I used intersectionality and acculturation theories to analyze the perceptions, challenges, and realities of Latin American Au Pairs who have decided to live their cultural exchange program in a binational border city. Given the study’s exploratory nature, I used semi-structured interviews as a research method. The following research questions guided the study:

(1) What are the key challenges that these Latin American women face while living in El Paso?
(2) What changes to an Au Pair’s perceptions of the “American Dream” do the program, the host country, and the particular border community generate via the Au Pair experience among the women of study?

(3) In what ways, if any, do the experiences vary among the Au Pairs interviewed in the host country?

In the following chapter, I describe theoretical concepts that shaped this study and interview questions, as well as my analysis.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

To begin with the literature review, I explain intersectionality and acculturation theories and why I decided to implement these sociocultural theories to analyze the topic of this study. Then, I examine the concepts of space and place within this context. After that, I explain the importance of intersectionality in understanding women's migratory processes. Moreover, I address the concepts of "The American Dream," transnational mobility and its complexities in the specific case of Latin American Au Pairs, elaborating on acculturation theory. Finally, I describe and interpret the two factors that had impacted and shaped the U.S. cultural environment in the last five years: Trump's Era and Covid-19 pandemic; and I navigate the concept of Frontera/Borderlands to understand better the place in which the study participants live or lived their cultural exchange experience.

Intersectionality theory (Busquier, 2018; Cresswell, 2004; Davis, 2008; Hulko, 2009; Collins, 2019) draws attention to how individuals' identities (race, gender, nationality, among others) overlap and interconnect in ways that influence how they are seen, understood, and treated. How do Latin American Au Pairs' social categories interact while participating in the Au Pair program and having their cultural exchange experience in a border community, and how are they perceived and treated in their new environment. This thesis uses intersectionality theory to examine Latin American Au Pairs' experiences of migration to the United States and the border city of study. Acculturation theory (Benet & Haritatos, 2005; Berry, 2017; Lackland & Oppedal, 2003; Mannarini, Talo, & Mezzi, 2017) refers to the process that people go through when exposed to a new culture and pays attention to the changes that individuals experience in this process. This study aims to explore and identify how acculturation is expressed in the Latin American Au Pairs' experiences due to their migration process.
HOW PEOPLE CONSTRUCT PLACES/SPACES?

In the last 30 years, disciplines such as communication, psychology, sociology, and architecture, among others, have carried out many studies (Urrútia, 1996; Garrido, 2005; Hashemnezhad, Parisa, & Akbar, 2013; Moranta & Urrútia, 2005; Pérez & Ortega, 2020, Muntañola, 2001; Altman, 1992) focused on discovering, identifying, and defining concepts that help to understand social reality. The terms sense of place, place-attachment, place-identity, appropriation of place, among others, are some of the main concepts that account for the relationship between people and their environments and the effects of this relationship. To achieve this study's goals, it is essential to investigate how a reading of social reality is carried out, based on establishing the links that people have with spaces. These links can be analyzed from various perspectives. However, in this study, I will adopt the terms "space adaptation" and "sense of place" to understand the links that Latin American Au Pairs create with El Paso, Texas, their current environment.

To start this conversation, one asks, “what is a place”? Garrido (2005) points out that "space has been defined as the result of the multiple relationships that human beings establish with the environment" (p. 1). For Tuan (1974), a place can be defined as a geographical location or a spatial structure signified by people's experiences. According to Bruchansky (2004), place simultaneously describes and produces a powerful association between social and spatial dimensions. For other scholars, such as Cresswell (2004), it is hard to define this concept singly, given a place's ubiquity. He emphasizes that place is "a way of seeing, knowing, and understanding the world" (p. 18). The definitions provided above illustrate that the concept of place is strongly attached to the relationship between space and humans. Within this framework, I adopt the concept of "sense of place" and "appropriation of space."
Different disciplines have studied the concept of a sense of place. Although it has different implications in each of them, psychology has established its relationship with concepts of perception and identity, among others. From an overview, Hashemnezhad, Parisa, and Akbar (2013) point out that "sense of place is the relationship between man, his imagine, and environmental characteristics" (p. 7). I can say that it is the way we understand the world around us. The way in which human beings understand or perceive the world is different and subjective, since as Hashemnezhad et al. (2013) emphasize, the concept is associated with personal experiences (memories, traditions, sociocultural aspects, among others) that are influenced by external factors (noises, smells, images). The aforementioned views show the relationship people have in interaction with space. The concept of "sense of space" is created from cognitive, perceptual, and physical elements, which interrelate, leading us to create meaning and appropriate space. From a psychological perspective, Moranta and Urrútica (2005) define the concept of appropriation as:

A basic mechanism of human development, by which the person ‘appropriates’ the generalized experience of the human being, which is specified in the meanings of ‘reality’... Through appropriation, the person becomes herself through her own actions in a sociocultural and historical context. This process - close to that of socialization - is also that of mastering the meanings of the object or space that is appropriate, regardless of its legal property (translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, p. 283).

Via this framework, appropriation of space can be understood as the process through which people feel ownership over a specific space with which they create historical, cognitive, affective, and interactive ties, which leads people to think that this space belongs to them. For Korosec-Serfaty (1976), the appropriation of a space is about a dynamic process of the person with the surrounding
environment (translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez). The dynamic actions individuals generate within a space, transform that space and leave a “mark” or alteration (Moranta & Urrútia, 2005), based on their personal experiences. The interaction between individuals and space, according to Hashemnezhad et al. (2013) is established in three dimensions: cognitive (spatial perceptions), behavioral (interaction between space and the individual), and emotional (meanings, attributes, or values assigned to space). This description of the three phases that comprise this dynamic process is vital in this study. How do Latin American Au Pairs perceive, interact with, and attribute meaning to the city of El Paso, Texas? To answer this question, it is necessary to identify and recognize those factors that influence these three processes.

When I write about Latin American Au Pairs in this study, I refer to young women (18 years old and older) of different races, nationalities, social classes, beliefs, different political preferences, and who speak Spanish, who decided to migrate to the United States, at least temporarily, to live an experience of cultural exchange in a border city. From a general perspective, the group of “Las Au Pairs Latinoamericanas residentes en El Paso, Texas” [Latin American Au Pairs residing in El Paso, Texas] share some similarities. However, each is a unique person.

Individuals tend to be homogenized and grouped into social categories. Societies, therefore, tend to understand people via the groups into which they are placed, more than from their particularities and singularities. Magliano (2015) points out that many studies dedicated to studying the labor trajectories of migrants are based on the assumption of the existence of a certain homogeneity between people who carry out the same work activity. However, as noted above, intersectionality theory reflects on the subjects' multiple positionalities, and debates any attempt at generalization. Although this study does not focus on studying the career path of Au Pairs, it does recognize the consequences of living in a society in which the processes of homogenization,
stereotyping, and categorization of individuals have been naturalized. Thus, that has created great differences in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, and identity, leading to the emergence of systems of oppression, marginalization, discrimination, and privilege (Hindman, 2011; Garcia, 2007; Magliano, 2015). It also recognizes the need to adopt new theories, methodologies, and approaches that invite us to rethink the way we perceive and conceive the individual and their environment and how they interact and influence each other.

Therefore, it is pertinent in this study to adopt an approach that recognizes individuals' various identities, minorities, and diversity. Also, that acknowledges that all social categories interrelate, producing advantages and disadvantages in specific contexts. This study adopts an intersectional approach to explore Latin American Au Pairs’ experiences in their current social world. It builds on Collins and Bilge’s (2020) objective to understand and explain complexities in the world, in people, and in human experiences by revising how social categories interrelate with and mutually shape one another. As Symington (2004) states, intersectionality reveals meaningful distinctions and similarities that help us overcome discrimination rather than a show in which an individual or group is more victimized or privileged than another.

UNDERSTANDING INTERSECTIONALITY

Since the end of the 20th century, coloniality, the axis of action of capitalist power — aimed "the imposition of a racial/ethnic classification of the world's population as the cornerstone of said pattern of power..." (translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, Quijano, 2000, p. 285) — was consolidated as a theoretical paradigm of decolonial social research. This approach allows users to reveal the power dynamics that led to the domination of some groups by others. Consequently, it is presumed that a large part of the authority exercised comes from the processes experienced during the colonial period.
Colonialism can be defined as a political, social, and economic system of control that aims to dominate a foreign territory. Kohn and Reddy (2017) describe colonialism as "a practice of domination, which involves the subjugation of one people to another." (p. 1) Coloniality is evidenced in the relationships of categories such as race, gender, social class, and place of origin, which are related and overlapping, according to the context of the subject (Wolfe, 1996; Quijano & Ennis, 2000; Shohat & Stam, 2014). These encounters of experiences have been called intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989; Case, 2017; Tomlinson, 2013; Collins, 2002; Keuchenius & Mugge, 2020). From the late 1960s to the early 1970s, within the context of the activism social movement in the United States, women of color faced the challenges derived from capitalism, colonialism, racism, and other systems of power (Crenshaw, 1989; Smith, 2013; Yosso, 2006; Chun, Lipsitz, & Shin, 2020).

As a reaction against the oppression caused by these elements, they created movements sustained in ideas of intersectionality. However, at this time, the term had not yet been created. The concept of intersectionality in Black feminism and women of color activism was first used by African-American lawyer and scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) when she studied the case of *DeGraffenreid v. General Motors* (1989). Emma DeGraffenreid, an African-American woman who worked in a local car company experienced discrimination, violence, and oppression because of being a woman and being Black. Crenshaw, through this case, evidenced the double discrimination (race and gender) to which women of color in the United States were and are exposed. He also noticed that there was no name to define this problem. Crenshaw (1989) states that "there is not a name for this problem, and we all know that when there is no name for a problem, you can't see the problem, and when you can't see the problem, you pretty much can't solve it" (Crenshaw, cited in Gainsburg, 2020. p. 71). To remedy this situation, she coined the term
“intersectionality.” According to Viveros (2016), Crenshaw was not trying to create a theory of oppression, but rather a concept of contextual use and practice that would help to analyze the multiple inequalities and legal omissions, problems that needed to be made visible and would be under the name of intersectionality.

The concept of intersectionality has been modified over the years and has been adopted in various ways. Hulko (2009) points out that in the literature, different concepts have emerged to categorize both intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) and interlocking oppressions (Collins, 2000). Some researchers and practitioners have defined intersectionality as a paradigm (McCall, 2016), methodological framework (Fotopoulou, 2010), theory (Davis, 2008); Hulko, 2009; Magliano, 2012; Busquier, 2018; Bastia, 2014), analytic tool (Collins & Bilge, Intersectionality, 2020) perspective (Baleisan and Collao, 2021; Hopkins, 2017), and as Black feminist thought (Collins, 2000). These approaches study how social categories (race, gender, class, sexuality) interact and intersect in complex ways to produce experiences of identity and oppression in different settings. Moradi and Grzanka (2017) state that “Understanding experiences of oppression is therefore inextricable from understanding the ways in which multiply marginalized groups resist their subordination” (p.30). It has been the resistance mainly of women and other minorities over the years against the systems of oppression and marginalization that originate in various contexts, which motivates us to rethink the most appropriate ways to navigate, study, and address the dimensions of identity in contexts of oppression and privilege. Consider the clarification made by Hulko (2009), “… identity, oppression, and privilege are not solely abstract concepts; they have real, complex, and often-disputed meanings in our daily lives” (p. 44). The relationship between identity construction, privilege, and oppression is evident, interrelated, and linked in meaningful ways to context. Hulko (2009) reflects on different aspects of his identity (gender, age, race, sexual
orientation, social class, workplace, among others) in diverse sociocultural contexts and affirms that “the amount of privilege and oppression that I hold concerning these identity constructs depends on the context” (p.46).

Contexts are a vital component in research studies that embrace interculturality to study the social world. That is why this concept that emerged within the context of Black feminism in the United States shows that not all women have the same living conditions, but that all are conditioned by socially accepted factors such as race/ethnicity, social class, and others (Collins, 2019). In other words, women are biased by their race and gender and their other living conditions. This has become, for decades now, the cornerstone of feminist and gender studies in the United States, Europe, and Latin America (Moraga and Anzaldúa, 1981; Anzaldúa, 1987; Collins, 1990; Sandoval, 1998; Hooks, 1984/2004; Tomic, 2006; Amelina & Lutz, 2018). As Viveros (2016) notes it is in the “search to account for the crossed or overlapping perception of power relations” (p.1). It blurs the fine line that has allowed the consolidation of epistemological conflicts between the various feminisms throughout history since it focuses on observing the subject concerning their historical conditions of possibility, where gender, race/ethnicity, and class are determining factors. Collins (2019) explains that intersectional variables (e.g., gender, race, age):

reference important resistant knowledge additions among subordinated peoples who oppose the social inequalities and social injustices that they experience. Such projects aim to address the deep-seated concerns of people who are subordinated within domestic and global expressions of racism, sexism, capitalism, colonialism, and similar systems of political domination and economic exploitation. (p.10).

From an intersectional perspective, I attempt to understand how these categories that subordinate Black, mestizo, indigenous, Chicana, Latina women, among others, construct identities and create
mechanisms of resistance against systems of oppression domination. Hence the importance of exploring the experiences of women of color (Latin American Au Pair) in countries like the United States, a context where the concept of "women" tends to exclude women of color. This phenomenon is prevalent within the context of El Paso, a border city that has a high presence of women of color.

That is why, as McIntyre (2020) expresses, "... focusing on a single dimension of identity, without that context, is not always helpful. When we consider women as a single category, as a monolith, it can be misleading at best, dangerous at worst " (p. 2), especially in contexts of inequality. Steedman (1987) emphasizes it is indispensable to avoid generalization, universalization, and simplification. She extends on the importance of paying attention to these women's narratives because they account for subjectivity in experiences of inequality. Listening to the voices of those women and minorities who have been exposed to relationships of domination and exclusion, which are generally not heard, will help promote the inclusion and representation of these groups in society.

**INTERSECTIONALITY AND WOMEN’S MIGRATORY PROCESSES**

In recent years, academic researchers have implemented an intersectional approach to address migration and mobility matters. Hopkins (2019) suggests that intersectionality "enriches our understanding of migrants' connections with multiple places and localities" (p. 943). A Latin American reflection on the use of intersectionality in migration studies leads Baleisan and Collao (2021) to affirm that demographic changes in Latin America have brought about a renewed dynamism in migration studies, and the subjectivities of migrants have become the subject of study. Bastia (2014) points out that "migration studies have been gender blind and effectively biased against women for a long time" (p. 5). Recent academic research on migration (Aguirre,
has focused on understanding women's migration especially now that migration has become a normal feature in society. However, Bastia (2014) states that even though there are substantial advancements in this matter, two problems persist:

(i) mainstream migrations studies continued to show resistance to the uptake of the feminist critique and remained gender blind; (ii) most of those who researched gender in migration, focused mainly on gender and/or women with little incorporation of class, ethnicity or race as relevant axes of differentiation (p. 6).

From the field of migratory processes, Magliano (2015) points out that intersectionality:
recognizes gender as a central dimension to analyze migratory experiences and trajectories while considering that this is not an isolated dimension but one of the various intersecting processes with ethnicity and social class, among other classifications, which create and perpetuate social inequalities (translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, p. 700).

These migrations are intertwined in regions that include the legal-administrative borders that define a national state and the multiple internal borders that configure social classifications, both in the country of destination and in the country of origin of the migrants. In the field of migrations studies, according to Kerner (2009) “intersectionality can be potentially useful to examine the meanings and implications of the labor market in the lives of migrants” (translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, p. 193). He says that the articulation of social classifications can produce spaces of subordination, in which the insertion of migrants in informal and low-paid jobs is justified and naturalized.

The preceding concepts lead me to think about Latin American Au Pairs' insertion within the United States in general. In this way, gender, social class, national origin, age, and migratory
status emerge as main social classifications, producing intersectional different trajectories and experiences within paid domestic work or experiences of cultural exchange. For example, the Au Pair program participants conceive this program as the opportunity to reside in another country temporarily, experience a cultural exchange, and develop skills that, upon returning to their country, provide them better job options. Some participants who live their experience in the United States believe that they can achieve the 'American dream.' A key criticism is that the participants’ migration to the United States and other countries, under the concept of "cultural exchange" hides the intention of recruiting cheap international labor related to childcare (Berg, 2014; Hess & Puckhaber 2004; Chuang, 2013; Muñoz & Santos, 2015), which can be seen as a system of oppression and subordination.

It is important to highlight that the processes of oppression, exclusion, discrimination, and privilege vary in different contexts. For example, in the case of Au Pairs, they may have privileges during their cultural exchange experience because they maintain a legal status when entering the country with a J1 visa (exchange visa), and according to the program, the Au pairs perform the role of an elder sister in their host families. However, they may simultaneously experience oppression, marginalization, and discrimination in other contexts by being identified as migrant women who speak English with an accent, and as Au Pairs whose primary role is domestic labor. There are other aspects that differentiate and categorize them and that vary across multiple contexts. As part of a specific social group. The Latin American Au Pairs’ case shows how in a given context and situation, diverse identities are interrelated with social categories, demonstrating the complex task of studying Latin American Au Pairs, and their experiences in a border context.
MIGRATING TO AMERICA: PURSUING THE AMERICAN DREAM

Different factors motivate or force people to decide to leave their home countries and migrate to others (Kuhnt, 2019). “Every year there are approximately 18,000 Au Pairs in the United States” (Krueger, 2020, p. 1). The main motivations cited by many young women across the globe to migrate as Au Pairs to the United States are “spending time in a foreign culture, experiencing the United States, learning or practicing English, and profiting from a cultural learning experience” (Gererick, 2012, cited in Cuban, 2018, p. 236). Research also notes limited access or lack of educational, employment, and migration options in their home countries (Rohde & Tkach, 2006). For many people, having the chance to live legally in America, “the land of opportunity,” is a privilege and a great start on the path to pursuing the “American Dream.”

What is the “American Dream”/ “El Sueño Americano”? In the context of immigration, the conception of the "American Dream" varies. On the one hand, for some immigrants, this dream is relative to ideas of having financial stability, a house, educational and job opportunities, a better life, and a greater future for themselves and their children. On the other hand, this dream is associated with the idea of true personal freedom, which means that people can control their own lives (Clark, 2003; Lawrence, 2012). The idea of freedom and equality have been echoed in the history of the United States since 1776 when Thomas Jefferson stated that “…all men are created equal, that they are endowed with certain unalienable rights that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness” (Langholtz, 2018, p. 1) in the Declaration of Independence.

The American dream has influenced American culture and inspired Latin Americans and people worldwide to immigrate to the United States. They wish to pursue the dream in a land where everybody has the right and the freedom to dream. As noted by Stavans (2001), “everybody dreams
in America but each person dreams the American dream in a unique fashion” (p. 245). The dream may vary, but they all pursue in "the American way."

Overall, the general idea that immigrants can access any of this personal and material well-being in the United States has helped this country to become one of the best and a more attractive destination to immigrate to, and the land of cultural diversity. Lawrence (2012) believes that "as the world becomes increasingly flat and the nation becomes increasingly multicultural, the Dream will play an even more important role…” (p. 3). The “American Dream” o “El Sueño Americano” has become the unifying force of Latin American immigrants, specifically Latin American Au Pairs who decide to live their cultural exchange experience in the United States. They tend to see the program as affordable, and as a unique migration form/strategy (Rohde & Tkach, 2006) that will eventually help them achieve the dream, and “to overcome economic strains in their home country” (Cuban, 2018, p. 236).

Based on polls conducted for Gallup, Edmond (2017) points out that “One in five potential migrants named the US as their preferred destination.” (p. 1). Also, an analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2018 American Community Survey data by the American Immigration Council (2020) demonstrated that:

There are more than 23 million female immigrants in the United States today, and they are a formidable presence in U.S. society and the economy. Female immigrants come from every corner of the globe and outnumber male immigrants.” (p. 1)

These data results can be reflected in the Au Pair context because most Au Pairs are female (Bahna, 2006). This finding is also support by Geserick (2012), who argues that “many sponsors restrict their programme to women, though US law allows participation for both sexes” (p. 50). We can find evidence that, in general, the migration processes and the Au Pair program reinforce gender
bias. This problem helps to illustrate the importance of implementing an intersectionality approach in this study to analyze Latin American Au Pairs’ experiences in El Paso, Texas.

In this regard, the concept of intersectionality is key to “understanding the different factors that continuously and differently affect the lives of Latinos in the United States” (Hanna, 2018, p. 188), and “in particular to enrich our understanding of migrants’ connections with multiple places and localities” (Hopkins, 2019, p. 943). In this setting, and thinking on the target population of this study, emerge these questions: Which factors affect the lives and experiences of the Latin American Au Pairs who live their cultural exchange experience in a border community? And what are the type(s) of connections that these Latin American Au Pairs establish with the United States and El Paso, Texas? To find those answers and to be able to understand them in a meaningful way, it is vital to review the concepts of transnational mobility, acculturation, and Borderland/Frontera. **ADDRESSING A NEED: EXPLORING THE TRANSNATIONAL MOBILITY OF LATIN AU PAIRS AND ITS COMPLEXITIES.**

In the global world in which we live, Khalid (2008) affirms that “the proportion of women among migrants has increased rapidly” (p. 3) and has facilitated new ways of migrating, creating programs that foster transnational mobility. The Au Pair program is an excellent example of these new waves of migration. In this study, the term mobility “is to be understood as the physical movement of people in transnational space.” (Dahinden, 2010, p. 29). The term transnational refers to migrants who live “in between nations, sustaining social, economic, and political interest across national boundaries, living ‘dual lives’” (Koser, 2007, as cited in Banerjee & German, 2010, p. 11). The participants of the Au Pair program can reside legally in the United States for one year. Also, they can extend their participation in the program and remain in the country for 6, 9, or 12 months. During their participation in the program, they are allowed to go back and forth to their host
countries (if they renew their visas) and live their cultural exchange experience in different states within the U.S. Thus, as we can see, the Au Pairs experience involves continued transnational mobilities, which underscores the “movements that traverse the distance between specific territories and as such are embedded in fields of power that operate within, between and across these spaces” (Collins, 2011, p. 320). This affirmation reaffirms the importance of implementing intersectionality in this study and draws attention to the significance of implementing acculturation theory.

One of the ongoing challenges that Latin American Au Pairs encounter while living a cultural exchange experience in between spaces is the acculturation process. Acculturation has classically been defined as "those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first/hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups" (Redfield, Linton & Herskovits, 1936, p.149, cited in Lackland & Oppedal, 2003, p. 3). The acculturation process can occur at an individual or a collective level. Berry (2017) states that “Acculturation is the process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between cultural groups and their individual members” (p. 1). For Blume (2013), who studies minority group members engaging in addictive behaviors, acculturation is “the degree to which a person from a minority group functions and interacts competently within the majority culture” (p. 152). He highlights that high levels of acculturation are associated with individual’s competence in understanding and using culture beliefs and practices and engaging successfully in majority culture functions. While low levels of acculturation, would be associated with little engagement in culture activities, little understanding of culture beliefs or practices, and sometimes little use of majority culture language. Benatuil (2010) highlights that cultural similarities, receptivity of the host culture, age, and personality of
the individual are other factors that play an essential role in an acculturation process. She goes on to say that “in an acculturation process three elements intervene: intergroup contact, conflict and adaptation.”

The provided acculturation definitions suggest that it would be helpful to consider elements such as place, cultural groups, behaviors, interaction, engagement while exploring the Latin American Au Pair cultural exchange experience. Also, “feelings of attachment or identification with the receiving community have been considered factors that promote the integrative attitude of immigrants” (Kalin & Berry, 1995, cited in Mannarini, Talo, & Mezzi, 2017, p. 7). Addressing the acculturation process of these participants who maintain a strong relationship with two countries or more and traveling between them is challenging because as:

The process of negotiating multiple cultural identities is complex and multifaceted... An important issue, then, is how individuals who have internalized more than one culture negotiate their different, and often opposing, cultural orientations, as well as the role external and internal factors play in this process (Benet & Haritatos, 2005, p. 1017)

Within this frame, emerges the curiosity to know how the Latin American Au Pairs who had lived or are living their Au Pair experience in the United States, specifically in El Paso, Texas, are integrating and negotiating their cultural differences in America and in a border community. Also, what strategies they are using during this acculturation process. Berry (2005) identified four acculturation strategies: assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization. The strategy that individuals implement will depend on their reactions to the environment in which they are immersed.

In order to understand the different dynamics and processes that result from a cultural exchange, it is crucial to know the environment in which the Latin American Au Pairs are
immersed. The features of the environment tend to influence and shape people's perceptions, behaviors, emotions, and actions. For that reason, it is essential to differentiate between different environments. In this case, the Au Pairs general environment is the country of the United States, and the specific environment the border community of El Paso, Texas.

**Living the Au Pair experience in the era of Trump and COVID-19**

Over the last five years, a period in which this research investigation is framed, the US environment for immigrants has been negatively affected by Donald Trump’s administration and the COVID-19 pandemic. In this study, a brief overview regarding these aspects is presented in order to provide historical context to help readers understand the social atmosphere in which the participants of this research lived or are living their cultural exchange experience.

On February 20, 2017, Donald J. Trump was inaugurated as the forty-fifth president of the United States. During his administration, anti-immigrant and anti-Mexican attitudes and actions shifted from being accepted to being celebrated. This legitimized and promoted racist and xenophobic cultural practices against immigrants. For example, Trump's initiative to create "this big, beautiful, powerful wall (as he has variously described it)" (Dick, 2020, p. 451) along the Mexico-U.S. border exemplifies administration rhetoric. Also, his aggressive language used in his speeches and tweets targeted immigrants, mainly Mexican people. In October 2018, after visiting the southern US border, Trump wrote some of his most controversial and unforgettable tweets:

> Many Gang Members and some very bad people are mixed into the Caravan heading to our Southern Border. Please go back, you will not be admitted into the United States unless you go through the legal process. This is an invasion of our Country and our Military is waiting for you! (Donald J. Trump, 2018, as cited in Rivas, 2019, p. 3)
Humanitarian Crisis at our Southern Border. I just got back and it is a far worse situation than almost anyone would understand, an invasion! I have been there numerous times - The Democrats, Cryin' Chuck [Schumer] and Nancy [Pelosi] don't know how bad and dangerous it is for our ENTIRE COUNTRY.... (Donald J. Trump, 2019, as cited in Rivas, 2019, p. 3)

Rhetoric such as this displayed a desperate desire to implement anti-immigration policies to defend the country from the brown-skinned invaders. The president’s mantra of “Make America Great Again”, spread white supremacist sentiments across the country, which directly affected border communities. Verea (2018) highlights that “Trump’s violent rhetoric, hate speech, and continual bullying of Mexico and of Mexicans have caused irreparable damage to our already deteriorated bilateral relationship” (p. 198). This damage is reflected in cultural, social, economic, and public health settings, among other areas. Examples of it include the mass shooting at a Walmart in El Paso, Texas. On August 2019, the shooter, a young white non-Hispanic man, proclaimed to the police that he was targeting Mexicans. Also, the restrictive immigration policy changes made by the Trump administration during the COVID-19 pandemic, were “part of a broad effort to limit the entry of immigrants into the country” (Shear and Jordan, 2020, p. 1). Finally, Trump and some Republican governors blamed the spread of COVID-19 virus, “not on unvaccinated [individuals] but on immigrants” (Sykes, 2021, p. 2).

COVID-19, also known as Coronavirus or corona, is an infectious and atypical disease condition caused by a virus that can be transmitted from person-to-person and continues to spread worldwide as of this writing. In March 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic, “meaning that it can pose threats to many countries and needs an urgent, coordinated international response.” (Mahmoud & Jebril, 2020, p. 2785). As noted by Tarka (2020), countries
have been taking various measures to control and reduce the spread of the pandemic, such as lockdowns, workplace non-attendance, school closures, suspension of transport facilities, travel restrictions, and more. These measures and the host parents’ fears of exposing their families to any health risk have been limiting the possibility for Au Pair participants to interact and socialize with other Au Pairs, with other people in their communities, and to explore their new environments. All these factors complicate Au Pairs’ experiences and limit the program’s immersive opportunities.

**Setting the Borderland/Frontera Context**

The Au Pair program gives participants the possibility to live their cultural exchange experience in any of the 50 states within the US. Also, participants who decide to extend the program can choose to live a new cultural experience in a different state. It all depends on the location of the host family with whom the participant is matched. Currently, a small group of Latin Au Pairs is living their experience in El Paso, Texas, which is one of the U.S. border cities. Tarin, Upton, and Sowards (2020) point out that:

> El Paso, Texas – Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua region at the United States-Mexico border is the largest bi-national metropolitan area in the Western hemisphere...the border region is a unique bioregional amalgamation of distinct ecocultural forces wherein languages and population intermingle in complex ways. Residents of this region must frequently straddle two or more distinct languages, nation-states, and cultures in order to make sense of their identities. (p. 53)

In general, the U.S.-Mexico borderlands is a broader context, a zone of transition that holds its unique characteristics, where people from diverse backgrounds with diverse languages, needs, concerns, traditions, and other variables coexist. For the Mexican writer, SanMiguel, the border is
the way in which we dwell and walk through all its spaces. We all swarm through the air and intertwine: rich and poor, Mexicans and Chicanos, cholos and preppies, men and women, heterosexuals and homosexuals, First World and Thrid World (Rosario SanMiguel, cited in Castillo & Tabuenca Cordoba, 2002, p. 8)

The border is a space of diversity, transition, and massive flows of people who face constant complex negotiation processes. Marsico (2016) argues that a border is a “space with its own characteristics that makes living there very specific, regulating the dynamic with the surroundings and even the way of thinking, acting and feeling” (p. 1). The terms border, borderlands, and frontier have been conceptualized in different ways. However, in this study, we adopt Martinez’s (1994) definition where a border is a line that separates one nation from another with the intention to keep people in their own space and to be able to manage the interactions among them. A borderland is a region that lies adjacent to a border. He used these two terms interchangeably, and states that frontier, is a related term that denotes a physical area that is a zone for transition.

Studying the experience of populations located in a borderland (border residents, crossers, immigrants, travelers, among others) is very challenging but beneficial. Some of the reasons why it is challenging to analyze the life experience of people located in the Mexico-U.S. border region are: First, the experience of living in the border, encompasses, as noted by Ortiz and Contreras (2014) “the subjectified experience of the region, integrating both the meaning of crossing and the structural elements that historically have defined the border: proximity, asymmetry, and interaction.” (p, 37). Second, as García (1989) and Anzaldúa (1999) point out “crossing physical and symbolic borders does not always entail hybridization” (Garcia, 1994, & Anzaldúa ,1999, cited in Ortiz & Contreras, 2014, p, 43) in cultural interaction. Third, there are different ways of experiencing the border (Martinez, 1994; Ortiz & Contreras, 2014; Perez & Ortega, 2020).
However, it is important to mention that even though “different borderlands have their own particular identities owing to special environmental factors...all borderlands share similarities” (Martinez, 1994, p. xviii). In other words, a study makes in a particular borderland could be replicable in others, highlighting the importance of developing this study because other Au Pairs could be living their Au Pair experience in other border cities. Women who, like me, intend to explore the particularities regarding individuals who experience life at a border city, at the borderlands, "in-between": two cities, two different cultures, two or more languages, among other dimensions, play the role of mediators who “facilitate(s) passages between worlds” (Anzaldúa, 2009, p. 322); or in Anzaldúa’s (1987) words, the neplantera role, who recognize and acknowledge the existence of the self (la nepantlera) in the sense of being an "I." Anzaldúa (2009) wrote,

I’d like to create a different sense of self (la nepantlera) that does not rest on external forms or identifications (of family, race, gender, sexuality, class, nationality), or attachments to power, privilege, and control, or romanticized self-images. But can we talk about ourselves in ways that do not rest on some notion of identity when identity is the means in which we (both individual and groups) attempt to create a sense of security and belonging in the midst of a fast paced, ever-changing world? (Anzaldúa, 2009, p. 302)

The neplantera, as Ortega (2016) explained, based on Anzaldúa’s work, does not form self-understandings based on pre-existing social categories. It does it through finding more inclusive visions of self and identity to help us understanding ourselves and others as insider/outsider. “It appeals to the possibility of our being together while at the same time recognizing differences” (p. 22). This way of seeing the other, to see the residents of the Mexican-U.S. border, is fundamental to a better understanding of the sociocultural dynamics that emerged in a place where, as de la
Piedra and Guerra (2012) noted, “multiple identities and experiences convene in, across, on, and around an imaginary line that separates two seemingly separate linguistic and cultural sites that meld into one another” (p. 628). These particularities that set the life in the border provide unique life experiences for their residents and highlight how complex it is to conduct cultural studies. For that reason, it is vital to rethink or reformulate the way researchers study different cultural processes (e.g., migrations, cultural exchanges, globalization) that imply cultural interaction, social mobility, hybridization, among others.

From the cultural studies field founders' (Hoggart, 1957; Thompson, 1963; Williams, 1983; & Hall, 1978) point of view, which emerged within a crisis between the humanities and social sciences contest, arose the need to implement an interdisciplinary approach to understand the relationship between culture and power in the contemporary world. Interdisciplinarity defends the idea of a culture intertwined with all social practices. In this framework, conversations such as those raised by Hall (1978) about race and resistance have pertinency. As Hall affirms, what matters is not the object of study, is how it is approached. The cultural studies in Latin American have been analyzed mainly through the contributions of García Canclini (2015), who argues that implementing a transdisciplinary gaze in the cultural studies field makes it possible to rethink the social narratives. It is possible to find a narrative (descriptive and interpretive) that recognizes individuals in their individuality and collectivity.

Ortiz and Contreras (2014) point out that “in the life stories, the border emerges in people’s narrative in different ways” (p.45). For that reason, in this exploratory study, I am interested in knowing the reality of living the Au Pair cultural exchange program on the Mexico-U.S. border (Perez & Ortega, 2020) community, through the life stories of former and current Latin American
participants. Women whose cultural exchange experiences are or were marked by border community conditions even when they may never have crossed it the physical line.
Chapter 3: Methodology

From the Au Pair Experience Back to the Academia

Researchers can choose from several different methodologies to view, study, and analyze the world and its realities in social research. Tracy (2013) states that “The type of glasses you wear affects the world you see” (p. 38). I had the privilege to wear the glasses as a Latin American Au Pair who lived her cultural exchange experience in the U.S. While I am conducting this study, I am wearing the glasses in my role as an international student, as a researcher who attempts to open a space where the voice of the Latin Au Pair community, my community, can be expressed and heard.

During my experience as an Au Pair, I evidenced that we have so much to say related to this experience as participants of the Au Pair program. However, the lack of space to share this meaningful information to promote changes in the program and prevent future participants from experiencing difficult situations has isolated us and grouped us in what we recognize as our Au Pair community. I see this research project as the perfect opportunity to build a space that promotes open communication between the parties (the Latin American Au Pairs study participants and the researcher). For that reason, I decided to conduct a qualitative research study, open to understanding how individuals experience the world with a focus on non-quantitative data. Teherani, Martimianakis, Stenfors-Hayes, Wadhwa and Varpio (2015) state that “Qualitative research focuses on the events that transpire and on outcomes of those events from the perspectives of those involved.” (p. 669)

Through this approach, researchers (Banerjee & Sowards, 2020; Fischlein, et al., 2010; Galada, et al., 2009) aim to understand social phenomena and human relationships by focusing their attention on people's meanings, interactions, and experiences. Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klingner,
Pugach, and Richardson (2005) indicate that “By focusing on participant’s personal meanings, qualitative research “gives voices” to people who have been historically silenced or marginalized.” (p. 199) To ensure that I achieve the purposes of this study that aims to investigate and clarify the concerns arising from the Au Pair cultural exchange experience through the perspective of the Latin American women who participate as Au Pairs in the El Paso, Texas, border community, I conducted semi-structured interviews, as the primary data collection tool.

**DATA COLLECTION METHOD AND TOOLS**

A research interview is a coordinated conversation that researchers establish with the study participants to gather information regarding a topic of mutual interest and explore human phenomena from the interviewees' unique experiences, opinions, and motivations. For that reason, qualitative researchers should “explicitly identify their biases, values, and personal interest about their research topic and process” (Creswell, 2007, p. 184, cited in Mukminin & McMahon, 2013, p. 3) in order to define the researcher role and credibility. In this study, the researcher’s role is to open a safe space to encourage two-way communication, in which the study participants can share their thoughts and feelings regarding their personal experiences as Latin American Au Pairs in a border city, and the researcher can access, analyze, and reflect on the meaningful information obtained.

As noted by Tracy (2013), “Qualitative interviews provide opportunities for mutual discovery, understanding, reflection, and explanation via a path that is organic, adaptive, and oftentimes energizing.” (p. 132) In this process, it is vital to consider the relationship between participants and researchers, and the nature of the interviews. There are interviews that are planned and structured, whereas others are more flexible and spontaneous. There are three types of interviews: structured, semi-structured, and unstructured. Blee and Taylor (2002) affirmed that
“Any type of interviewing can be used to gain information…In semi-structured interviewing, however, it is not only information but also themes and categories of analysis…” (p. 94). I decided to conduct semi-structured or in-depth interviews because it is a qualitative research method that fits well with the study's exploratory nature and allows me to reconstruct the experiences of the study participants through effective bidirectional communication. DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019) note that “Researchers can use semi-structured interviews to collect new, exploratory data related to a research topic” (p. 2) Also, this type of interview allows the researcher to lead and guide the conversation by using predetermined open-ended questions to make sure that all participants provide information on the same topics. In addition, this type of interview gives the interviewees the freedom to answer in their own words and express themselves in the way they desire.

**Research Participant**

Even though Au Pairs can be female or male (generally known as bro pairs), this research investigation focused on women because no male Au Pairs had been located in El Paso, Texas, at least in the last five years. In this study, eight Latin American women who fit the study's criteria participated. See specifics below.

Characteristics of subjects (inclusion and exclusion criteria): The five criteria are that subjects: (a) are or were a participant in the Au Pair program in the last five years; (b) they are or were located near to El Paso, Texas; (c) they mainly speak Spanish or are bilingual in Spanish/English; (d) they are of Latin American background; and (e) they are over 18 years of age.

**Sample section**

In general, there is a small Au Pair community in the El Paso area. For that reason, a snowball sampling method was used throughout the study because this method helps “reaching
difficult-to-access or hidden populations” (Tracey, 2013, p. 136). As a former Au Pair and during my time living in El Paso, Texas, I had the opportunity to meet with several Latin American Au pairs. I contacted and invited them to participate in the study. Also, I asked them to suggest this study to other former and current Latin American women who lived their Au Pair cultural exchange experience in El Paso, Texas, in the last five years.

**IRB Approval Process**

A completed informed consent form and the interview protocol were submitted for IRB approval prior to beginning the study. Submission to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) was made to protect study’s participants rights. IRB approval was obtained (document added as Appendix B), and subjects’ names were changed to a pseudonym when summarizing the information. No participants will be identified in any publication or presentation of research results; only aggregate data were used.

**Data Collection**

**Procedure**

In this study, participants were identified through WhatsApp, a mobile app that lets people send messages and voice-over. Permission was not needed to recruit via WhatsApp. I shared with the potential participants the main purpose, goal(s), significance, and benefits of the study. Participation in the study was voluntary and potential as well as active participants could choose not to participate or to opt out at any time. For those who were interested in participating, I asked for an email address to send the informed consent form. In addition, given that participants in this study mainly speak Spanish or are bilingual in Spanish/English, they were able to choose whether to receive a Spanish or English informed consent form. The Spanish version of the informed consent was sent to all the study’s participants as required. The informed consent form details the
name of the study, the task(s) that participants were asked to perform, and the date on which their voluntary consent was obtained. An electronic signature was accepted. The process of obtaining informed consent occurred remotely and is documented in our study records. Once both parties (participant and principal researcher) filled out the informed consent form, I scheduled the Zoom interview meeting with each participant. I sent the Zoom interview meeting link individually by email.

In this study, the semi-structured interviews occurred via Zoom, a technological platform that provides video communications and online chat services. Morris (2015) indicates that “Although, ideally, the in-depth interview should be conducted face-to-face, it can be done by telephone, Skype, or email…and can be effective as the face-to-face interview” (p. 4). Given the COVID pandemic at the time of this writing, Zoom was a viable option, based on Morris’s assessment. Mediated interviews can be synchronous and asynchronous (Ayling & Mewse, 2009, cited in Tracy, 2013). A synchronous method was adopted in this study, which means that the communication between the researcher and the participants occurred at the same time. The decision to conduct the interviews through this platform was made based on the social distancing guidelines during COVID-19.

I met one-on-one with the subjects via Zoom. I asked them to complete a demographic survey and send it back to me. Then, I gave them the option to respond to interview questions either in English or Spanish. I interviewed them, using a guiding set of questions designed to answer the research questions listed in the summary. I asked questions, such as: What motivated you to do the Au Pair program in the United States, and specifically in El Paso, Texas? or What have been the biggest challenges you have had to face in your adaptation process with your Host Family? The interview questionnaire contained questions that address four main elements
(perceptions, challenges, realities, and border community) relative to participants’ cultural exchange experiences. Overall, all Zoom interviews were conducted in Spanish. The interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes, and each participant’s responses were digitally recorded and transcribed.

These study procedures are similar to procedures that have been used in other exploratory communication research (Tracy, 2013), but have been adapted for the goals of this study. To maintain confidentiality, the informed consent, the demographic survey results, and the interview data were only accessed by Nathaly Carolina Hernandez Garcia, and my academic advisor, Dr. Frank G. Pérez. As specified in federal regulations, data will be kept for three years in a locked file on my computer and will then be destroyed by deletion.

Data Analysis

For the process of data analysis in this study, I am applying an inductive thematic analysis. From a broad view, a thematic analysis (TA) “is a method for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning (“themes”) within qualitative data” (Clarke & Braun, 2017, p. 297) in order to address, discover, or present meaningful information about an issue. There are different ways to approach this method that “unlike many qualitative methodologies, it is not tied to a particular epistemological or theoretical perspective” (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017, p. 3352). This flexibility allows this method to be applied in a variety of qualitative studies across diverse theoretical frameworks. Braun and Clarke (2017) emphasized that TA’s flexibility can also be understood “in terms of research questions, sample size and constitution, data collection method, and approaches to meaning generation” (p. 297). They go on to say that:

TA can be used to identify patterns within and across data in relation to participants’ lived experience, views and perspectives, and behaviors and practices; ‘experimental’ research
which seeks to understand what participants’ think, feel, and do (Clarke & Braun, 2017, p. 927).

The thematic analysis suits the purpose of this exploratory research that aims to analyze the collected data through the lens of intersectionality theory and acculturation theory because this method allows me to identify patterns across the data. Through these patterns, I examine how Latin American women's social categories (e.g., race, gender, nationality) interact while participating in the Au Pair program and how this interaction of categories affects how they are perceived and treated in their new environment. Also, through exploring these patterns, I was able to identify how acculturation is expressed in the Latin American Au Pairs' experiences due to their migration process.

Braun and Clarke (2017) distinguish between both top-down deductive (theory-driven) and bottom-up inductive (data-driven) analysis. The inductive analysis is adopted to drive this study data analysis because through the data, I am trying to reconstruct the cultural exchange experiences of the study participants to find meaningful information that helps us understand the Au Pair social phenomenon. Braun and Clarke (2017) suggest that inductive reasoning works well when exploring a new research area (p.298). Also, I used the six phases of analysis (see Table 1) recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006) as a guide for doing my thematic analysis.

Table 3.1: Braun & Clarke’s six-phase framework for doing a thematic analysis

| Step 1: Become familiar with the data, | Step 4: Review themes, |
| Step 2: Generate initial codes, | Step 5: Define themes, |
| Step 3: Search for themes, | Step 6: Write-up. |

Note: (Braun & Clarke’s, 2016, as cited in Maguire & Delahunt, 2017, p. 3354)
Chapter 4: Analysis

In this study, I go through the six phases of thematic analysis. In these phases, I code the collected data, create the themes based on my interpretation and the patterns I identified across the data, and define each theme and provide extracts from the data. At the end of this chapter, I develop the sixth steps of the thematic analysis. In this step, I write the report in which I expose the convergent points that I found across the experiences of the Latin American Au Pair Participants and discuss them from an intersectionality and acculturation perspective.

The Six-phases of Thematic Analysis

Step 1: Become familiar with the data

I began this step of the thematic analysis by listening to each interview again. Although I remembered a good portion of what people said during the interviews, I found it important to listen to the interview audios again. Then, I printed the information obtained from the demographic surveys and the interview transcripts (both can be found in the appendix section) because I prefer to work with hard copies. I read and re-read each interview and made some rough notes.

Step 2: Generate initial codes

To start step 2, I organized the transcripts in the order that the interviews were conducted, in a chronological way, to begin with the coding process. As Maguire and Delahunt (2017) noted, “Coding reduces lots of data into small chunks of meaning” (p. 3355). There are diverse ways of coding information, but I implemented the manual process in this study. I used highlighters of different colors to differentiate information and establish codes. Also, I wrote notes along with the transcripts. In this stage, while reading the interview transcripts, “Good open-ended questions to ask are: “What is happening here?” or “What strikes you?” (Creswell, 2007, p.153, cited in Tracy 2012). Those questions can guide you in the coding process but what is a code? Swain (2018) sees
codes as “its most basic as being something that seems of interest to the researcher, which they think might help them answer their question or problem” (p. 6). I adopted this definition, and for that reason, I did not code every single line of each transcript. I am coding the text fragments (words, sentences, paragraphs) that seem to capture and reveal meaningful information for this study.

As result of the demographic survey and the interview transcripts (66 pages), I generated more than 30 codes (Childcare experience, responsibilities, rematch, language barriers, culture shock, interculturality, gender, feeling like at home, low payment, COVID-19, food, among others). Before I go to step 3, I want to present the summary of the demographic survey (see Table 2) to present other codes and provide an overall view of all the participants.

Table 4.1. Summary of Demographic Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonyms</th>
<th>Pamela</th>
<th>Catalina</th>
<th>Sandra</th>
<th>Gabriela</th>
<th>Marcela</th>
<th>Andrea</th>
<th>Sofia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Codes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>22-25</td>
<td>26 and older</td>
<td>26 and older</td>
<td>26 and older</td>
<td>22-25</td>
<td>22-25</td>
<td>22-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you from Latin American?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Months in the United States as a part of the Au Pair Program</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous living abroad experiences</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Au Pairs’ Agencies</td>
<td>Cultural Care</td>
<td>Cultural Care</td>
<td>Cultural Care</td>
<td>EurAupair</td>
<td>EurAupair</td>
<td>Global Exchange</td>
<td>EurAupair</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Step 3: Search for themes

Once you have coded the data in thematic analysis, the next step is to identify which codes can be organized into the same theme. Maguire and Delahunt (2017) highlight that “most codes are associated with one theme although some are associated with more than one.” However, there are cases where some codes “do not fit into any theme” (Riger & Sigurvinsdottir, 2016, p. 35). This step can be overwhelming because it implies examining the data in a more detailed way to be able to evidence meaningful connections between codes and find a way to fit them in one or various themes.

I had several codes related to participants' motivations and their process to be part of the Au Pair program. Other codes were related to their idea of the American dream, their perceptions about the program, the American life, and life in El Paso, Texas. In addition, there were codes associated with the benefits and the challenges of living a cultural exchange experience in the Mexico-U.S. border community and America, during a rematch process and pandemic times. Based on this information, I identified four themes: (a) the process to become an Au Pair; (b) participants’ perceptions; (c) the American Dream; and (d) the American Experience.

Step 4: Review themes

I was not sure if all the data could fit into the mentioned four themes. Riger and Sigurvinsdottir (2016) stated that “some potential themes may not be relevant to the research questions, while others might be combined into broader ideas or divided into separate themes” (p. 35). For that reason, I had to go back to step one and re-read all the interview transcripts one more time to make sure that the data related to each theme was well supported. It is important to mention that thematic analysis is not a linear process. It is a circular process where you can move back and forward between the stages as needed, especially when working with complex data. After
reviewing the data, the codes, and the preliminary themes, I decided to divide The American Experience into three subthemes (i.e., challenges, living in El Paso, and the American Dream) and added a new theme, benefits of the Au Pair experience.

**Step 5: Define themes**

At this step of the thematic analysis, I am going to clearly define each theme, and present extracts from the transcripts to illustrate through examples the accuracy of the point being made. In Figure 1, I present a final thematic map that shows how themes and subthemes connect between them in this study that intent to analysis and explore the experiences of the study’s participants in El Paso, Texas. It is important to highlight that some codes overlap across themes, that all themes are relative to each other and are rooted in an overarching theme. I labeled this theme, experiences of Latin American Au Pairs in El Paso, Texas. Each team is a key in understanding the elements that play an essential role in the cultural exchange experience of the participants.
The Experiences of Latin American Au Pairs in El Paso

Figure 4.1: Thematic map
Participants’ Perceptions

This theme illustrates how the participants perceive the Au Pair program. I want to note that throughout the analysis, I share in each theme, some of the participants' perceptions regarding their host families, the American Life, the American Dream, life in El Paso, and how they feel perceived by others during the cultural exchange experience. Also, I reveal how their perceptions influenced their decision-making in different moments of their exchange experience, and I provide evidence on how their perceptions vary depending on cultural, emotional, and environmental factors.

While reviewing the demographic survey data, I noticed that study participants differ in certain things: age, length of stay in the United States, some of them had previous experiences abroad; others did not and chose different agencies to conduct their Au Pair process. However, by revising the interview transcripts, I was able to establish some similarities between them. They all have things in common: They are young, Latin American, experience working with children, interested in improving their English language skills, and they had the desire to live their cultural exchange experience in America. I believe those factors influenced them to build a positive perception about the Au Pair program and encouraged them to take the decision to live this cultural exchange experience rather than another type of exchange experience. For example, Marcela said, … once I learned at university about the benefits of being an Au Pair, which was learning a new language, getting to know the American culture, taking care of children. All those things have always caught my attention. So, I said, that is the perfect program for me (Translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, personal communication, November 10, 2021). I want to highlight the phrase, "that is the perfect program for me." This affirmation makes me question why the Au Pair program is perceived as the "perfect program" for Marcela and other
Latin American women? First, the globalization era in which we live, and the close relationship between the United States and Latin American countries, have raised the need to learn English as a second language to have greater job opportunities and improve Latin Americans' life quality. Proof of that is Sandra's response when I asked her: Why were you interested in participating in this program?

Because of English, as I mentioned earlier. Because of wanting to learn another language and also searching for new opportunities. Right? Well, everything starting from the language. Well, when one has a foreign language, more doors open in the work field and in the personal area, maybe being able to know other cultures and see the world differently, being able to be in contact easily, let's say not only with English speaking countries but also with people from other places, then that (Translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, personal communication, October 30, 2021).

The second theme, experience with childcare. Latin American women have been raised in a culture where childcare is a female duty. In Latin cultures, girls are expected to learn how to take care of their siblings, cousins, and other family members to help the family when needed, without expecting any payment. In Latin America, just a small part of the population has the means to pay for a nanny. For that reason, many Latin American women see childcare as a chore or hobby rather than a remuneration job. This point can be reflected in Pamela’s response to the question: What motivated you to participate in the Au Pair program in the United States especially in El Paso, Texas?

Let us see. It was not exactly that I chose El Paso, like uh, how cool to go to El Paso to live my Au Pair experience, no. But one of the things, first, one of the things that motivated me to be an Au Pair was that I really like children and especially young children, so when I
found my host family, the three children seemed too cute, and I had a very good connection with my host mom, so the truth is, I did not know about the existence of El Paso, but I rely on the connection I had with my host mom, and that is why I decided to go to El Paso (Translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, personal communication, October 30, 2021).

By analyzing Pamela’s words, her main concerns were not about how hard it would be to care for three young kids in a city that she did not even know existed. Instead, Pamela highlights that she likes kids so much and chose her host family based on an emotional factor: a “good connection” she felt with her host mom.

Overall, perceptions are people's responses to environmental stimuli. People respond to these stimuli in different ways because we all have our own way to interpretate the world around us. However, many factors (e.g., gender, history, nationality, cultural values, experiences) influence that interpretation, and the way people act. Each of the study participants chose freely to become part of the Au Pair program; But what does that decision imply? Many things as this analysis will show, but the first was to comply with all the program requirements in the participants' home country. In the next theme, I approach participants' processes to meet the agencies' requirements to become eligible candidates for the Au Pair program and have a green light to join the matching process.

**The process of becoming an Au Pair**

This theme is defined by the participants' motivations to become an Au Pair in the United States. Also, their capacity to fulfill all the program requirements in their home country allowed them to match with a host family. The participants of this study expressed that they learned about the existence of the Au Pair program in different ways. Through former participants, someone who
was enrolled in the process to live the experience in Germany, through Facebook, and through meetings related to cultural exchange programs hosted by their universities.

What motivated them to enroll in this cultural exchange program? And why did they choose the United States? Based on the participants' responses, mainly because of the program's great benefits, their knowledge of the language, and their previous experience with childcare. Also, the program price is more accessible than other exchange programs. Some have family relatives who live in the U.S. Also, living in America is cheaper than in Europe. Plus, there is a perception that Au Pairs have better opportunities in their home country after finishing the program. As Gabriela stated:

Well, mainly being an Au Pair in the United States was my easy option, or let's say it was fast because I had the language. While another place that I wanted to go to, it will cost me more because I had to learn the language. So, that's basically why I went to the United States…” (Translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, personal communication, November 9, 2021).

Also, Pamela commented,

The reason why I chose the United States was because, well, first, I already had a little knowledge of the language, and secondly, because my family lives here, so anything that could happen to me or if at some point, I needed to my family because I was going to have them closer to whatever happened to me (Translated from Spanish, Hernandez, personal communication, October 30, 2021).

To have the opportunity to become an Au Pair in the United States, it is necessary not only to fill up many forms. It also implies one has previous and certifiable experience in childcare, good English language skills, the money to afford the program's cost (the price of the program varies
depending on the agency and the country) and other expenses, among other requirements. For example, when I asked the participants: How was your process to become an Au Pair? Pamela provided a detailed summary of her process:

First, I contacted the agency with which I wanted to start the process. Later I went to some informative meetings.

Then I started to apply to be an Au Pair, and in the application, there were several steps. So, first was an interview in which they asked me, like all my court records, if I had had legal problems, well, many questions about me. The second step was an interview to see my English level and see if it was good enough to start the process. Then there, I was in contact with some girls from the agency, they asked me some questions, and after a few days, they gave me the result If he was going to apply or if he could apply for the program. Subsequently, I had to fill out some forms, and one of those was some personal references and interviewing people to talk about me.

What else, I think after that it was like, I think they already activated the platform to start looking for families, and I was getting the families interested in me (Translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, personal communication, October 30, 2021).

Even though the process to become an Au Pair took longer for some of the participants, they all agreed that becoming an Au Pair was easy. The challenges started when they had to select their host families, and the city where they wanted to live their experience. The study’s participants emphasized that they did not have many options to choose a host family and almost no possibilities to select the city. Gabriela and Marcela were the only ones who talked with more than three families. In Sandra’s case, she revealed that interviewing with the families was challenging due to
language barriers because when the families noticed that she could not understand all their questions, they stopped the process with her. Sandra said,

…I was going to mention that, by the way, with those two families, it was very tough. I think zero and nothing in the English interview because there were things that I understood and could answer, but there were others that I could not, well, no idea. Starting from there, obviously, families stopped there the process with me, and I don't remember the places…

I think one family was from California but the other I don't remember where it was from (Translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, personal communication, October 30, 2021).

In Andrea and Sofia’s cases, they did match with the first family they talked to.

Interview # 2:

Researcher: How many families did you interview to carry out the program before selecting the first host family?

Andrea: One.

Researcher: Which were the cities from which you had the option to select for the Au Pair program? and, why did you choose to complete your Au Pair experience in El Paso, Texas?

Andrea: Well, the options were nil because it really depended on where the family was, and well, I liked the first family that contacted me, and also, at that time, the country was in a critical situation. I had already been looking for a family for three months, and nothing came, and well, since it was a baby, maybe I should have thought about it a little more, but hey, at that moment, I accepted and left for Michigan. Then for El Paso, I spoke with several families, but where I lived in Michigan, it was in the middle of nowhere, and I already wanted a different experience. What happens is that I spoke with several families, let's say that I already wanted a different experience than the one I had already had, I spoke
with several families who also lived in places far from the city, and well, in the end, I liked the family from El Paso because I really feel like I connected a lot with my host mom and that's why I decided to go to El Paso and because I also had a friend there (Translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, personal communication, November 1, 2021).

**Interview # 5**

**Researcher:** How many families did you interview?

**Sofia:** Only one.

**Researcher:** Which were the cities from which you had the option to select for Au Pair program?

**Sofia:** Sadly, only El Paso, but I would have liked to go somewhere else.

**Researcher:** Why sadly? Where would you have liked to live your experience?

**Sofia:** In New York or California. Well, I got used to living in El Paso, but at first, I didn't like it very much (Translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, personal communication, November 5, 2021).

These examples are not the only ones that evidence that more factors play a role in an Au Pair participant's decision to choose the city where to live during the program. In Pamela and Catalina's experiences, they both had the chance to talk with three different host families. However, they decided to live their Au Pair experience in El Paso, Texas, not because they liked or were interested in living in a border community. They chose the city based on how much they liked their host family, rather than if they liked or disliked the city of El Paso. Catalina said,

Well, the truth was that the family I was there with and with whom I interviewed looked very good, and in fact, it was. When I interviewed this family in El Paso, I was not very convinced about going to El Paso. However, in the end, I said fine, because it is more
important to be with a good family, regardless of the place, than to be in a good place like with a wrong family, basically that motivated me to be there (N. Hernandez, personal communication, November 4, 2021).

So far, the data reflect some critical features regarding the Au Pair program and its participants:

1. The Au Pair participants do not have total freedom to decide where to live their cultural exchange experience. In some cases, this decision is subject to environmental situations in the participant's home country, emotional and empathy ties that the Au Pair creates with the host family or the place.

2. Language barriers can affect in a negative way the Au Pairs matching process and lead to a new form of discrimination.

3. Some Au Pairs live in more than one city and with different host families. The process in which Au Pairs must transit from one host family to another is known as a rematch. This study recognized the rematch as one of the challenges that some participants had to face during their Au Pair program.

Before I move on to the next theme, I found it important to share some of the study participants perceptions related to their belief of what main skills and abilities made them an eligible candidate for the Au Pair program.

**Catalina:** My English level helped me a lot to get approved by the agency. Also, my experience with children and likewise, because I think the career, I was doing influenced a lot because it was closely related to being in contact with children (Translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, personal communication, November 10, 2021).

**Sandra:** The first one, I think it was my experience as a teacher, knowing how to act in different situations with children and then, and also in the educational field, maybe,
contributing as such to the academic training of the children I was going to take care of. I think that was the main factor or what most attracted the attention of my profile (Translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, personal communication, October 30, 2021).

**Andrea:** Much experience with children, the command of English, I think that being a psychology student also influenced a little and living far. Since I lived far from my home, it was not like a risk factor that I put arriving in the United States and that I did not feel well because I had already lived alone for a long time (Translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, personal communication, November 1, 2021).

As we can see, the participants highlighted their English language skills and their professional experience as a teacher and as a psychologist. Through the collected data, I identified that just three of the participants used to work with kids (formal jobs) in their host countries because they are teachers. The other participants were university students, professionals in different fields, and one of them started her Au Pair process while she was finishing high school. It is relevant for this study to point out that none of the participants were working as an Au Pair or nanny (the job more related to the Au Pair job) in their home countries. The idea to leave their work, their profession, sometimes constitutes an emotional challenge for some of the participants of the program; added to the idea of leaving their loved ones, their country, their comfort zone, to go and live in another country with people that they meet through a camera. Marcela and Gabriela talked about some of the emotional challenges that they faced before leaving the country.

**Marcela:** “It was very hard for me, since already having a career there as an engineer, to come here and leave everything…” (Translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, personal communication, November 10, 2021).
**Gabriela**: Well, it's always tricky, isn't it? Because you really don't know the other people, and because it is possible to act through a screen, right? In a certain way, I was more or less carried away by their attitude when they introduced me to the children… (Translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, personal communication, November 9, 2021).

The path to becoming an Au Pair participant is made of agency requirements, challenges to overcome, and many decisions to make. The decisions made by the participants in this stage of the Au Pair program influenced and helped to shape their cultural experience in America.

**The American Experience**

This team refers to the events, processes, perceptions, attitudes, feelings, and behaviors involved in the study participants' practical contact with the host country. These experiences are understood through three sub-themes: Challenges, Living in El Paso, Texas, and The American Dream.

**Challenges**

The collected data reflect some of the difficult situations these Latin Au Pairs encountered in different moments of their cultural exchange experience. Also, they highlighted aspects that affected or conditioned their experience. When the study participants came to the United States, each of them had a host family. They also knew their responsibilities and the benefits (e.g., room and board, weekly pay, $500 dollars to help pay education, transportation if needed) they had access to in their role as an Au Pairs, as "Big Sisters." However, they realized that the Au Pair experience goes far beyond when they came and lived in the United States. For example, in Sandra's case, she chose her host family because her host mom knew "some Spanish" and offered to help Sandra in her adaptation process to the family and the environment. She arrived in Washington, D.C., to live with this host family, and Sandra affirms that from her first day with that family, they made her feel less than them. Sandra said,
…when I was here before traveling when I did the interviews and all that, the lady always told me not to worry, that she was going to help me, that I would feel at home. Well, all those kinds of things, and well, then under those conditions she mentioned to me and considering the language factor, that she spoke Spanish. Well, I decided to go with them. When I got there, let's say it was not like that, not so real what she mentioned to me. I remember a lot the first day I got there where the family and when we entered the house. I remember that it was a very, very big house, and well, we arrived, and they had already told me to come, you are going to your room, and to start my room was in the basement, so at that time I already felt less, like we are here, and you are going to be there. It is something that, from that moment, generated an impact to start the program. I feel that it was not a positive and good impact. Well, to that, we must add being in a different country, alone, without knowing much of the language, and then that is how it all began… the agency also gives us some parameters, right?... the activities that we have to do daily or weekly and where the schedule is organized. It happened that, within those activities, there were things that were not part of the program, such as, for example, she asked me to vacuum the whole house, tidy up the kitchen (Translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, personal communication, October 30, 2021).

I want to note that when Sandra started sharing this part of her experience with me during the interview, she started to cry. At that moment, I could feel her sadness, and she made me recall those moments in my Au Pair experience when my first host family made me feel like I was nobody. From my personal experience, I know how hard is to talk about those moments when we got hurt. For that reason, during the interview, I told Sandra:
I want you to know that it is okay to continue to the next question or stop. I don't want to expose you to any situation you do not want to be in. If you do not feel comfortable telling us what that experience was, it is okay. We can continue to the next question or as you prefer.

**Sandra:** Well, yes, it causes me a bit of an impact to remember. But I do want to mention it because I know that maybe this can be happening to other girls or so that they are attentive to all this that can happen when we travel in these programs (Translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, personal communication, October 30, 2021).

Living a cultural exchange experience is not easy, and even less so when the participants constantly face situations of oppression and discrimination. Sandra decided to go in a rematch after several months of living with this host family. Sandra's host mom adopted attitudes and behaviors towards her because she never agreed to do any chores or activities that were not part of her responsibilities as Au Pair. Also, Sandra mentioned that it took her six months to get in the rematch process because her host mom always discouraged her:

Afterward, I tried many times to change my family. She told me like "Well, you are not going to get another family," or she told me, “Nobody is going to want an Au Pair, nobody is going to want an Au Pair who doesn't speak proper English and doesn't drive." Hence, of course, that slowed me down, and that's why I endured so many things being there those six months with that highly complex family. Later, when finally, a situation detonated, well, so I said, "no, this is it, whatever it is, I am going to leave this family," and that was when I began to do the rematch process. However, this lady, the one from the first family, had given me quite strong references, so it was very difficult for me to find another family; So that's why at the beginning, I mentioned that I had no other option of being able to go
with another family, but with the one that I went to El Paso, which I really thank them very much because they gave me the opportunity to continue and finish my program (Translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, personal communication, October 30, 2021).

Sandra's experience reflects how the host families have the power to condition and shape positively or negatively the Au Pair experiences. Also, when Sandra said, "I endured so many things being there," this phrase makes me question, how many situations of subordination, oppression, and discrimination a participant of the Au Pair must endure to be able to experience a successful cultural exchange experience? What role plays the Au Pair agencies in this scenario? Unfortunately, Sandra is not the only one who faced these types of scenarios with her host family. Andrea and Gabriela too. They briefly shared their experiences when I asked, them if they could share why they decided to go into a rematch process.

**Researcher:** Could you tell us a little about why you went into the rematch process and what city you were in?

**Andrea:** I lived in Chewaka, Michigan; I went into the rematch process because my boss at the time, the father of the baby I was taking care of, had some aggressive attitudes, and well, at some point, he yelled at me, well, at some point no, several times at me she screamed, and the last time she did I decided to change families and that she was no longer comfortable there (Translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, personal communication, November 1, 2021).

**Gabriela:** I was first in North Carolina, and I did the rematch because the mother of the home had bipolar behavior problems, and sometimes, well, she always had behaviors that I said were not normal. First, she played a lot with my time, I had no rest, and they made me work more than 45 hours a week. The reason I left was that she and her husband
attacked each other, and they threw all the implements they could find in the kitchen. So, that was my most significant reason for leaving, and I just decided to do my rematch (Translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, personal communication, November 9, 2021).

The Au Pair agencies offer a "first-hand American experience," but in cases like Andrea's, the host parents or all the family are from different nationalities. The fact that families from different heritage backgrounds participate in the program leads the Au Pairs participants to live a totally different cultural exchange experience. So, what are the Au Pairs agencies' criteria to accept host families as part of the program? Because so far, the study participants' experiences have shown features of their previous host families that are unacceptable in the frame of a program that offers a "cultural exchange experience." Also, these features can be considered red flags for future program participants and can influence their decision process to choose or not to become an Au Pair participant.

Other factors can lead to a rematch process. In Catalina’s case, she liked her first host family, but she had to find a new family because her host dad, who was part of the U.S. Army, was deployed outside of the United States, and all the family moved with him. The second time she was in the rematch process was because, in her own words:

I didn't do very well with that family, so I decided how to just rematch again and in that second rematch I decided how to be a little more open to any place because of what I told you many times choose the place, but families many times they are not very good. But yeah, basically I had to leave El Paso because of that, I didn't want to, but well, I had to. (Translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, personal communication, November 4, 2021).

Catalina chose her second family because they were located in Texas, and she wanted to stay in the area. She tried to stay in El Paso because she was dating someone there, but it was impossible.
Catalina highlighted, “Unfortunately, I could not, it never came to me as a family from there because as I tell you there are not many families there that need Au Pairs.”

It is interesting to see how an individual in transition gets attached to his new physical environment and tries to resist the idea of having to leave it. The experiences of Catalina, Sandra, Gabriela, and Marcela illustrate that within the Au Pair program, there are participants who live multiple experiences with different host families in different environments. Each host family and each environment provide new challenges and benefits. Some of the participants of this study had the experience of living part of their Au Pair program in different cities around the U.S., but they all share the experience of living part or all their cultural exchange experience in El Paso, Texas, a border community.

**Living in El Paso, Texas**

El Paso is a city located in Texas, across the border from Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. The study participants emphasized that none of them lived their cultural exchange experience in this city because they wanted to or were interested in exploring life in a border community. They were there because they liked their host families located there or did not have any more choices. When I asked them Catalina, Pamela, and Sofía were the only ones who arrived from their home countries directly to El Paso. When I asked: Which were the cities from which you had the option to select for Au Pair program? Why did you choose to complete your Au Pair experience in El Paso, Texas? Sofía said,

**Sofía:** Sadly, only El Paso, but I would have liked to go somewhere else.

**Researcher:** Why sadly? Where would you have liked to live your experience?

**Sofía:** In New York or California. Well, I got used to living in El Paso, but at first, I didn't like it very much.
Researcher: Why?

Sofia: Because it was very different from my country, I mean, I am from the capital, and this city was tiny for me. Also, the weather, I mean, I arrived during the wintertime, and it seemed to me that it was very cold and very dry. I don't know; it took me a while to get used to it. I didn't have many friends at first, so that's why I didn't like it very much, and there aren't many things to do here (Translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, personal communication, November 5, 2021).

The geographic disparities between their home countries and El Paso, Texas, and their desire to live their cultural exchange experience in other cities are two factors that difficult their adaptation process. In this regard, Andrea stated:

Yes, yes, I had a lot of friends, I've always had a lot of friends in New York or Miami, and I really hoped to get a family there, but well, it never came (Translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, personal communication, November 1, 2021).

Most participants expressed their desire to live the Au Pair experience in bigger cities like New York, Miami, and San Francisco. Catalina and Marcela were the only ones who mentioned not having a preference for a city in which to have their cultural exchange experience. Both were open to exploring a new city. Another factor that I believe complicated the Latin American Au pair adaptation process in El Paso, Texas, is disinformation. During the interviews, when I asked: In the process of selecting a location for their Au Pair experience, did the agency that advised you provide specific information on the particularities of living in a border city? All the participants said no. When I asked: Do you think that the program should inform candidates about the particularities of living in a border city? They said,
**Sofía:** Yes (Translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, personal communication, November 5, 2021).

**Andrea:** Yes (Translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, personal communication, November 1, 2021).

**Researcher:** ¿Why?

**Sofía:** Yes, I mean, it seems super important to me in border cities and anywhere you go. Because you will arrive in a city you do not know, and well, the family will talk to you, but it is very different if the agency talks to you about that. But no, they didn't tell me anything (Translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, personal communication, November 5, 2021).

**Andrea:** Because if they had explained to me a little more about where the first city I lived was, perhaps I would have thought twice, suddenly, as I did not know and have always thought that any city in the United States is equal to the big cities; I did not imagine that you are going to live in a small town in the middle of nowhere; So, if I had really known a little more about the place where I was going to live with the first family, I would not have accepted it (Translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, personal communication, November 1, 2021).

Sofía and Andrea's response to this question shows that the agencies do not provide any information about the cities where the Au Pair participants go and live their cultural exchange experience. In Pamela's opinion, it is not the agencies' duty to provide information about the cities because it could influence the participants' perception of the places. Catalina believes it is the participant's responsibility, if they care, to find information about the city where they are going.
Sandra, who traveled from Washington, D.C., to El Paso, Texas, due to her rematch process, mentioned that her host family provided meaningful information about the city. Sandra said,

**Sandra:** Not the agency. Well, I really don't remember that the agency as such had told me to look at this, or this, no. My family, whom I went with did it, I remember a lot that in their profile it was very detailed, they mentioned me, because well they both worked in the army, so, they mentioned that well there was the military base. It was thus located on the border with Mexico, and I remember when I began to read the information and read that the city was called "El Paso" and I said, "Will it be a city or will it be a town, what will it be like? So then, I kind of started looking a bit of the city too, but I had never really heard that city before (Translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, personal communication, October 30, 2021).

During a cultural exchange experience, the participants often experience a cultural shock, but this shock or impact tends to be stronger when they do not have any perception, reference, or knowledge related to their new environment. In exploring the Latin American Au Pair experiences, it is relevant to approach their environment in two levels. First is the environment that they share with their host families, in other words, their “new homes.” Second is the city where they live, in this case, El Paso, Texas. When I asked the participants: What have been the biggest challenges you have faced in your adaptation process with your host family? In general, the things that impacted them the most in their adaptation to their “new homes” were aspects related to food, their lifestyles, and how Americans educate their kids. Regarding this matter, Pamela, Sofia, and Catalina said,

**Pamela:** First, the food; They had a very different way of eating than mine, so it was something that hit me very hard. The way they raise their children is different, that is it!
Well, being away from my family and my friends was difficult in the adaptation process (Translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, personal communication, October 30, 2021).

**Sofía:** Children's attitude, sometimes they are very rude to me. They have a very different way of raising children, they spoil them a lot, and we don't do that in my country. Sometimes I felt that I could not tell the mother the things that the girl told me because she gave me excuses that the girl felt tired, that she yelled at me because she was tired, so I reached a point where I decided not to say anything and how to put up with myself. Right? Well, it was a bit complicated (N. Hernandez, personal communication, November 5, 2021).

**Catalina:** “The adaptation part is sometimes tough and being with new people that one is meeting up to now is a challenge living with entirely different people” (Translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, personal communication, November 4, 2021).

In Catalina and Marcela's cases, their adaptation process was a little more complicated due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The lockdowns affected their possibilities to interact with other people and explore the city. Marcela stated that her host parents never took advantage of the situation. They also encouraged her to go out and explore even during pandemic times. However, the other Au Pairs and their host families were isolated. Catalina affirmed that COVID-19 had been the biggest challenge she faced during her experience as an Au Pair in the United States. Having to spend all the time with her host family inside the house was exhausting for her. Also, she lost the opportunity to travel with her host family around the country and to Mexico. The idea of living a real cultural exchange experience during COVID-19 turned into the challenge of keeping good relationships with their host families.
None of the participants identified language barriers as one of the main challenges in their homes. Pamela, Sandra, and Marcela pointed out that there was someone in their houses who was bilingual. However, most of them find it challenging to improve their English language skills in a city where most people speak Spanish. Marcela shared an anecdote related to her experience of living in El Paso. In her words, the mixed feeling that she had of living in this border community is tangible. Marcela stated:

Well, in the beginning, as I was saying, since my goal was to come to learn English, I felt very uncomfortable because, in my view, in Colombia, my English was good. However, when I got here, I realized that I definitely did not have a good level of English because I didn't understand people when they spoke to me in English, nothing. So, when I went somewhere, for example, Walmart or something like that, to a store and I spoke in English, they answered me in Spanish because they realized that my native language was not English. So, at first, that made me very angry because I was not practicing my English, and that way I was not going to improve it, but after a while, I started to like the fact that people here are not very similar to people in Colombia. It maybe has a bit more warmth people from further north, that makes me feel a bit like in quotation marks "at home" (Translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, personal communication, November 10, 2021).

In this study, when the study participants talked about their experiences living in El Paso, Texas, they expressed them in terms of the advantages and the disadvantages of living there. In Table 2, I present both categories that represent the responses of the study participants.
Table 4.2. Advantages and Disadvantages of Living in El Paso, Texas

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<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
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<td><strong>Sofía:</strong> ... here in El Paso, being Latino, you have a Latino community around you, that Hispanic heat. That seems to be a super advantage. Also, because you have the border so close, you can go to Juarez whenever you want. It also seems to me that it is very central if you want to travel and then also Spanish, it seems to me that, if you are not very fluent or you do not speak English very well, here most people speak Spanish, and you can understand very well.</td>
<td><strong>Sofía:</strong> … it looks pretty boring to me, if you are a person who likes doing lots of activities, there is not much to do. Suppose you come just to do your job, only to babysit. In that case, you will obviously not care, or if you come from a very small city, you will not care either. But if you come from a big city like me, green, with trees all over the sides, it will hit you a bit, because it is a desert and there is not much to do.</td>
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<td><strong>Pamela:</strong> … El Paso is a cheap city, so the Au Pair salary is meager, and with that, you can buy many things in El Paso. If you don't know English, perfect, because you don't need to know English. It seems cool to me that it is a military city, so it is like learning everything about the military.</td>
<td><strong>Pamela:</strong>… if you want to learn English, you will not learn English, and it is costly to travel.</td>
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<td><strong>Andrea:</strong> … if you do not handle the language very well, you will always get someone who speaks Spanish. In addition to the experience of living in a border city, I think it is very different from any other experience. You learn a lot about</td>
<td><strong>Andrea:</strong> …In the case of El Paso… it was tiny, and there was very little to do.</td>
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<td><strong>Sandra:</strong> … maybe there is no greater attraction, let's say, like theme parks or, yes, things like that so big that one can explore.</td>
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<td><strong>Catalina:</strong> In my case, is that there were almost no Au Pairs… It wasn't that they lasted long in El Paso, I don't know. It was super weird… Also, a disadvantage was that there was not much to do</td>
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<td><strong>Advantages</strong></td>
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<td>the country's culture that you have next to you; you meet many people from the country that you have on the other side of the border.</td>
<td>in El Paso. It is like a desert, so there are few places to visit, which was also a disadvantage.</td>
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<td><strong>Sandra:</strong> …I think in the first place everything is very close, that is, it is a small city in which you can access different places easily. For that same reason, money reaches you a little more; maybe being Latina we find a feeling of brotherhood with, yes? With people who are from Mexico, then there is that common denominator that is being Latino. Well, I always saw how everything was very calm, a safe, friendly environment…</td>
<td><strong>Marcela:</strong> …maybe it takes much more time to acquire the level of English that someone would acquire if they were in another city where there were not so many Spanish-speaking people.</td>
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<td><strong>Catalina:</strong> …There is a lot of interculturalities there, the community as such is very friendly, I like it a lot…let's say that people are very sociable.</td>
<td><strong>Gabriela:</strong> I think the language. That many people speak Spanish to you, then a serious disadvantage is that you cannot really face that bilingual world.</td>
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<td><strong>Marcela:</strong> …In terms of the human sense, you feel more like at home, as I said before.</td>
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<td><strong>Gabriela:</strong> I think it was cool because it was not that far from some places that I wanted to know. Well, although it had some distance, I liked that it was close to California and Utah in Arizona.</td>
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The study participants identified more advantages than disadvantages. Based on this table, I could imply that they enjoyed living their cultural experience in this border community. However, when I asked them: From your personal experience, would you recommend future participants of the Au Pair program to live their exchange experience in El Paso, Texas? Four said no, two said yes, and the other two said yes/no. The responses support the Au Pairs' collective perception about the city: El Paso is a boring city. Because of that, most of the Au Pairs do not recommend for other program participants to live their cultural exchange experience there. The collective perception that the study participants have about El Paso does not match their perceptions about the United States and the Au Pair Program.

**The American Dream**

One of the reasons people decide to come to the United States is because it is known and perceived as "The land of opportunities." In this case, it is the land that gives the study participants the possibility to live a cultural exchange experience. In this conversation, it is crucial to know how the Latin American Au Pairs perceived the United States from their home countries and identified if they have an American Dream, to see how their experiences as Au Pairs living in the United States modified or not the previous perceptions and expectations. During the interviews, when I asked: What was your image of life in the United States when you were in your country? Now that you live in the United States, as a member of the Au Pair program, how close to reality was your image?
In general, the country's perception of the study participants was described in terms of ideas related to the food, culture, lifestyle, and environment. Also, one of the participants mentioned that her perception of the country was created based on what she saw (pictures and videos) and heard from the experiences of other former Au Pairs in the country. Another formed her perceptions through watching American movies. Most of them expressed that their perception of the country changed after participating in the Au Pair program. In Table 3, I present some examples of the country's perceptions (previous and present) of the study participants.

Table 4.3. Examples of the participants country's perceptions

<table>
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<tr>
<th>What was your image of life in the United States when you were in your country, before living the program?</th>
<th>Now that you live in the United States, as a member of the Au Pair program, how close to reality was your image?</th>
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<td><strong>Andrea:</strong> Like everything very modern, everything very controlled, everything very accessible, really, everything very different.</td>
<td><strong>Andrea:</strong> I think they were close, but at the same time, I was never aware that all these things, although they are real and can be, require a lot of work.</td>
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<td><strong>Sofía:</strong> Well, I imagined like this, kind of an American life, gringos everywhere. As I came to El Paso, I expected a much bigger cultural blow, but since I came here, the atmosphere was very Latin, so I didn't feel like I was in America, but at the same time, I did, it was kind of strange.</td>
<td><strong>Sofía</strong> Well, before I came, I saw many YouTube videos about Au Pair showing their day-to-day with the children; it seemed fake to me. It looked very happy, everything very joyful, and I was like, mmm … I do think that many people believe they are coming to work. However, in truth, it seemed to me that it was a heavy job …</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Pamela:</strong> I thought people would have more time to do different activities as the working</td>
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What was your image of life in the United States when you were in your country, before living the program?

hours were shorter than in Colombia. However, I realized that, although the working hours are shorter than in Colombia, here time is not enough for anything.

Pamela: Zero. Because here life is working, working, and working. I truly realized that families do not have enough time to spend with children.

Now that you live in the United States, as a member of the Au Pair program, how close to reality was your image?

Through analyzing the information presented in Table 3, it is clear how the participants modified their perceptions based on two elements: their experience living in El Paso and their work experience as Au Pairs. In its nature as a border city, El Paso presents unique features in its environment and provides its residents the possibility to live a different experience compared to other cities in the United States. Regarding their work experiences, the agencies and the U.S. government have established the responsibilities that the participants of the Au Pair program must develop. However, the Au Pair work experience is suitable to the host families' needs.

Keeping in mind that not all the families are the same, the Au Pairs' work responsibilities and their cultural exchange experience vary in each scenario. For example, all the study participants stated that they had or are having a great cultural exchange experience in El Paso because they host families treated or are treating them well, as they said: "as part of the family." However, the collected data reflect that some Au Pairs assume more responsibilities than others, but they all get the same remuneration. An exception is Sofia, who mentioned that her host family pays her more because "they want to help me."
For example, in one hand, Sandra and Marcela shared that their host kids used to study from home (homeschooling), so one of their duties was to support them through their learning process plus wash their clothes, help them clean their rooms, prepare some of their meals, and snacks, among other things. On the other hand, Andrea and Marcela affirmed that their primary responsibility as Au Pairs was/is to drive their host kids to their different activities. In this case, because their host kids are teenagers and more independent, their responsibilities are less.

None of the study participants complained about their host families in El Paso or their responsibilities as Au Pair, but most expressed dissatisfaction with the weekly remuneration. When I asked them: Have the economic benefits received from your participation in the AU Pair program met your needs and expectations? Some of their responses were,

**Gabriela:** …I don't think so, we play a fundamental part in families, not simply providing a service, we give everything so that the children are very well, we become their parents, so I think not (Translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, personal communication, November 9, 2021).

**Andrea:** I feel that in my case, yes, because the family I had was very good and because the children that I cared for did not really require much attention either. In the case of other companions who took care of more children and smaller ones, it seems to me that the payment, even if it was enough to cover needs, it was not fair in relation to the amount of work (Translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, personal communication, November 1, 2021).

**Marcela:** Yes, but it should be clarified that we know what the salary they will pay us before coming here. Then, once being here, we should not expect to be paid more because we already knew what the payment was. Also, we live with a family here, obviously, that
is much less than what they pay an American nanny, but we already know what we are coming for.

**Researcher:** But considering, since you are in the program and your responsibilities, do you think the payment should be higher?

**Marcela:** Well, for example, in my case, that I started studying, it would be much better if they paid us more because with what I currently earn it is very, very difficult to pay for the study. Although we are supposed to only come here to the program, you don't come to study, right? However, taking into account the plans we have after the program, it would be better to raise the salary of the Au Pairs (Translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, personal communication, November 10, 2021).

Gabriela, Marcela, and Andrea highlighted throughout their responses essential aspects that need to be discussed. All the Au Pairs know how much they will get paid before they come to the United States. The study participants all are/were living their cultural exchange experience because they accepted the program conditions, but the problem is that the host families (in most cases) take advantage of that agreement. As Andrea mentioned, some Au Pairs work more than others, and the relation of work vs. remuneration in most of the cases is not fair, and as Marcela pointed out, the payment is not enough if the Au Pairs want to study but "we already know what we are coming for" What is that mean? It means that the Latin American Au Pairs do not have the right to complain about the low pay they receive in exchange for their services; and that they cannot try to improve themselves while they are in the program. Within these conditions, are the Latin American Au Pairs living their "American Dream"?

From an immigrant's perspective, "The American Dream" is constantly related to the idea of having more money, living in a lovely house, access to better opportunities, and in the end, the
possibility to have a better quality of life in the United States. Proof of that is the answers of Sofía and Andrea when I asked them: When you were in your country, what was the American dream for you? They said,

**Sofía:** I think the American dream is to live in a beautiful house, in the suburbs, with your children, to earn very well. I mean, I think it's like having your family already formed, with your house, with your car, economically stable, with a good job, and well, practically that. (Translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, personal communication, November 5, 2021).

**Andrea:** For me, the American dream was to have a huge and gorgeous house, children at school, and a good school. It was always like the dream of a family in the suburbs, a big and beautiful house, and a big garden. For me, it was that! (Translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, personal communication, November 1, 2021).

**Researcher:** Has your concept of the American dream changed now that you are part of the Au Pair program?

**Sofía:** I think it doesn't exist, and it's very idealized. It depends a lot on you. If you want to get to that point or not, but I think it doesn't exist, I mean, it's the way you want to live and, that's it (Translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, personal communication, November 5, 2021).

**Andrea:** Yes, definitely after having the experience of having lived in the United States, I think that depending on the family that touches you, living as an Au Pair in the United States is a very great privilege. Because let's say you don't go through the work that any other immigrant who goes on their own does. But, if I believe that now the American dream is for me, the concept now of the American dream is, work and work without resting and
everything is material, beyond the quality of life is how much money you can have on stuff.

(Translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, personal communication, November 1, 2021).

While Sofía and Andrea shared their perception of the American Dream, Catalina, Pamela, and Sandra never thought about it. For Marcela and Gabriela, the "American Dream" is related to ideas such as: to come to the United States, be able to travel, have a better life than in your home country, and have much money to make your dreams come true. It is noticeable that there is a collective cultural perception of the "American Dream," but not all Latin American people are pursuing it. When I asked the study participants if as part of the Au Pair program, do you feel that you are/were living your American dream? Pamela, Catalina, and Sofía said no. While Marcela, Sandra, Gabriela, and Andrea recognized that as participants of the Au Pair program, they were/are able to live their "America Dream" or is a step forward to achieve it. Pamela and Marcela's responses are provided to highlight how polarized the study participants' opinions are regarding the role that plays their participation in the Au Pair program in achieving their American Dream.

**Pamela:** Because it is not easy to take care of other people's children, work so much, and the money you have as an Au Pair is good enough just for your basic needs (Translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, personal communication, October 30, 2021).

**Marcela:** Because if I had not come here through this program, I would not have been able to start studying for a career here in the United States. I did not have enough resources to dream of coming to the United States to study due to the Colombian economy and my family's economy. So, since my dream was always to learn another language, in fact, in Colombia I studied English for a year, always like I had in mind to study here, but I said, no, I don't have money to do that, but then well, I finally got to do it (Translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, personal communication, November 10, 2021).
Many are the challenges and the benefits that the Au Pair program and a cultural exchange experience offer to the individuals who decide to live these types of experiences, but what are the benefits that the study participants obtained or are enjoying as a Latin American Au Pairs living their cultural experience in El Paso, Texas? I explore this topic in the next theme.

**Benefits of the Experience**

This theme is defined by all the positive aspects that the study participants obtained, improved, and achieved during their cultural exchange experiences as Au Pairs. For example, when I asked them: Has your level of English competency improved since you have lived in El Paso, Texas? Even though they all agreed that El Paso is not the best city for improving English language skills, they all affirmed that they had improved the language. In Marcela's case, maybe not as much as she expected, but they all noticed language improvements during their cultural exchange experience. The improvements in English as their second language have provided better job and study opportunities for some participants. For example, Sandra stated:

…my goal was to learn English and have better working conditions when I returned to my country, and fortunately, I succeeded. I must mention that it was not easy at all; learning a language in practically two years is very complicated, but it is possible because I did it, and I did it with much dedication. That is, free time that I had was studying, studying and studying on my own and additionally go to college, and all that, and well, to certify that I took one of the international exams with which I could have better opportunities here in my country, so yes, I did it, and I feel fortunate to have made it (Translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, personal communication, October 30, 2021).
Other gains that the Latin American women highlighted from their cultural exchange experience were their capacity to adapt to a new culture, the cultural elements they learned and adopted, and the possibility to share their culture. Sofía, Andrea, and Marcela expressed,

**Sofía:** ...adapting to the culture here. At least in our countries, we don't celebrate Thanksgiving or the Fourth of July. I am one of the people who now celebrate Valentine's Day or Halloween. So, I think that I adapted very quickly to that, and I also contributed a lot to my family. I made food from my country for them, they showed me that they don't have typical food here, but that's okay (Translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, personal communication, November 5, 2021).

**Andrea** I really learned many things from Mexico, more than from the United States, Mexican food, or differences between countries. Yes, the cultural contributions were not very American (Translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, personal communication, November 1, 2021).

**Marcela:** Well, here in El Paso, I have met many people from different countries. Both Latin and Asian have allowed me to open my mind a little more about how to understand the way of thinking of other people and the way of living, their culture, different cuisines, so that has allowed me to be a little more tolerant (Translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, personal communication, November 10, 2021).

Self-discovery and the construction of solid relationships with the host families, Au Pairs' friends, and other people were also identified as gain aspects. The collected data shows that all study participants were in the United States for at least one year. They found and are finding the ways to adapt their selves to the new conditions. For example, Sofía illustrated how hard her first
Christmas celebration was in the United States but then she found the way to face this cultural challenge.

**Sofía:** Oh yes, the first December I spent here. Well, obviously, you know, we celebrate December, the New Year in our country; well, parties, songs, we are too much with those celebrations. I don't know, the first December here was very horrible. Literally, the family sat down on December 24 to watch a movie, and they went to bed at eight-thirty at night, and that affected me. Because I thought we would have dinner together, we would talk, drink, and do something, but nothing. That affected me a lot, and it was my first year here, and I cried a lot. I cried a lot, but afterward, I had people to spend Christmas with, so there was no need to feel that way again (Translated from Spanish, N. Hernandez, personal communication, November 5, 2021).

Also, through this analysis, it has been evident that the host families play a critical role in the cultural exchange experiences of the study participants. They have the power to influence the Au Pair's experiences positively or negatively. All the Latin American women emphasized that they had/have a good relationship with their host families, located in El Paso, Texas. They also said they treated them as a family member, in some cases like the big sister, and respected their opinions and emotions. The host families made them feel at home.

**Step 6: Write Up**

Guided by an inductive thematic analysis within interview discourses as they relate to the experiences of former and current Latin American Au Pairs who lived or are living their cultural exchange program in the United States, specifically in El Paso, Texas, I illustrated the analytical steps with four themes and three sub-themes: (a) Participants' perceptions; (b) The process to become an Au Pair; (c) The American experience (Challenges, Living in El Paso, Texas, and The
America Dream); and (d) Benefits of the experience. Because this exploratory study aims to explore and make visible the concerns raised by female Au Pairs from Latin America who participate in the program in a border community in the US-Mexico Border, I have chosen these four themes for meeting this purpose.

I had presented my step-by-step analytical process, in which I have defined each team and provided extracts from the interviews to support the points being made. However, I have not analyzed the collected data through the lens of intersectionality and acculturation theories, one of the goals of this study. For that reason, in this report, I present an overview of the thematic analysis developed, and I reveal convergence points found between the immigration experiences of the study participants in which the individuals' identities (race, gender, nationality, among others) overlap and interconnect in ways that influenced/impacted how the study participants were/are seen, understood, and treated. Also, I pay attention and identify how acculturation is expressed in the Latin American Au Pairs' experiences during their time living in the host country.

By analyzing the collected data, I detected a cycle process that has been repeated at least in the last five years. This cycling process initiates every time a Latin American woman decides to become an Au Pair participant in the U.S. Even though the study participants are from different countries and choose different host families to live their cultural exchange experience, they all go through similar administrative and cultural adaptation processes.

Also, I was able to identify in the collected data repeated patterns that were coded and organized in four themes: (a) Participants' perceptions; (b) The process to become an Au Pair; (c) The American experience; and (d) Benefits of the experiences. I decided to analyze the team called "The American Experience" through three sub-themes: Challenges, Living in El Paso, Texas, and the American Dream, due to the large amount of meaningful collected data related to this topic.
These themes were organized and analyzed in consecutive order to reflect the experience of the study participants. Each theme exposes the Latin American women's perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors during different stages of the Au Pair experience, which started in their host countries. Also, the themes reflect the perceptions and behaviors of other involved parties (host families, Au Pair agencies) toward the Latin American women and illustrate the various challenges they face and the benefits the study participants obtained from their Au Pair experience living in the United States.

One of the convergence points identified between the study participants' experiences was the relation between migration vs. work. Even though this study aims to study the Au Pair Program as a cultural exchange program, the participants stand out via their Au Pair experiences more in terms of work and childcare responsibilities than as a cultural exchange experience. The collected data reflect that none of the participants used to work as an Au Pair or nanny in their host countries. The participants who had formal jobs related to children in their countries were developed under their role as professors and professionals.

In the case of the Au Pair program, the study participants tend to be overqualified for the Au Pair job compared with the individuals who perform this type of childcare services in Latin America. However, this program appears as "the perfect program" that suits the study participants' needs and interest. Another important factor in this intersectional analysis is that the study participants are women and young. These two social identity categories (gender and age) support social conceptions related to the role that a woman should play in the family; and that young people tend to be more productive, adapt better to the changes, and are easier "to guide" or influence. Young Latin American women are thought to be the perfect population to supply American families' childcare needs.
Through the experiences of these Latin American women, one can identify systems of power that benefit the agencies and the host families, and that subordinate, oppress, and discriminate against the study participants in different moments of their cultural exchange experiences. For example, is the "rematch process" that four of the study participants had to face as their way to resist the attitudes and abuses of their host families. Under the concept of "the big sister of the family," many families try to take advantage of their Au Pairs and use their language limitations to subordinate and oppress them. For that reason, many of the study participants affirmed that in the Au Pair program experience, it is more important to choose a good host family than to choose the city because they all know that the host families have the power to influence their experiences negatively or positively.

Based on the study participants' experiences, it can be implied that having a good host family does not mean that the Au Pair participants work fewer hours, have fewer responsibilities, or receive better pay. Having a good host family means that the family members recognize the Au Pair as a woman from a different culture, with different traditions, opinions, expectations, who decided to live a cultural exchange experience in the United States, mainly to improve her English skills and get to know the American culture. From an intersectional point of view, it can be understood that the way these Latin American Au Pairs have been recognized (their identities) from their host families, the Au Pair agencies, and the people around them during their cultural exchange experience had led them to experience positions of privilege and inequality in their new environment.

From an acculturation theory perspective (Berry, 2017), how study participants are perceived and recognized in their new environment makes their transition and acculturation process into the host country easier or more difficult. This study aims to identify how
acculturation is expressed in the cultural exchange experiences of the study participants. It is vital to clarify that even though the study participants recognized the advantages of living their cultural exchange experiences in El Paso, Texas, a city that "feels like home" due to the significant presence of Spanish speakers and the cultural mix between the American and the Mexican cultures, unique features of a border city located in the U.S.-Mexico border. There are signs and challenges of acculturation in the experiences of the Latin American Au Pair who lived or are living in El Paso, Texas.

In this study, the acculturation process is expressed in different ways. For example, they all have adopted elements from the foreign culture. The study participants affirmed that they had improved their English language skills and now celebrate holidays that they do not celebrate in their home countries, such as Thanksgiving, Halloween, and Easter, and others. Also, some of the participants pointed out how challenging was for them to adapt to the way people eat in the United States. They clarified that breakfast and lunch are the most important meals in Latin American countries, while in the United States, the most important meal is dinner. Another factor that they highlighted in their acculturation process was the need to understand how American parents educate their kids because some of their host kids' behaviors in Latin American culture will be recognized as rude, inappropriate, or unacceptable, but for the American parents it is a sign of tiredness.

The study participants reveal that one of the challenges that El Paso environment discloses to them is the difficulty of improving their English language skills. As I mentioned, they all speak English and have noticed improvements. However, they highlighted that it is difficult to improve the country's native language in a context where more than half of the population speaks Spanish. It is challenging to try to speak in English with others, and that the
people reply in Spanish. Social categories (race and nationality) intersect in this scenario, integrating intersectionality onto the study participants' acculturation process.

As I have shown, the Au Pair program benefits the participants in exchange for childcare services. For that reason, most or all Latin American women's responsibilities and duties are related to their host kids. In some cases, due to the parents' behaviors and the long time that the study participants spend with their host kids, they feel like their mom rather than the Au Pair. The collected data showed that study participants experience their acculturation process in multiple levels, and they applied acculturation strategies: assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization.
Chapter 5: Conclusions and Suggestions

This exploratory research study aimed to investigate and make visible the concerns raised by former and current Latin American women who live their Au Pair program in El Paso, Texas, a border community in the US-Mexico Border. From the results obtained in the inductive thematic analysis, I now respond to the research questions that guided this qualitative research study.

**Question 1: What are the key challenges that these Latin American women face while living in El Paso?**

The thematic analysis identified six key challenges that the study participants faced or are facing while living in El Paso. The first challenge is related to the need to like the idea of living in El Paso before they arrive in the city. None of the study participants chose to live their experience in El Paso. In most cases, this city was their only option. Factors such as the lack of options that provided the Au Pair agencies to the Au Pair participants, positive perceptions created toward their host family, and bad references provided from a previous host family are some of the factors that play a decisive role in the decision of which city the experience participants will live the experience.

The second key challenge is the geographic disparities between the home countries/towns of the Latin American Au Pairs participants and El Paso, Texas. The study participants emphasized that it is challenging to get used to living in a desert when your city has a green landscape around (trees, mountains, among others) and better weather. Also, because of El Paso’s geographical location, it is expensive to travel to other cities, specifically to Latin America. The third challenge is the Au Pairs' lack of information related to the city/town where they are going to live their cultural exchange experience. The study participants affirmed that the Au Pair agencies do not provide any type of information related to the cities where the participants will live their cultural
exchange experiences. Some of the Latin American women interviewed recognized that they did not even know about the existence of El Paso, Texas. This lack of information exposes the participants of the program to make wrong decisions and face negative experiences.

The fourth challenge is related to the culture shock that the Latin American Au Pairs experienced. The cultural aspects that most impacted them were food habits, people lifestyles, individuals' personalities (precisely the personality of the host family members), the COVID-19 pandemic, understanding how American parents educate their kids, and getting used to living in a city shaped by two cultures: The Mexican and The American cultures.

The fifth challenge is improving English language skills in a city where most of the population speaks Spanish. "We try to speak to others in English, and the people reply to you in Spanish." The study participants recognized this as one of the biggest challenges of their cultural exchange experience in El Paso, Texas. The sixth challenge is the lack of Au Pairs in El Paso. The study participants stated that "El Paso is a boring city", there is very little to do. Two of the study participants highlighted that is common for other Latin American Au Pairs to arrive in the city and to then request a rematch because they do not like it. That is one of the reasons why the Au Pair community does not grow in this border city. Also, the lack of families who need an Au Pair in the area.

**Question 2: What changes to an Au Pair’s perceptions of the “American Dream” do the program, the host country, and the particular border community generate via the Au Pair experience among the women of study?**

The thematic analysis demonstrated that most of the study participants changed their perceptions positively or negatively toward the American Dream, the host country, and El Paso, Texas, through their participation in the Au Pair program.
Three of the study participants expressed that they never thought about the "American Dream", this aspect shows that not all immigrants are interested in pursuing the American Dream. While the other participants shared that the perceptions that they had of the "America Dream" in their host countries were related to ideas such as: to have the possibility to come to the U.S., be able to travel, have a better life than in one’s home country, and have much money to make one’s dreams come true.

After they participated in the Au Pair program in the United States, just four participants recognized the Au Pair program as a step forward to achieving their American Dream. Even though each of them has their individual definition of the American Dream, they all agreed, based on their personal experiences, that people need to work hard to succeed in this country. In contrast to these opinions, one of the participants pointed out that it is not possible to talk about a dream when Au Pairs are working very hard taking care of kids that are not their own while receiving a low payment that covers just their basic needs. The above evidence shows how polarized are the study participants' opinions related to the American Dream.

Some of the Latin American Au Pairs' perceptions of the country were created based on what they saw (pictures and videos) and heard from the experiences of former Au Pairs or through watching American movies. The country's perception was described in terms of ideas related to the food, lifestyle, and environment. Most of the participants affirmed that their perceptions of the United States changed after living in El Paso, Texas, and working as Au Pairs. As Latinas, all the study participants recognized the advantages and disadvantages of living their cultural exchange experience in El Paso because, as one said, "it is like to be at home." When they talked about the Au Pair program, it is more about their responsibilities and the challenges they face as childcare service providers than as participants of a cultural exchange program.
**Question 3: In what ways, if any, do the experiences vary among the Au Pairs interviewed in the host country?**

This study revealed that the experiences of the Latin American Au Pairs could vary in many ways. Through the reconstruction of the experiences of the study participant, I identified that there are Au Pairs who live with two or more host families and in different states during their Au Pair program. Also, in some cases, the host families are from different nationalities, which leads the Au Pair participant to undergo multiple acculturations and adaptation processes. Also, this study demonstrated that Latin American Au Pair cultural exchange experiences are influenced by two forces, Au Pair agencies and host families. These forces create relations of power to subordinate the Latin Au Pairs participants.

In the Au Pair program, social categories such as gender, age, nationality, race, among others, are articulated to produce subordination and to justify the insertion of activities like the childcare services provided by young immigrant women undercover in the idea of a cultural exchange program. In this study, the experiences of four Latin American Au Pairs demonstrated how some host families oppressed and discriminated against their Au Pairs. These women used the rematch process to resist this oppression related to being an immigrant woman of color who does not speak the English language well or does not want to become the housekeeper of the host family. This study also shows through the experiences of three study participants how different are the cultural exchanged experiences of the Latin American women whose host families recognized in their social identities. In the Au Pair program, the host families and the agencies have the power to shape and influence the experiences of the Latin American Au Pairs in the United States negatively or positively.
The results obtained from this research are beneficial in terms of decision making for future participants, as well as to contribute to the lack of studies that address aspects of the Au Pair experience. Taking into account Martínez’s observation (1994) that “… environmental factors play a determining role in shaping the lives of distinct populations” (p. xx), this study contributes to the understanding of identity shifting and the environmental factors that play an important role in a cultural exchange experience. In sum, this project contributes to the field of communication studies, particularly the subfield of intercultural communication. It illustrates the potentiality of intersectionality to approach and understand the migration process of Latin American women.

**STUDY LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES**

One of the limitations of this study is that it only approached the experiences and concerns of Latin American Au Pairs located in El Paso, Texas. Future research could replicate this study in other cities along the U.S. - Mexico border to further support the findings of this research and identify similar patterns or new key aspects that would allow a better understanding of the socio-cultural dynamics that emerge in border communities via a culture exchange contest.

This study did not explore the host families and the Au Pair agencies' perceptions. However, this exploratory study shows the fundamental role these parties play in the cultural exchange experience of the Latin American Au Pairs and how their relations of power can create spaces of social inequalities for the participants of the program. For that reason, future research studies could evoke the perceptions of these parties and investigate their relations to clarify the real role they play in the Au Pair program to enrich the conversation and clarify concerns.

This study reveals that Au Pairs participants can experience multiple adaptations processes simultaneously. Future studies can explore the concerns, challenges, and benefits in the experiences of Au Pairs who live with families from different nationalities or the experiences of
those Au Pairs who go through the rematch process on one or more occasions during their cultural exchange experience.
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Mariluz. (2014). “*Borderlands/ La Frontera: It’s also about freedom*”. University of Maryland Retrieved from Transnational Theory and Criticism.


Appendix A: My Au Pair Experience

In February 2013, I received a call from an agent from the "Au Pair Colombia" agency, known as Go Au Pair in the U.S. During the call, the agent gave me a brief description of the Au Pair program and emphasized three points. First, he mentioned that they were calling me because one of my best friends was going through the process to be an Au Pair in the USA. As one of the process requirements, my friend had to share the personal data (names and phone numbers) of five friends that she believed might be interested in doing the program, and I was one of her referrals. Second, he told me that for that week the agency had a great promotion. I remember that the promotion cost around 3,500,000 Colombian pesos (currently about $936 US dollars). The package included the enrollment in the program, counseling throughout the process, the training course, the interview, and roundtrip tickets. Third, if I was under 18 years old, my parents needed to go with me at the time of registration.

At that time, I just graduated from my second university degree, and I was packing my bags to travel to Peru to work as a volunteer on a social project for the next three months. Personally, the Au Pair experience caught my attention, especially because I saw in this program the possibility of improving my English while living a cultural exchange experience in one of my favorite countries. I remember that I talked to my parents about it, and my father, three days after receiving the call, accompanied me to the Au Pair Colombia office to obtain more information. That day, my dad made the payment and I signed up to start the process, which I could carry out remotely.

After four months, while living in Peru, I was matched with a host family located in Lake Tapps, Washington. It was the only family I interviewed with. I met the parents and their three children, ages 3, 6 and 9. Despite my limitations in the language (it was easier for me to understand, but it was very difficult for me to communicate) we managed to understand each other, and we
had a good connection. We video called about three times before they informed me that they wanted to match with me. The only thing that made me hesitate to match with them was that they needed me to travel very soon and that the host dad spoke some Spanish (his parents were Mexican). Due to the urgency with which they needed the Au Pair, I would not be able to go to the training school in New York. However, at that time what worried me the most was that there would be someone in the house who spoke Spanish because that would make it difficult for me to improve my English. At that point, I communicated my concern to them and the host mom told me that her husband worked for the Army. For this reason, he usually traveled a lot. I would spend most of the time with her and her children. That encouraged me to match with them.

In June 2013, I came to the United States and lived in Lake Tapps, Washington, a beautiful place in the middle of nowhere, and a hard place to make friends. My first year as an Au Pair was very difficult. In general, the relationship with my host family was good. At the beginning, they respected my work schedules, they gave me the weekends off and, allowed me to use their car in my free time. They also had a room for me, but I had to share a bathroom with the children. There were good, bad and very bad days. At the beginning, it was very difficult to clearly understand what the kids wanted, especially the two younger ones, so they got frustrated, cried, and yelled at me. Within two weeks of arriving, my host parents sent the children on vacation for two weeks with their grandparents. During that time, I was locked in the house. I did not know anyone, there were no Au Pairs from my agency who lived close to me, the closest one lived 45 minutes from the house. It was summer and the days seemed eternal. I never understood why they needed it an Au Pair so urgently.

I had no GPS and my host parents gave me an old cell phone that worked well only for phone calls. The first month my host mom was cordial to me. Then, there were days when she did
not even say hello to me. She constantly made me feel as if my presence in the house bothered her. My host dad was kinder. He usually took care of dinner. Still he did get mad and yelled at me the few times he went out with me to help me get comfortable driving in the U.S. I used to drive in Colombia, but it took me some time to adjust to drive here. In the first months, I suffered a lot with the food. In Colombia, we are used to having a big lunch but here the custom is to eat something light at noon and a large supper at night. I remember that at night my stomach ached, and I could not sleep because of everything we ate. However, over time, I got used to it.

Not everything was bad. With my first paycheck, I bought gifts for my family in Colombia. I saved up and bought a GPS, which gave me the freedom to start going out and seeing new places and new people. I also took ESL classes at the nearby college in my free time from Monday to Thursday (Instead of helping me with $500 to pay for my studies as stipulated in the contract, my host family helped me with $25, and my LCC supported them. They made me pay for transportation costs in school days as well). After living there for five months and having only one friend, an Au Pair from Colombia, I heard about Au Pair groups on Facebook. I applied to the Seattle Au Pair group in January 2014, and thanks to it, I met Chloe, an Au Pair from France who used to live five minutes from my house.

Within seven months, I moved with my host family to Phoenix, Arizona. A new city, a new adventure that marked my life and my experience as an Au Pair and human being. Living with my first host family, I experienced moments in which I put my physical and psychological integrity at stake, so a month after finishing my first year I decided to go in rematch. I remember that my host mom got sad and mad when I told her why I decided to go in rematch. That same night, I left their house with my bags, having nowhere to go. The agency ignored the complexity of my situation. They only told me that I should wait for the official rematch to be made. I am grateful that at that
time an Au Pair from Argentina and her host family allowed me to stay at their house for two nights. After that, my new host family, whom I already knew because they had another Au Pair from Colombia who was my friend, when they found out about my situation, they opened their doors to me and let me at their home, ignoring what the agency said.

I was always afraid to go in rematch for many reasons. First, because I felt that my host kids needed me. Also, I was afraid of not finding a new host family soon and having to return to Colombia without achieving my purpose of being an Au Pair. Luckily, after a very difficult year, I met my second American host family. They were amazing human beings who made me feel loved and gave me the opportunity to finally live the Au Pair experience I signed up for.

In the following years, I moved and lived in several different states. The adaptation process in my experience has been complicated due to language barriers and cultural differences, adding up to feeling like an outsider. However, I used the Au Pair network on Facebook to connect with people in every place I moved. Migrating from one place to another or “social mobility” implies recognizing a new space and the need to seek adaptation strategies (Aguirre, 2017). To this day, I still use my experience as an Au Pair to make connections in the states that I visit. Although the Au Pair community is small, it extends throughout the entire North American territory, and over the years, it has established a reliable social network. Therefore, when I arrived at El Paso, Texas, the first thing I did was to post in the different Au Pair groups on Facebook, asking if there were Au Pairs living in this Texas city.

To my surprise, I received only one response from a participant, who like me, is Colombian and who had been living in El Paso for a few months. Through her, I met other participants in the program, mostly women from Brazil, Colombia, Venezuela, Italy, and Thailand. During the two years that I lived in El Paso, I learned that the local Au Pair community is tiny, and that the
participants are usually from Latin America. From this situation emerged the motivation to conduct a study that examines Latin American Au Pairs’ affairs in a border community context.

Currently, I am not an Au Pair; I am an international student in the United States. In August 2018, I moved from Alexandria, Virginia, to El Paso, Texas, with the intention of continuing my English as a Second Language (ESL) studies and later starting my graduate studies at the University of Texas at El Paso. I moved to El Paso in the company of my “host family” with whom I lived during my last year as an Au Pair in Washington. They also welcomed me into their home under my F1 student status, with the intention to help me to achieve "The American Dream." In my case, it has been to study for a master's degree in communication at a US university. Today, I am writing from my perspective as a young Latina, who lives and studies in a border community. My experiences as an Au Pair, and living in many states throughout the nation, have contributed to the construction of my multiple identities, in which I have experienced discrimination and privilege positions.
Appendix B: IRB Approval

Institutional Review Board
Office of the Vice President for Research and Sponsored Projects
The University of Texas at El Paso IRB
FWA No: 00001224
El Paso, Texas 79968-0587
P: 915-747-7693 E: irb.crsp@utep.edu

Date: October 26, 2021

To: Nathaly Hernandez, Master's in Communication

From: University of Texas at El Paso IRB

Study Title: [1818841-1] Experiences of Latin American Au Pairs in El Paso, Texas: Perceptions and Challenges in a Border Community

IRB Reference #: College of Liberal Arts - Communication

Submission Type: New Project

Action: APPROVED

Review Type: Expedited Review, Category #7

Approval Date: October 26, 2021

Expiration Date: October 25, 2023

The University of Texas at El Paso IRB has approved your submission. This approval is based on the appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a study design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This study has received Expedited Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Based on the risks, this project requires Biennial Verification by this office on a biennial basis. Please use the appropriate renewal forms for this procedure. The renewal request application must be submitted, reviewed and approved, before the expiration date.

This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals that may be required. Other institutional clearances and approvals may be required. Accordingly, the project should not begin until all required approvals have been obtained.

Please note that you must conduct your study exactly as it was approved by the IRB. Any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation, except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subject.

All serious and unexpected adverse events must be reported to this office. Please use the appropriate adverse event forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.
Please report all Non-Compliance issues or Complaints regarding this study to this office.

Remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the study and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the study via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document.

Upon completion of the research study, a Closure Report must be submitted to the IRB office.

You should retain a copy of this letter and any associated approved study documents for your records.

All research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after termination of the project. The IRB may review or audit your project at random or for cause. In accordance with federal regulation (45CFR46.113), the board may suspend or terminate your project if your project has not been conducted as approved or if other difficulties are detected.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Office at irb.orsp@utep.edu or Bernice Caad at (915) 747-6590 or by email at bcaad@utep.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Dr. Lorraine Torres, Ed.D. MT(ASCP)
IRB Chair
Appendix C: Interview Guide Questionnaire (English)

Experiences of Latin American Au Pairs in El Paso, Texas: Perceptions and Challenges in a Border Community

Interview Guide Questionnaire (English)

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<tr>
<th>Border</th>
<th>1. How did you learn about the Au Pair program?</th>
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<tr>
<td>2. What motivated you to participate in the Au Pair program in the United States, especially in El Paso, Texas.</td>
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<td>3. Which were your daily activities in your country of origin? What main skills and abilities made you an eligible candidate for the program?</td>
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<td>4. Which were the cities from which you had the option to select for Au Pair program? Why did you choose to complete your Au Pair experience in El Paso, Texas?</td>
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<td>5. In the process of selecting a location for your Au Pair experience, did the agency that advised you provide specific information on the particularities of living in a border city? [If the answer is YES] what sort of information did the agency provide? [If the answer is NO] do you think that the program should inform candidates about the particularities of living in a border city?</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. How do you feel about living in El Paso, Texas? Did you initially expect to have this experience in another city?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perceptions</td>
<td>7. What was your image of life in the United States when you were in your country? Now that you live in the United States, as a member of the Au Pair program, how close to reality was your image?</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. From your experience, what are the advantages and disadvantages of being an Au Pair in El Paso, Texas?</td>
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<td>9. Have the economic benefits received from your participation in the AU Pair program met your needs and expectations?</td>
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<td>10. Have you felt alienated for being a foreigner or being a member of the Au Pair program?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11. When you were in your country, what was the American dream for you? Has your concept of the American dream changed now that you are part of the Au Pair program?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges</td>
<td>12. As part of the AU Pair program, do you feel that you are living your American dream? Yes__No___. Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Has your level of English competency improved since you have lived in El Paso, Texas? Have you felt that language has been a barrier to properly developing your responsibilities in the Au Pair program? Has living in a bilingual area</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realities</td>
<td>14. What have been the biggest challenges you have faced in your adaptation process with your host family? What do you enjoy the most about living with your Host Family?</td>
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<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td></td>
<td>15. Do you feel like a part or member of your Host Family? What makes you feel that way?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16. In the development of your experience, which cultural barriers have you faced, if any?</td>
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<td>17. Given that the Au Pair program is a cultural exchange program, what highlights have you received as a participant in this program?</td>
</tr>
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<td>18. Can you tell me a particular cultural anecdote associated with your experience in El Paso, Texas? because it is a border city?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Experiencias de Au Pairs latinoamericanas en El Paso, Texas: Percepciones y Desafíos en una Comunidad Fronteriza

#### Cuestionario Guía de Entrevista

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fronteras</th>
<th>1. ¿Cómo te enteraste de la existencia del programa Au Pair?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. ¿Qué te motivó a realizar el programa Au Pair en los Estados Unidos, y de manera específica en El Paso, Texas?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. ¿Cuáles eran tus actividades cotidianas en tu país de origen? ¿Qué habilidades y destrezas principales te hicieron candidato(a) elegible para formar parte del programa?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. ¿Cuáles fueron las ciudades que tuviste la opción de seleccionar para realizar el programa de Au Pair? ¿Por qué escogiste vivir tu experiencia de Au Pair en El Paso, Texas?</td>
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<td>5. ¿En el proceso de seleccionar a El Paso - Texas para vivir tu experiencia de Au Pair, la empresa que te asesoró, te suministro información específica sobre las particularidades que se tendrían al vivir en una ciudad fronteriza? [Si la respuesta es SÍ] ¿Qué tipo de información te proveyó la agencia? [Si la respuesta es NO] ¿Usted cree que el programa debería informar a sus candidatos acerca de las particularidades de vivir en ciudades fronterizas?</td>
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<td>6. ¿Cómo te sientes con el hecho de vivir en El Paso, Texas? ¿Con el programa esperabas vivir la experiencia en otra ciudad?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percepciones</td>
<td>7. ¿Cuáles eran tus imaginarios sobre la vida en los Estados Unidos cuando estabas en tú país? ¿Ahora que vives en los Estados Unidos, como miembro del programa Au Pair, qué tan cerca a la realidad estaban tus imaginarios?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>8. ¿Desde tu experiencia, cuáles son las ventajas y desventajas de ser Au Pair en El Paso, Texas?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>9. ¿Sientes que el beneficio económico y de prebendas recibido por formar parte del programa de AU Pair, es adecuado para cubrir tus necesidades y expectativas?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>10. ¿Te has sentido aislada por ser extranjera o por ser miembro del programa de Au Pair?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. ¿Cuándo estabas en tu país, que era para ti el sueño americano? ¿Ha cambiado tu concepto sobre el sueño americano, ahora que formas parte del programa Au Pair?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desafíos</td>
<td>12. ¿Durante tu participación en el programa AU Pair, sientes que estás viviendo tu sueño americano? Si____ No____. ¿Por qué?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13. ¿Desde tu experiencia, viviendo en El Paso, Texas, ha mejorado tu nivel del inglés? ¿Has sentido que el idioma</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Realidades** | 14. ¿Cuáles han sido los mayores desafíos que has tenido que enfrentar en tu proceso de adaptación con tu “Host Family”? ¿Qué es lo que más disfrutas de convivir con tu Host Family?  
15. ¿Te sientes como miembro de la familia de tu Host Family? ¿Qué lo hace sentirse así?  
16. ¿En el desarrollo de tu experiencia, te enfrentaste a barreras de orden cultural?  
17. ¿Dado que el programa Au Pair, es un programa de intercambio cultural, qué aportes destacas haber recibido en ese campo, mientras has estado en el programa?  
18. ¿Nos puedes narrar una anécdota cultural particular, asociada a tu experiencia en El Paso, Texas por ser una ciudad fronteriza? |

*Inglés ha sido una barrera para desarrollar adecuadamente tus responsabilidades en el programa Au Pair?*
Appendix E: Demographic Survey (English)

Experiences of Latin American Au Pairs in El Paso, Texas: Perceptions and Challenges in a Border Community
Demographic survey

Hello:
You are invited to participate in our survey. The purpose of the study is to explore the challenges and concerns Au Pair program participants (Latin American women) that live within the context of the border of the El Paso, Texas — Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, experience. In this survey, approximately 10 people will be asked to complete a survey that asks questions about demographics. It will take approximately 5 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and confidential. There are no foreseeable risks associated with this project. However, if you feel uncomfortable answering any questions, you can withdraw from the survey at any point. It is very important for us to learn your opinions.

Your survey responses will be strictly confidential and data from this research will be reported only in the aggregate. Your information will be coded and will remain confidential. If you have questions at any time about the survey or the procedures, you may contact Nathaly Carolina Hernandez Garcia at 301 401 9494 or by email at nchernandez3@miners.utep.edu.

Thank you very much for your time and support. Please start with the survey now and when you are done, please return it to the following email: nchernandez3@miners.utep.edu.

1. Your Age
   ___18-21
   ___22-25
   ___26 and older

2. Are you from Latin American?
   ___Yes
   ___No

3. How many months have you been in the United States as a part of the Au Pair Program?
   ________________________________

4. Do you have previous living abroad experiences?
   ___Yes
   ___No

5. What is the name of your Au Pair agency?
   ________________________________

Thank you!
Appendix E: Demographic Survey (Spanish)

Experiencias de Au Pairs Latinoamericanas en El Paso, Texas: Percepciones y Desafíos en una Comunidad Fronteriza
Encuesta demográfica

Hola:
Estás invitado a participar en nuestra encuesta. El propósito del estudio es explorar los desafíos e inquietudes de los participantes (mujeres latinoamericanas) del programa Au Pair que viven en el contexto de la frontera de la experiencia El Paso, Texas - Ciudad Juárez, México. En esta encuesta, se les pedirá a aproximadamente 10 personas que completen una encuesta que hace preguntas sobre demografía. Le tomará aproximadamente 5 minutos completar el cuestionario.

Su participación en este estudio es completamente voluntaria y confidencial. No hay riesgos previsibles asociados con este proyecto. Sin embargo, si no se siente cómodo respondiendo alguna pregunta, puede retirarse de la encuesta en cualquier momento. Es muy importante para nosotros conocer sus opiniones.

Sus respuestas a la encuesta serán estrictamente confidenciales y los datos de esta investigación se informarán solo en conjunto. Su información será codificada y permanecerá confidencial. Si tiene preguntas en cualquier momento sobre la encuesta o los procedimientos, puede comunicarse con Nathaly Carolina Hernandez Garcia al 301 401 9494 o por correo electrónico a nchernandez3@miners.utep.edu.

Muchas gracias por su tiempo y apoyo. Comience con la encuesta ahora y cuando haya terminado, devuélvala al siguiente correo electrónico: nchernandez3@miners.utep.edu.

1. Tu edad
   __18-21
   __22-25
   __26 años o más

2. ¿Eres de Latinoamérica?
   __Sí
   __No

3. ¿Cuántos meses llevas en los Estados Unidos como parte del Programa Au Pair?

   ________________________________

4. ¿Tiene experiencias previas viviendo en el extranjero?
   __Sí
   __No

5. ¿Cuál es el nombre de su agencia Au Pair?

   ________________________________

   Gracias!
Appendix F: Interviews Transcripts (English)

**INTERVIEW # 1: PAMELA**

**Researcher:** Well, we are going to start with the first question. Give me a moment... we are already recording, for your information. So, I would like to ask you, how did you learn about the Au Pair program?

**Pamela:** When I started university, at the university there was a program that was like conferences to do exchanges in other countries, and in one of the experiences that the students of each exchange had, of each type of exchange they had done, was that of Au Pair, and I found that type of exchange too cool, for all the conditions it offered, so I decided to start looking for what agencies offered this program in Colombia.

**Researcher:** What motivated you to participate in the Au Pair program in the United States, especially in El Paso, Texas?

**Pamela:** Let us see. It was not exactly that I chose El Paso, like uh, how cool to go to El Paso to live my Au Pair experience, no. But one of the things, first, one of the things that motivated me to be an Au Pair was that I really like children and especially young children, so when I found my host family, the three children seemed too cute, and I had a very good connection with my host mom, so the truth is, I did not know about the existence of El Paso, but I rely on the connection I had with my host mom, and that is why I decided to go to El Paso.

**Researcher:** Why decided to carry out the program in the United States and why not in Europe or another continent? Hello, can you hear me? Hello.

**Pamela:** I had muted the microphone, where were you?

**Researcher:** Because of the connection with your host mom, you had decided to live the Au Pair experience in El Paso, and I asked you why you had decided to live the Au Pair program in the
United States and not on another continent?

**Pamela:** The reason why I chose the United States was because, well, first, I already had a little knowledge of the language, and secondly, because my family lives here, so anything that could happen to me or if at some point I needed to my family because I was going to have them closer to whatever happened to me.

**Researcher:** Perfect, which were your daily activities in your country of origin?

**Pamela:** Go to university, study, go home, continue studying, go out with my friends, and that is it.

**Researcher:** How was your process to become an Au Pair?

**Pamela:** First, I contacted the agency with which I wanted to start the process. Later I went to some informative meetings.

Then I started to apply to be an Au Pair, and in the application, there were several steps. So, first was an interview in which they asked me, like all my court records, if I had had legal problems, well, many questions about me. The second step was an interview to see my English level and see if it was good enough to start the process. Then there, I was in contact with some girls from the agency, they asked me some questions, and after a few days, they gave me the result if he was going to apply or if he could apply for the program. Subsequently, I had to fill out some forms, and one of those was some personal references and interviewing people to talk about me.

What else, I think after that it was like, I think they already activated the platform to start looking for families, and I was getting the families interested in me.

**Researcher:** How many families did you interview with?

**Pamela:** Like three.

**Researcher:** What main skills and abilities made you an eligible candidate for the program?
Pamela: From the program in general, or from the family that chose me?

Researcher: About the program in general, and well, if you want to tell us both.

Pamela: I do not know! I think it was the hours I had with childcare, and really anyone can apply to the program. No one needs to have a special characteristic or ability, and the family I think they chose me because, first, they wanted someone who knew Spanish, because the children were immersed in the language and they wanted someone to help them strengthen the language; and that my host mom and I got along well.

Researcher: Which were the cities from which you had the option to select for Au Pair program?

Pamela: San Francisco and New York.

Researcher: Why did you choose to complete your Au Pair experience in El Paso, Texas?

Pamela: Because I like the family I lived with in El Paso Texas.

Researcher: In the process of selecting El Paso Texas for your Au Pair experience, did the agency that advised you provide specific information on the particularities of living in a border city?

Pamela: No.

Researcher: Do you think that the program should inform candidates about the particularities of living in border cities?

Pamela: No.

Researcher: Why?

Pamela: Because I do not know, I think that each person should discover what each city offers without having a second opinion. Because when someone tells you many things about it, you are going to be forewarned. Instead, if you do not know anything, you are willing to know all about the city.

Researcher: How do you feel about having had your experience in El Paso, Texas?
Pamela: It was cool, I met cool people, but it's not the ideal city for perfecting the language if that's what you want.

Researcher: What was your image of life in the United States when you were in your country?

Pamela: I thought people would have more time to do different activities as the working hours were shorter than in Colombia. However, I realized that, although the working hours are shorter than in Colombia, here time is not enough for anything.

Researcher: Now that you had the experience of living in the United States, as a member of the Au Pair program, how close to reality was your image?

Pamela: Zero.

Researcher: Why?

Pamela: Because here life is working, working and working. I truly realized that families do not have enough time to spend with children.

Researcher: Would you have liked to live the Au Pair experience in another city?

Pamela: In a bigger with a bigger airport so that flights would be cheaper and I could travel more.

Researcher: From your experience, what are the advantages and disadvantages of being an Au Pair in El Paso?

Pamela: The advantages are that El Paso is a cheap city, so the Au Pair salary is meager, and with that, you can buy many things in El Paso. If you don't know English, perfect, because you don't need to know English. It seems cool to me that it is a military city, so it is like learning everything about the military. The downside is that if you want to learn English, you will not learn English, and it is costly to travel.

Researcher: Perfect, Have the economic benefits received from your participation in the AU Pair program met your needs and expectations?
Pamela: Yes, yes, it seems fine to me.

Researcher: Have you felt alienated for being a foreigner or being a member of the Au Pair program?

Pamela: No.

Researcher: When you were in your country, what was the American dream for you?

Pamela: Wow, Caro! I never think about this. I do not know, having a lot of money.

Researcher: Has your concept of the American dream changed now that you have been part of the Au Pair program?

Pamela: Yes.

Researcher: In what sense?

Pamela: I do not know. I think when you are in, I do not know, in Colombia, you think that things in this country are super easy, that everything comes like, as money falls from the sky, just because you are here, you are already rich. However, one realizes that getting any peso in this country is very difficult and does not fall from the sky.

Researcher: Perfect, as part of the AU Pair program, did you feel that you have lived the American dream?

Pamela: No.

Researcher: Why?

Pamela: Because it is not easy to take care of other people's children, work so much, and the money you have as an Au Pair is good enough just for your basic needs.

Researcher: Has your level of English competency improved since you have lived in El Paso, Texas?

Pamela: Yes.
**Researcher:** Have you felt that language has been a barrier to properly developing your responsibilities in the Au Pair program?

**Pamela:** No.

**Researcher:** Why?

**Pamela:** Because of the family I lived with, let us say that if I did not understand something at some point, my host mom speaks Spanish, then the language was never a limitation.

**Researcher:** Okay! What have been the biggest challenges you have faced in your adaptation process with your host family or that you had to face?

**Pamela:** First, the food; They had a very different way of eating than mine, so it was something that hit me very hard. The way they raise their children is different, that is it! Well, being away from my family and my friends was difficult in the adaptation process.

**Researcher:** What did you enjoy the most about living with your host family?

**Pamela:** Movies and pizza nights.

**Researcher:** Do you feel like a part or member of your Host Family?

**Pamela:** I came to feel like a member of the family.

**Researcher:** What made you feel that way?

**Pamela:** The children all the time told everyone that I was the big sister. My host dad was always like, you are like our oldest daughter, we are very grateful, you are adorable, they had super cute details with me like leaving food in my room or buying things different from what they used to eat or do

**Researcher:** In the development of your experience, which cultural barriers have you faced, if any?

**Pamela:** I do not think so, no.
**Researcher:** Both with your host family and with the city where you lived?

**Pamela:** No, no.

**Researcher:** Given that the Au Pair program is a cultural exchange program, what highlights have you received as a participant in this program?

**Pamela:** How, how?

**Researcher:** Given that the Au Pair program is a cultural exchange program, what highlights have you received as a participant in this program?

**Pamela:** I do not know. I think probably the holiday days that are different in Colombia and here is wow! Like Thanksgiving, Valentine's Day, and Easter were different for me, and they celebrate it as something extraordinary.

**Researcher:** What other benefit do you think you got from this cultural exchange?

**Pamela:** Wow! that you learn, first you one grows as a person, you learn not to take anything personally. Because even though I feel that culturally we are very similar, there are things that can be different both in their personality and in mine and it helped me become very strong and learn to treat different people and be patient. As an Au Pair, we develop a very high degree of patience.

**Researcher:** Can you tell me a particular cultural anecdote associated with your experience in El Paso, Texas? because it is a border city?

**Pamela:** Does it have to be from El Paso, or can it be an experience or related to the family, different, from different cultures?

**Researcher:** Well, yes, if you have any experience living with your family living in a border area.

**Pamela:** I think so.

**Researcher:** Yes, that anecdote may involve your host family or friends or the fact of living in the city, any type of anecdote that you remember.
Pamela: Oh, Okay! Something shocking for me was the way they handle the meal times, and that for us as Colombians, the main meal is lunch, and they do not eat lunch or eat a sandwich for lunch; instead, the diner is the main meal. For us diner is not really that important, that was something different but cool, and something good about living on the border is that it is easy to go to Mexico and it is cool to go to Mexico because things are cheaper and for example fixing your nails is a lot better in Mexico than in El Paso, so it is okay.

Researcher: From your personal experience, would you recommend future participants of the Au Pair program live their exchange experiences in El Paso Texas?

Pamela: No.

Researcher: Why?

Pamela: Because, firstly, the Au Pair community in El Paso is not that big, so it is hard to find friends. Second, regarding the language, if you want to perfect it, it can be complicated. Third, El Paso has a tiny airport, so it is costly to travel, and it is very far from everything, and fourth, there are no fun things to do, so I honestly do not recommend El Paso.

Researcher: To conclude with the interview, do you think that the company you traveled with takes some advantage from the participants or from the participation of Latin American immigrants who decide to live this experience in the United States? Pamela: No, the agency does not really care about the place or whatever we are going to do. They only care that you enter the program and that a host family enters the program too, and that is it.

Researcher: Okay. Thank you so much for your collaboration!

Pamela: No worries, thanks to you Caro!
**INTERVIEW # 2: ANDREA**

**Researcher:** Well, I welcome you to this study, thank you very much for taking the time to help us answer some questions, the first question is how did you learn about the Au Pair program?

**Andrea:** On Facebook. A friend was looking for options to study abroad, and the Facebook publication came out, we commented, and well, that is how they called and explained the program to me.

**Researcher:** What motivated you to participate in the Au Pair program in the United States, especially in El Paso, Texas?

**Andrea:** Well, it motivated me to do the program in the United States because it was relatively a language that I already spoke. It was cheaper than doing it in Europe because America is also cheaper than Europe and well in El Paso because it was the family that I got later to the rematch.

**Researcher:** Could you tell us a little about why you went into the rematch process and what city you were in?

**Andrea:** I lived in Chewaka, Michigan; I went into the rematch process because my boss at the time, the father of the baby I was taking care of, had some aggressive attitudes, and well, at some point, he yelled at me, well, at some point no, several times at me she screamed, and the last time she did I decided to change families and that she was no longer comfortable there.

**Researcher:** Okay! To give us back a bit, how was your process to become an Au Pair?

**Andrea:** Well, first, the agency called me, told me that I had a good profile, that I should go to Caracas, which is the capital of Venezuela, to interview to see if I was selected, so to speak.

For this, I had to cancel a quota like registration, I went with my mother, they did all the tests, they told me that I did qualify and then from there they explained to me how it was, what it
was about, how much I had to pay; after that, we decided about a week after. We paid for part of the program and started the paperwork.

As I was at the university at that time, it took me two years to submit all my paperwork because, well, I wanted to advance as much in my career as possible. Nothing, after that there were interviews, all the documents, to collect all the requirements that the agency asked, get the visa, and when I got the family, I went to the United States.

**Researcher:** What main skills and abilities made you an eligible candidate for the program?

**Andrea:** Much experience with children, the command of English, I think that being a psychology student also influenced a little and living far. Since I lived far from my home, it was not like a risk factor that I put arriving in the United States and that I did not feel well because I had already lived alone for a long time.

**Researcher:** Why were you interested in participating in this program?

**Andrea:** Because I have always liked children, because I liked the idea of living in the United States for a year; and I said well, what better way than to do it with something I like.

**Researcher:** How many families did you interview to carry out the program before selecting the first host family?

**Andrea:** One.

**Researcher:** Which were the cities from which you had the option to select for the Au Pair program? and, why did you choose to complete your Au Pair experience in El Paso, Texas?

**Andrea:** Well, the options were nil because it really depended on where the family was, and well, I liked the first family that contacted me, and also, at that time, the country was in a critical situation. I had already been looking for a family for three months, and nothing came, and well, since it was a baby, maybe I should have thought about it a little more, but hey, at that moment, I
accepted and left for Michigan. Then for El Paso, I spoke with several families, but where I lived in Michigan, it was in the middle of nowhere, and I already wanted a different experience. What happens is that I spoke with several families, let's say that I already wanted a different experience than the one I had already had, I spoke with several families who also lived in places far from the city, and well, in the end, I liked the family from El Paso because I really feel like I connected a lot with my host mom and that's why I decided to go to El Paso and because I also had a friend there.

**Researcher:** In the process of selecting a location for your Au Pair experience, did the agency that advised you provide specific information on the particularities of living in a border city?

**Andrea:** No, not at all.

**Researcher:** Do you think that the program should inform candidates about the particularities of living in a border city?

**Andrea:** Yes, from border cities and from all the cities where the Au Pair's will go.

**Researcher:** Why?

**Andrea:** Because if they had explained to me a little more about where the first city I lived was, perhaps I would have thought twice, suddenly, as I did not know and has always thought that any city in the United States is equal to the big cities, I did not imagine that you are going to live in a small town in the middle of nowhere; So, if I had really known a little more about the place where I was going to live with the first family, I would not have accepted it.

**Researcher:** How do you feel about the fact, or how did you feel, about living in El Paso Texas?

**Andrea:** The truth is, my experience was excellent. I had a group of friends who made my experience unforgettable. I think my experience, beyond the place, was whom I shared it with. The city was always tiny, but I don't know. It always felt a bit like home.
Researcher: Did you initially expect to have this experience in another city?

Andrea: Yes, yes, I had a lot of friends, I've always had a lot of friends in New York or Miami, and I really hoped to get a family there, but well, it never came.

Researcher: What was your image of life in the United States when you were in your country?

Andrea: Like everything very modern, everything very controlled, everything very accessible, really, everything very different.

Researcher: Now that you live or lived in the United States, as a member of the Au Pair program, how close to reality was your image?

Andrea: I think they were close, but at the same time, I was never aware that all these things, although they are real and can be, require a lot of work.

Researcher: From your experience, what are the advantages and disadvantages of being an Au Pair in El Paso, Texas?

Andrea: The advantages are that if you do not handle the language very well, you will always get someone who speaks Spanish. In addition to the experience of living in a border city, I think it is very different from any other experience. You learn a lot about the country's culture that you have next to you; you meet many people from the country that you have on the other side of the border. In the case of El Paso, the downsides are that it was tiny, and there was very little to do.

Researcher: What are or were your responsibilities as an Au Pair?

Andrea: Make the children's lunch, wake them up in the morning, give them breakfast. As mine were already big, it was not to dress them, or bathe them, or anything like that and take them to school, then look for them and take them to all the activities.

Researcher: Have the economic benefits received from your participation in the AU Pair program met your needs and expectations?
Andrea: I feel that in my case, yes, because the family I had was very good and because the children that I cared for did not really require much attention either. In the case of other companions who took care of more children and smaller ones, it seems to me that the payment, even if it was enough to cover needs, it was not fair in relation to the amount of work.

Researcher: Have you feel or felt alienated for being a foreigner or being a member of the Au Pair program?

Andrea: Not in the United States. I never felt neither because I was an Au Pair nor because I was a foreigner.

Researcher: When you were in your country, what was the American Dream for you?

Andrea: For me, the American dream was to have a huge and gorgeous house, children at school, and a good school. It was always like the dream of a family in the suburbs, a big and beautiful house, and a big garden. For me, it was that!

Researcher: Has your concept of the American dream changed now that you form or were part of the Au Pair program?

Andrea: Yes, definitely after having the experience of having lived in the United States, I think that depending on the family that touches you, living as an Au Pair in the United States is a very great privilege. Because let's say you don't go through the work that any other immigrant who goes on their own does. But, if I believe that now the American dream is for me, the concept now of the American dream is, work and work without resting and everything is material, beyond the quality of life is how much money you can have on stuff.

Researcher: As part of the AU Pair program, do you feel that you are living or did you live your American dream?

Andrea: Yes, you could say that a bit, yes.
**Researcher:** Why?

**Andrea:** Because I had the opportunity to travel without worries; because I had the opportunity to live quietly in the house in which I lived. A giant house, as I said. Which for me was living in the suburbs, going out with my friends without problem, something that you couldn't either for economic reasons or security reasons in my country. Then, traveling with my friends, planning a trip with my friends without thinking about money or this or that. I think that one way or another, I managed to live my little American dream.

**Researcher:** Has your level of English competency improved since you have lived in El Paso, Texas?

**Andrea:** Yes, very much.

**Researcher:** Have you felt that language has been a barrier, or was it a barrier to properly developing your responsibilities in the Au Pair program?

**Andrea:** No, I consider that I already had a good enough level of English so that it was not a barrier.

**Researcher:** What have been the biggest challenges, or were the biggest challenges you have faced in your adaptation process with your host family?

**Andrea:** With the first one, the fact that the predominant culture in my first host family was Greek, which is quite a different and pretty strong culture. In addition to the fact that my host dad, in my opinion, did not articulate English very well, and sometimes it was tough for me to understand him. With the second one, I never had adaptation problems or anything.

**Researcher:** What do you enjoy the most about living with your Host Family?

**Andrea:** The different points of view.

**Researcher:** Do you feel or did you feel a part or member of your Host Family? **Andrea:** Yes.
Researcher: What made you feel that way?

Andrea: My second host family always considered my emotions or what I was going through, if I was okay, if not, they were never like, how to say it? Like they never were, how do you say that word?

Researcher: Apathetic?

Andrea: No, no, of position, of you have to be here! To oblige, but they always gave me my space. If you want, the arms are open, and if you don't want to, that's fine too.

Researcher: You were given the option to choose.

Andrea: Yes.

Researcher: And why didn't you feel like a part or member of the family with your first host family?

Andrea: It is that the host dad, as I told you, I had a hard time communicating with him. Also, he used to speak in a very strong tone, and well, I preferred to keep contact to a minimum.

Researcher: In the development of your experience, which cultural barriers have you faced, if any?

Andrea: Maybe a bit because the first one, because of that, because the man was Greek and the second because they were very meticulous, they were very rigid, and that is not something I am used to, but we knew how to connect, as much I to them, as they to me.

Researcher: And during your experience in El Paso Texas, which cultural barriers have you faced, if any?

Andrea: No, because most of the people in El Paso are Mexican, so it's not that different either.

Researcher: Given that the Au Pair program is a cultural exchange program, what highlights have you received as a participant in this program?
Andrea: I really learned many things from Mexico, more than from the United States, Mexican food, or differences between countries. Yes, the cultural contributions were not very American.

Researcher: Can you tell me a particular cultural anecdote associated with your experience in El Paso, Texas? because it is a border city?

Andrea: Well, I sometimes went with my friends to Mexico, and it was a bit strange how to be able to go from one country to another walking on the same day, back and forth. I think that's the only thing.

Researcher: Was the difference between El Paso and Ciudad Juárez much?

Andrea: Abysmal, a lot.

Researcher: Could you tell me something in particular that caught your attention regarding the differences that you noticed between one city and another?

Andrea: When you enter Mexico, no one controls you, nor do they see your passport or absolutely nothing. It is noticeable. It is noticeable in the quality of life, in the streets, in everything, really. On the other hand, when entering the United States from Mexico, there is a lot of control, yes, basically that, and it is noticeable above all in the infrastructure.

Researcher: To conclude, do you think the agency you traveled with, takes some advantage of the participation of Latin American immigrants who decide to live in the United States?

Andrea: Yes, of course. In my case, I paid two thousand dollars to apply to the program. Then I found out that my friends from other countries paid much less. So, yes, definitely, and well, I don't know how much the agencies will pay them.

Researcher: From your personal experience, would you recommend future participants of the Au Pair program to live their exchange experience in El Paso, Texas?
Andrea: Honestly, no. If I recommend someone to become an Au Pair, which is a year that is not going to pay rent, that is not going to pay those kinds of expenses, I would recommend choosing a much bigger and more exciting city.

Researcher: Okay, thank you very much for your participation in this study.

Andrea: For nothing, always at your service.

Interview #3: Sandra

Researcher: Well, let's start with this interview, the first question is, how did you learn about the Au Pair program?

Sandra: Good morning Caro, first I tell you that I am from Colombia and I learned about the program through several, let's say as a voice to voice, about people here in my country and my city, who had already traveled with that program and precisely one.

Researcher: What motivated you to participate in the Au Pair program in the United States, especially El Paso, Texas?

Sandra: Well, in the first place, what motivated me was to learn a second language, in this case, English, and not least knowing another culture, learning new things, expanding my personal and professional visions. I have to mention that initially in the program, when I traveled, I did not travel to El Paso, Texas, I was in another place, and due to situations, that arose within the program, I had to make the change of family. In that case, when six months passed since it had started, it was when I traveled to El Paso, Texas, and there I found the family with whom I finished the program. It is also important to mention that, taking into account the situation that had arisen with the agency and everything, I really had no choice of, let's say, suddenly being able to go to another city or another place, so let's say my only option was to go with the family I was in contact with, who at that time lived in El Paso, Texas. It caused me curiosity because it was at the other end of
the country where I was at that time, which was a border with Mexico, then it would also allow me to soak up a little more of another culture.

**Researcher:** I would like to ask you, what city did you initially arrive in? And also, if you wanted to comment a bit, what was that situation, if you feel comfortable doing it, what happened that made you enter rematch, which I understand is, looking for a new family and following the program with that new host family?

**Sandra:** Exactly, that is it. Well, the first city I traveled to was Washington DC. Well, it wasn't exactly there, but it was close. The place where I was, was called Potomac, and it's very close, that's the region. Well, I tell you that it was a family of four children. The children were already grown up; there were thirteen, eleven, eight, and five. They were children who did not have as many norms, in fact, one of them was taking medicine because he was diagnosed with hyperactivity, I don't remember the name very well, but it was something like that, then, well, there it seemed, it was a bit complicated. The issue with them and something that I felt made it more difficult for me to interact with the family was the language. Although they asked us for a certain level to travel and all that, I am aware that my level of English was very basic; therefore, communication with the children was more complicated and with the family in general. I decided to go with that family because the lady, that is, my host mom from that family, spoke a little Spanish, so I took in that with her I was going to be able to have that communication channel while I learned the language, and well, so I was improving in all that aspects, right! However, when I got there, well, when I was here before traveling when I did the interviews and all that, the lady always told me not to worry, that she was going to help me, that I would feel at home. Well, all that kind of things, and well, then under those conditions she mentioned to me the and taking into account the language factor, that she spoke Spanish, well I decided to go with them.
When I got there, let's say it was not like that, not so real what she mentioned to me. I remember a lot the first day I got there where the family and when we entered the house. I remember that it was a very, very big house, and well, we arrived, and they had already told me to come, you are going to your room, and to start my room was in the basement, so at that time I already felt less, like we are here and you are going to be there. It is something that, from that moment, generated an impact to start the program. I feel that it was not a positive and good impact. Well, to that, we must add being in a different country, alone, without knowing much of the language, and then that is how it all began. Obviously, the agency also gives us some parameters, right? of our responsibilities within the family, and then under that, I was ruled, right? Things like being aware of the children, like taking them to school. I don't know, helping them with their homework, preparing their snacks, being aware of their rooms, their clothes, and all this, and I had no problem with this. But then, at the same time, the lady wrote to me in the agenda that the agency gives us, where they explain the activities that we have to do daily or weekly and where the schedule is organized. It happened that, within those activities, there were things that were not part of the program, such as, for example, she asked me to vacuum the whole house, tidy up the kitchen.

**Researcher:** I want you to know that it is okay to continue to the next question or stop. I don't want to expose you to any situation you do not want to be in. If you do not feel comfortable telling us what that experience was, it is okay. We can continue to the next question or as you prefer.

**Sandra:** Well, yes, it causes me a bit of an impact to remember. But, I do want to mention it because I know that maybe this can be happening to other girls or so that they are attentive to all this that can happen when we travel in these programs.

**Researcher:** Of course, I appreciate your sincerity and your desire to share this information with future participants.
Sandra: Furthermore, as I already mentioned when she asked me things like what I say, that is, clean the house, vacuum, wash their clothes, so many times I said to her no, because that was not stipulated within the program, so from there, it began to generate I do not know if rivalry, but a very tense situation because, well, the lady wanted me to do all that and I told her no, so they kind of started to generate friction, and well.

Then it became like a snowball, and then they wanted me to pay for the gas that I used when I took the children to school and all things. In addition to that, the lady often spoke bad things about me; she said, "no, it looks like she does not know anything, I do not know what," and she did it in English in front of me with other people. As I mentioned initially, I did not know much of the language, so I did not understand until people I shared told me, so all that was very complicated.

Afterward, I tried many times to change my family. She told me like "Well, you are not going to get another family," or she told me, "nobody is going to want an Au Pair, nobody is going to want an Au Pair who doesn't speak proper English and doesn't drive." Hence, of course, that slowed me down, and that's why I endured so many things being there those six months with that highly complex family. Later, when finally, a situation detonated, well, so I said, "no, this is it, whatever it is, I am going to leave this family," and that was when I began to do the rematch process. However, this lady, the one from the first family, had given me quite strong references, so it was very difficult for me to find another family; So that's why at the beginning, I mentioned that I had no other option of being able to go with another family, but with the one that I went to El Paso, which I really thank them very much because they gave me the opportunity to continue and finish my program.
Researcher: Well, since you have shared a bit about this first experience you had as an Au Pair, let's give back a bit in the process. Which were your daily activities in your country of origin, before deciding to become an Au Pair?

Sandra: Well, I am a teacher, and here in my country I worked as a teacher, so my routine was at seven in the morning I started working, at noon I had lunchtime, then, in the afternoon I worked again at the same school. So, let's say I worked from 7:00 to 5:30 in the afternoon, more or less, from Monday to Friday and on Saturdays I was finishing my degree, so on Saturdays, I was studying and basically, that was my activity.

Researcher: Perfect, how was your process to become an Au Pair?

Sandra: How did I start to do the whole process?

Researcher: That's right.

Sandra: Well, as I mentioned, I found out about all this, about the program, and the opportunities that were opening up. So, at that time, I had the contact of a person who had a closer knowledge of the entire process and who probably was aware of the experience of other people who had traveled. So that person began to guide me very closely, how to do the process, how to do, let's say, fill out the documents, and the needed requirements. With that person, I did the whole process, step by step. That is, from getting the passport, asking for the references they requested, the experience of working with children, and taking into account that I was going to travel to another country, I began to study the language little by little.

Researcher: What main skills and abilities made you an eligible candidate for the program?

Sandra: The first one, I think it was my experience as a teacher, knowing how to act in different situations with children and, then, and also in the educational field, maybe, contributing as such to
the academic training of the children I was going to take care of. I think that was the main factor or what most attracted the attention of my profile.

**Researcher:** Why were you interested in participating in this program?

**Sandra:** Because of English, as I mentioned earlier. Because of wanting to learn another language and also searching for new opportunities. Right? Well, everything starting from the language. Well, when one has a foreign language, more doors open in the work field and in the personal area, maybe being able to know other cultures and see the world differently, being able to be in contact easily, let's say not only with English speaking countries but also with people from other places, then that.

**Researcher:** How many families did you interview before choosing your first host family?

**Sandra:** I interviewed with two families -Interference in the connection- With two families.

**Researcher:** What were the cities? -Interference in the connection- Excuse me?

**Sandra:** Ma'am? -Interference in the connection- I was going to mention that, by the way, with those two families, it was very tough. I think zero and nothing in the English interview because there were things that I understood and could answer, but there were others that I could not, well, no idea. Starting from there, obviously, families stopped there the process with me, and I don't remember the places -interference in the connection- I think one family was from California but the other I don't remember where it was from.

**Researcher:** In the process of selecting a location for your Au Pair experience, did the agency that advised you provide specific information on the particularities of living in a border city?

**Sandra:** Not the agency. Well, I really don't remember that the agency as such had told me to look at this, or this, no. My family, whom I went with dit it, I remember a lot that in their profile it was very detailed, they mentioned me, because well they both worked in the army, so, they mentioned
that well there was the military base. It was thus located on the border with Mexico, and I remember when I began to read the information and read that the city was called "El Paso" and I said, "Will it be a city or will it be a town, what will it be like? So then, I kind of started looking a bit of the city too, but I had never really heard that city before.

**Researcher:** Do you think the program should inform candidates about the peculiarities of living in a border city?

**Sandra:** Yes.

**Researcher:** Why?

**Sandra:** I think it is important that they mention it because many times girls, I don't know, or people, go to a place without knowing more information; let us say, and maybe it could be good or bad information according to what people are looking for. Yes? For example, from El Paso, I think it was important to mention that the company had mentioned that it was right on the border, that it could, in some way, cross and then see and know another city that already belonged to another country. So, I think that in my case, It would have motivated me more because it was coming into contact with another culture. Many girls do not know it, or for the same reason, decide not to go to El Paso or other places close to the borders, so I think it is important that they mention it.

**Researcher:** How do you feel about living or having lived in El Paso, Texas?

**Sandra:** Well, I really feel very good and very happy, satisfied to have been in that city doing my program, finishing my program; I don't know, I think that many things influence, starting with the family I arrived with, the experience with them was excellent, and therefore I always saw everything good in El Paso, I mean, I know that it is a smaller city compared to others, that maybe it doesn't have as many attractions as other cities that one hears and sees in the United States. But
for me, it was excellent; I mean, I had college, I had easier access to places, I met great people there. Then I don't know; for me, that experience in El Paso was charming.

**Researcher:** With the program, did you initially expect to have this experience in another city?

**Sandra:** Well, no, well, since I initially went to another city, well, I really thought that at least the year was going to end there, right? Well, I will mention that initially, I planned to stay a year, right? There in the United States, but then I decided to stay the two years, then my plan or I saw myself finishing my first year, the program there in Washington, where I started it.

**Researcher:** Okay. What was your image of life in the United States when you were in your country, before living the program?

**Sandra:** It was what I saw in the photos of girls who had already traveled or what I heard and well you hear that everything is wonderful, that suddenly, well, also like the currency exchange, right? But if we say that suddenly you could have a little more money, a more comfortable life, travel, yes, that's what I saw. Like everything a bed of roses.

**Researcher:** Now that you live or lived in the United States, as a member of the Au Pair program, how close to reality was your image?

**Sandra:** No, I think initially, very far. I mean, at least in the six months they were too far, because of everything that happened to me with this family. Well, let's say that, in terms of money, if I was a little closer because it is a weekly payment, so I kind of received the money weekly, which I sent to my country to be able to pay what I had spent when I traveled, so in that sense in terms of money, I think if it was as very close. Already like thinking and seeing that everything was like a bed of roses and perfect and only joyful, well no. The truth is not; I was not even as aware of the fact of being, well, in another place. But above all, the food, I mean, I did not have a reference of that, as being so aware of that food issue.
**Researcher:** Okay. From your experience, what are the advantages and disadvantages of being an Au Pair in El Paso, Texas?

**Sandra:** Well, the advantages, I think in the first place everything is very close, that is, it is a small city in which you can access different places easily. For that same reason, money reaches you a little more; maybe being Latina we find a feeling of brotherhood with, yes? With people who are from Mexico, then there is that common denominator that is being Latino. Well, I always saw how everything was very calm, a safe, friendly environment. So, I think that those are the advantages. Disadvantages, maybe there is no greater attraction, let's say, like theme parks or, yes, things like that so big that one can explore.

**Researcher:** Okay. Could you tell us what are or were your responsibilities as an Au Pair?

**Sandra:** Yes, well, when I was in El Paso, the family that I come from, my children, for example, did not go to school, they were homeschooled, and fortunately, well, from my experience as a teacher, I remember that when I read that about my family, I really liked that, it caught my attention. So, well, I started my routine at eight in the morning, I made the children's breakfast, I organized them in the morning, I mean, their normal routine of cleaning, having breakfast and then we would start at nine in the morning to do class. I helped them by guiding the curricula that they had for homeschooling; we did it there together. Then I would prepare lunch for them, and in the afternoon, they generally had additional classes such as gymnastics, piano, soccer, music, taekwondo, well, among others. So, in the afternoons, I would take them to all their classes, accompany them, and then we would return. In addition to this, well, I did the laundry once a week and organized that for them because they were small. However, they also helped me, like being very aware of their things, I really had no problem with it.
**Researcher:** Have the economic benefits received from your participation in the AU Pair program met your needs and expectations?

**Sandra:** Well, no, I think the payment I received converting it to my Colombian pesos was reasonable, but I think it is still a meager salary to be there and everything that we maybe need. Well, I say, also because of the responsibility that implies one to be in the care and attention of the children, right? So, I think the payment should be a little better.

**Researcher:** Okay, have you felt alienated for being a foreigner or being a member of the Au Pair program?

**Sandra:** In the first family, yes, from the first day I arrived, as I mentioned. In the second family, not at all; in the second family, I really felt at home. Well, I want to mention that, in my second family, my host dad has a Latin origin, or he does not, but his family is of Mexican descent. So, I don't if also because of that, the fact of being there with them felt like family.

**Researcher:** Okay. Thank you. When you were in your country, what was the American dream for you?

**Sandra:** Well, the truth is that I don't think I had paid much attention to that, the truth is that I hadn't even heard it mentioned, just like "the American dream" no, I hadn't really heard it, only when I was there sometimes the news mentioned it, and that, but not otherwise.

**Researcher:** And now, after your experience and knowledge about this American dream, has your concept of that American dream changed, after you were part of the Au Pair program?

**Sandra:** Well, I think that as "the dream" says so well, it is that people expect that everything is perfect, that everything is perfect, and most people go in search of a better life, be better or in better conditions, especially economically. I think that people continue to travel with the same objective, so I believe that after the program, it continues to be the same vision, the same objective.
**Researcher:** Okay, and from your personal experience, did you achieve your American dream or is it not so, or not?

**Sandra:** I think so, I think so. Because my goal was to learn English and have better working conditions when I returned to my country, and fortunately, I succeeded. I have to mention that it was not easy at all; learning a language in practically two years is very complicated, but it is possible because I did it, and I did it with much dedication. That is, free time that I had was studying, studying and studying on my own and additionally go to college, and all that, and well, to certify that I took one of the international exams with which I could have better opportunities here in my country, so yes, I did it, and I feel fortunate to have made it.

**Researcher:** Has your level of English competency improved since you have lived in El Paso, Texas?

**Sandra:** Well, yes. Because fortunately, in college, I found a teacher who helped me a lot in an additional way. That is, in addition to the classes that I saw in college, he gave me additional tutorials, which helped me a lot. However, if that had not been the case, I think that it does not favor us so much. After all, maybe where we go there is no need because many people speak Spanish. When you hear that another person speaks Spanish, you feel more comfortable and continue to speak in Spanish instead of trying to improve your English competency, so I think that at that point, it does not favor much. I forgot to mention it as a disadvantage. Yes, I think that for learning a second language does not favor us so much.

**Researcher:** Have you felt or do you feel that language has been a barrier to properly developing your responsibilities in the Au Pair program?
**Sandra:** Yes, especially in the first family. Yes, I feel that English at that time became a barrier, like the monster. Maybe that's why it generated a more significant impact on me and that things with that family were so tricky.

**Researcher:** Okay. What have been the biggest challenges you have faced in your adaptation process with your host family?

**Sandra:** With either of the two?

**Researcher:** If you want to mention them separately, each case, there is no problem.

**Sandra:** Well, with the first, especially with the first was, let's say, in our Latino families, they educate us differently from how children are educated there. Right? So, for example, children there with their routines, for example, their routines that they get up and then always all the things that they use, I don't know, toys, clothes and others, they use it and throw it in the place that falls. Well, maybe, the way they sometimes ask for things, the way of saying things is precise, it is like to the point and well, here let's say by culture, well no, I mean, we always pick up what we use. If you mess up something because it organizes it, maybe more like a warmer human relationship, the fact of asking, how are you? How did it go? And then, of course, when I felt that it was like that impact all the time with this family.

With my other family, I feel that it was not so difficult to adapt to them. Because well, I already had a little experience. Second, as I mentioned before, my host dad was from that Latin culture, so I agreed with him a lot, and that is it. I think it is that.

**Researcher:** Okay. What do you enjoy the most about living with your host families?

**Sandra:** I really enjoyed it when we cooked together and had dinner together or when we traveled as well. That relationship always felt very pleasant, and it didn't really feel like I was working like
that because I felt like part of the family, so something more like everyone in the family helps.

That's it!

**Researcher:** So, you did you feel like a part or member of your Host family?

**Sandra:** Yes, with the second family, I felt totally at home; that is, with them, it was great. In that second family, I can feel and say that I felt like a family and that they are my family. More than a year ago, it already passed that I returned to my country, but I keep in contact with them. Almost every day I talk with them, with my children. So, we really made solid ties.

**Researcher:** In the development of your experience, which cultural barriers have you faced, if any?

**Sandra:** Yes, of course, as I mentioned just now, a bit of a communication issue. They are very concrete. Also, the food, maybe breakfast is more or less similar, lunch for them is something very fast, and dinner is like big food. For us here, it is the opposite; lunch is big food, and dinner is something smaller. So, it was a bit strange when that happened, but well, I adapted over time. But I was also free to keep my habit in terms of meals. As for the music, the celebration of special dates and all that, there was also much different.

**Researcher:** Given that the Au Pair program is a cultural exchange program, what highlights have you received as a participant in this, while you were in the program?

**Sandra:** I think, yes, that cultural contribution is total. For example, about food, I learned to cook different typical dishes that they cook or that are eaten on certain festivities, such as, they eat turkey on Thanksgiving, and all that, because I had never experienced it before going to the program. Like when it is Easter, the whole egg game and all that, so yes, all those kinds of celebrations happen a lot. So, I think so, and in the same way, I feel that I contributed a lot to my family. I
shared a lot with them about the music typical of my region, about the food, several times I cooked them things from here in my country, well to also share with them.

**Researcher:** Can you tell me a particular cultural anecdote associated with your experience in El Paso, Texas? because it is a border city?

**Sandra:** Well, as I mentioned, I found there other girls who were also Latin Americans, and there was another classmate who was Italian. We were almost going to finish the programs, so we decided to make a farewell trip. So, we decided to go to Cancun. We would take the flight from Ciudad Juarez, crossing the border, because it was cheaper. So, since it was a short flight, there were many restrictions with luggage, so each one had their luggage organized for the week, for the week that we were going to stay. However, two colleagues had packed more things and had excess luggage, and obviously, we were going to have to pay that extra. Within those extra, it was clothing and; so, they began to open the suitcases and began to place everything the clothes, a lot of clothes, and I remember that all the people at the airport looked at them and looked at them. I remember that I looked at them, and it made me laugh a lot to see them doing that, but I told them. However, still, we were already going to have to pay because they had already measured our luggage, so they already knew that we had extra luggage, that is, yes or yes, we had to pay for it, or we had to leave it. They still tried to put on clothes and everything. However, it did not work, people laughed a lot, and I laughed a lot too, but nothing, because in the end, we had to pay that extra money to carry all the luggage.

**Researcher:** To conclude the interview, do you consider that the company with which you traveled takes some kind of advantage from the participation of Latin American immigrants who decide to live the experience in the United States?
**Sandra:** Well, I think so. I think so, and they do it economically because anyway we have to pay. In fact, I think it's a lot and then the families there should also pay, so I think the company does. Of course, it has that advantage of earning that money for them and selling in some way the image that everything is perfect, it is the best experience, like all families, wonderful, but you already know that it is not so.

**Researcher:** The last question, from your personal experience, would you recommend to future participants of the Au Pair program, live their exchange experience in El Paso, Texas?

**Sandra:** Yes, I think yes, I mean, I think that for me, my experience in El Paso, Texas, had a lot to do with the family I was with. So, I think that if you have a good family where you feel very good, where they make you feel very good, I think the place does not make much difference as you can travel and get to know other places. I think that the family's well-being or where one is from is more important and one can solve the rest easier. But yes, I had a nice experience in El Paso. So yes, I would really recommend someone else to do it there.

**Researcher:** Well, thank you very much for your time and collaboration, all this information will be very important for the purposes of this study.

**Sandra:** Well, thank you very much for inviting me, and I hope that this information is really for that use, that it will be helpful for your study and the experiences of other people in this type of program.

**Researcher:** Thank you!

**Sandra:** Well, thank you!

**INTERVIEW # 4: CATALINA**

**Researcher:** Good morning. Thank you very much for wanting to participate in this interview. Let's start with the first question, how did you find out about the Au Pair program?
Catalina: Mmm, I found out through a flyer, a flyer, that they were handing out at my university.

Researcher: What motivated you to participate in the Au Pair program in the United States, especially in El Paso, Texas?

Catalina: Well, what motivated me mainly was being able to have an exchange experience. It has a lot to do with my profession; let's say that being with children and teaching is something that interested me a lot. And in El Paso, well, the truth was that the family I was there with and with whom I interviewed looked very good, and in fact, it was. When I interviewed this family in El Paso, I was not very convinced about going to El Paso. However, in the end, I said fine, because it is more important to be with a good family, regardless of the place, than to be in a good place like with a wrong family, basically that motivated me to be there.

Researcher: What made you hesitate to go to El Paso, Texas?

Catalina: What made me hesitate? Mmm, well, let's say I had heard comments like it was a very boring place; there wasn't much to do because there were almost no Au Pairs in that place. Basically, because of that. But I really didn't have much knowledge, I mean, really like I told you, the place was not very important to me, I mean it was more important to choose a good family. But then El Paso, really when I chose, I mean when I checked that place, I didn't have much idea what kind of place I was going to be, I was just kind of open to knowing a new place.

Researcher: Which were your daily activities in your country of origin?

Catalina: Mmm, everyday activities what I did was work and study my degree. So I was studying at the university. My career is about pedagogy, language teaching, and I was working in a school teaching English.

Researcher: How was your process to become an Au Pair?

Catalina: In what way? How difficult was it or?
**Researcher:** Since you received the flyer, you began to investigate. How did all that process until the trip?

**Catalina:** Okay! I really had heard a lot before the program, but I was not very sure about doing it. Indeed, the one who prompted me to do this program was my mother. Since before, I had done other trips to other countries volunteering, and I said, well, this would be like another opportunity to go to another country. This would be the third country that I have visited in the last four years, and well, I was really very open to a new experience, and it was really very easy to start the process. The first thing I did was attend the informational meetings of the agency, and, from there, I started with the whole process of paperwork, training and then informed myself that is it. It was effortless for me to do the whole process.

**Researcher:** What main skills and abilities made you an eligible candidate for the program?

**Catalina:** My English level helped me a lot to get approved by the agency. Also, my experience with children and likewise, because I think the career I was doing influenced a lot because it was closely related to being in contact with children.

**Researcher:** What were the cities that you had the option to select to do the Au Pair program?

**Catalina:** I don't remember much, but the truth is, I didn't receive as many requests at that time. Mmmm, the places that reached me the most were like the states of Florida and California, there were cities like San Francisco, cities like Orlando, they mainly came from places in the south of the country, they came from Texas too.

**Researcher:** Are you currently living in El Paso, Texas?

**Catalina:** -No sound-

**Researcher:** Hello, do you hear me?

**Catalina:** It doesn't sound good!
**Researcher:** I was wondering if you currently live in El Paso, Texas?

**Catalina:** No, right now I'm in another city with another host family.

**Researcher:** How many months did you live in El Paso, Texas, and why are you living with another family?

**Catalina:** I lived in El Paso for approximately nine or ten months, and my previous host family had to leave the country because they are from the Army and they had to go to another country as a deployment, something like that, to work in Italy -Technical issues with the internet connection-

**Researcher:** Hello? They moved to Italy, and you got a new host Family?

**Catalina:** Yes, I had to go into rematch. I wanted to stay in Texas after that. I wanted to stay in El Paso because I had met someone, I was dating someone, and the truth is, I wanted to continue living in El Paso. Unfortunately, I could not, it never came to me as a family from there because as I tell you there are not many families there that need Au Pairs. It was really very difficult so I just met a family in Houston. I didn't do very well with that family, so I decided how to just rematch again and in that second rematch I decided how to be a little more open to any place because of what I told you many times choose the place, but families many times they are not very good. But yeah, basically I had to leave El Paso because of that, I didn't want to, but well, I had to.

**Researcher:** What city are you in at the moment?

**Catalina:** Right now, I'm in Washington, DC, in the DMV area, which is like the triangle of Maryland, Virginia, and DC, and here I am.

**Researcher:** How many families did you interview when starting the program?

**Catalina:** I interviewed two, the one with whom I made a match and another one.

**Researcher:** In the process of selecting a location for your Au Pair experience, did the agency that advised you provide specific information on the particularities of living in a border city?
Catalina: No, they never told me about it.

Researcher: Do you think that the program should inform candidates about the particularities of living in border cities?

Catalina: No, I don't see it necessary. I think you can do that yourself if you are interested.

Researcher: How do you feel about living in El Paso or having had your experience in El Paso, Texas?

Catalina: How do I feel? I feel good. Let's say that living there was very cool, although the truth was I could only live it for a month because, after a month of arriving, the quarantine began, and it was a four-month quarantine without going to absolutely nothing. I was always there in the house, mmm well yes. Unfortunately, my experience in that sense was not very pleasant because I wanted to go out and explore the city and everything, but everything was closed for four months.

Let's say that in the month that I could -Technical problems with the internet connection- Let's say that since it is a border, let's say that the culture is more Mexican than American. Then I really didn't feel like much difference or change between my culture and the culture in El Paso.

Researcher: Before you went any further, I stayed in the only month that I could get out. I don't know if you said anything else after that?

Catalina: (Laughs) I mean, when I arrived I was only able to go out and enjoy the city for a month, no more. After a month, the quarantine began due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and I was locked up for the next four months. So, I was basically unable to do anything. That really was the negative part of having been there. Nothing after four months was when the family was planning to get another job in the Army, and that was when they left in another country.

Researcher: With the program, did you initially expect to have this experience in another city?
Catalina: No, the truth is, I have never had a preference for X or Y city. I have always wanted to let myself go.

Researcher: What was your image of life in the United States when you were in your country?

Catalina: Image, well, I thought that everyone was going to speak in English, something that was completely shocking when I arrived in El Paso because really in El Paso they speak a lot of Spanish, also let's say that I did not feel that change. The image I also had was that, apart from the fact that everyone was going to be speaking English, I thought I would be eating at McDonald's all the time and that I was going to get fat (laughs) like Americans, that was my image. Well, it was more than everything about food and culture, the lifestyle that I saw in the movies; let's say it is a very capitalist country where people work hard, and well, I thought that surrounded me. It is basically that.

Researcher: Now that you live in the United States, as a member of the Au Pair program, how close to reality was your image?

Catalina: Well, they were very close anyway. Likewise, let's say that food-related not everyone eats junk food. Here people treat children with great care. Especially when there are children, people try to be healthier. Also, because I realized many people speak Spanish here, and it was not very shocking concerning the language, and I think that my image was very close to reality (laughs). Basically that.

Researcher: From your experience, what are the advantages and disadvantages of being an Au Pair in El Paso, Texas?

Catalina: Well, the advantages, there is a lot of interculturalities there, the community as such is very friendly, I like it a lot. Let's also say that it is very easy to do, let's say that people are very
sociable and the disadvantages, in my case, is that there were almost no Au Pairs, so there were not as many mmm how do you say? -Technical problems with the connection-

It wasn't that they lasted long in El Paso, I don't know. It was super weird, because - Technical problems with the internet connection-

**Researcher:** I stayed in, is that it was broken. What a shame to cut you, it was broken, and I stayed in that there were not many Au Pairs. I don't know what you said after that!

**Catalina:** Okay, do you hear me?

**Researcher:** Yes, I can hear you. That there weren't many Au Pairs, not anymore.

**Catalina:** Can you hear me?

**Researcher:** Now yes, sometimes yes, sometimes no.

**Catalina:** Yes, I also hear you broken. (Laughs) Again, I'm going to tell you everything, the advantages -Technical problems with the internet connection-

**Researcher:** If you want only the disadvantages, the advantages did remain, the disadvantages remained that there were not many Au Pairs -Technical problems with the internet connection- Hello?

**Catalina:** Also, a disadvantage was that there was not much to do in El Paso. It is like a desert, so there are few places to visit, which was also a disadvantage.

**Researcher:** To go back to the first one about Au Pairs, did you say that they left quickly or that it was difficult to socialize?

**Catalina:** No, it was that they were leaving fast. Precisely El Paso is not a very attractive city or place, so many just said that they did not like it, and they did a rematch. Mmmm and well, the truth is that it is one of the disadvantages of El Paso, there is really not much to do, it is like a desert, so there were not many Au Pairs, just that.
**Researcher:** What are or were your responsibilities as an Au Pair? -Technical problems with the internet connection- Did you hear me?

**Catalina:** Yes. My tasks as an Au Pair was to take care of the children, let's say that my situation was particular because the children never went to school. It was home school. The parents, or more specifically the mother was in charge of teaching them or giving them classes in the mornings, and I worked for eight hours a day every day, and it was really hard because, as I told you, we were in quarantine and it was a long time being with the children at home all the time, and it was really stressful. My tasks, then, were also to be with them, play with them, prepare lunch for them no more, and that's it, and then wash their clothes, organize their room, and that was basically my job.

**Researcher:** Have the economic benefits received from your participation in the AU Pair program met your needs and expectations?

**Catalina:** No, I really think it is not enough because no matter how much they say they are covering our housing and food, the amount they pay us is not really enough. I do not expect them to pay much more, but I would say that it should be a little more subject to increase.

**Researcher:** Hello? -Technical problems with the internet connection-

**Researcher:** Have you felt alienated for being a foreigner or being a member of the Au Pair program?

**Catalina:** Yeah, do you hear me?

**Researcher:** Now yes, -Technical problems with the internet connection- not anymore!

**Catalina:** I think that the payment is not enough, because, although they provide us with housing and food, I still believe that it is not enough to live in this country, where the reality is that what we earn is not enough because of the costs that are around. Let us say to buy our personal things; our salary is not really sustainable to maintain our basic needs. Additionally, I believe that the
agency or agencies do not take into account that we not only work to earn money and spend it on our personal stuff but also that we need money to save and to invest. I mean, I think the agencies don't consider that, so I just don't think it's enough for that.

**Researcher:** Have you felt alienated for being a foreigner or being a member of the Au Pair program?

**Catalina:** No!

**Researcher:** When you were in your country, what was the American dream for you?

**Catalina:** The American dream? Well, the truth is that I have never thought about that, but supposedly an American dream I think is when people come and want to stay here, emigrate to have a better life.

**Researcher:** Has your concept of the American dream changed now that you have been part of the Au Pair program?

**Catalina:** It hasn't changed.

**Researcher:** As part of the AU Pair program, do you feel that you are living your American dream?

**Catalina:** Mmmm, not at all. I honestly don't really have an American dream. But if I really did, being an Au Pair may be the way or the way to achieve the American dream, but it is not the American dream itself.

**Researcher:** Has your level of English competency improved since you have lived in El Paso, Texas? Have you felt that language has been a barrier to properly developing your responsibilities in the Au Pair program? -Technical problems with the internet connection-

**Catalina:** As I was saying -Technical problems with the internet connection-

**Researcher:** I wasn't listening to you!
Catalina: Do you hear me?

Researcher: Now yes, but did you manage to hear the last questions for me?

Catalina: I stayed in the American dream.

Researcher: Oh, I haven't already asked you other questions!

Catalina: Okay.

Researcher: Well, has your level of English competency improved since you have lived in El Paso, Texas?

Catalina: Yes, a lot!

Researcher: Have you felt that language has been a barrier to properly developing your responsibilities in the Au Pair program?

Catalina: No, it was not a barrier.

Researcher: Why?

Catalina: Because I consider that I have a good level of English to be able to communicate with the children I care for.

Researcher: What have been the biggest challenges you have faced in your adaptation process with your host family?

Catalina: What?

Researcher: What have been the biggest challenges you have faced in your adaptation process with your host family?

Catalina: Ah, my biggest challenges, let's say to adapt to their lifestyle, to adapt to their routine, and no more. Because they really are not like such challenges, but it is something like adapting. The adaptation part is sometimes tough, and being with new people that one is meeting up to now is a challenge living with entirely different people.
Researcher: And perhaps, as you mentioned in your case, the fact that you have had to live part of the pandemic has started your Au Pair program.

Catalina: Ah, yes, of course, obviously! That was a challenge. I think that was the biggest. Being in quarantine for four months was pretty tough.

Researcher: What do you enjoy the most or did you enjoy about living with your host family?

Catalina: I liked that they traveled frequently, let's say it was a host family who liked to travel, which I liked the most. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19, they had to cancel many trips that they had planned for the year but let's say that the times I traveled with them, let's say I liked doing it.

Researcher: What places did you go with them?

Catalina: I was with them in Denver, Colorado, and they often went to Houston because they had family there. They had planned to go to Mexico to visit another family there, but we couldn't leave because the borders were closed.

Researcher: Do you feel or did you feel like a part or member of your Host Family?

Catalina: Yes, most of it, yes.

Researcher: What made you feel this way and what didn't?

Catalina: What made me feel part of the family is that they were always looking out for me, whether I needed something, whether I wanted something, basically that, whether I was okay or not. What did not make me feel part of the family was that at the beginning, I let's say that the first four months I was only with the mother because the father was working in, I think he was, mmMM, where was he? Well, on an island, I don't remember which island, but he was working on that island for nine months. When I arrived, he was not there, so he only reached the fourth month. Let's say that during the time I was alone with the mother, I was spending my eight hours with the
children and well, let's say that she was never present, let's say that it was exhausting, but I got used to it and let's say that it was never a problem for me.

**Researcher:** In the development of your experience, which cultural barriers have you faced, if any?

**Catalina:** Mmmm. Cultural barriers? No, not really. Regarding the language, yes, barriers that we say sometimes I used expressions that were not very polite but that I did not know and, no more, they were very minimal things.

**Researcher:** Given that the Au Pair program is a cultural exchange program, what highlights have you received as a participant in this program?

**Catalina:** I improved my English, I had my cultural exchange, I met new people, and I learned a lot about being here, and I also learned about what it is, let's say, to meet immigrants too.

**Researcher:** Can you tell me a particular cultural anecdote associated with your experience in El Paso, Texas? because it is a border city?

**Catalina:** Mmm, an anecdote, mmm. I don't really have any in particular.

**Researcher:** ¿Or something that has marked you as you have lived in El Paso? That you always remember because of the language or the culture.

**Catalina:** Well, let's say the only thing was that I didn't know how to drive and it was tough to go from one place to another because everything is very far from everything, and public transport was very, very, very bad, so, at some point, I tried to use public transport, but it didn't work. Usually, I had to use either Uber or ask my host parents the favor of taking me from one place to another, and that's it.
Researcher: Okay! To conclude with the interview, do you consider that the company you traveled with takes some kind of advantage from the participants or from the participation of Latin American immigrants who decide to live this experience in the United States?

Catalina: Yes.

Researcher: Why?

Catalina: Actually, the agency is a company that feeds on the needs of the third world or developing countries, so let's say that these companies basically feed on that.

Researcher: From your personal experience, would you recommend future participants of the Au Pair program to live their exchange experiences in El Paso, Texas?

Catalina: Not from my experience. Let's say that, if it weren't for the quarantine, I would maybe recommend it. Everything would have been better, and I would really recommend it, but in what I lived, I would not recommend it, to be honest, no.

Researcher: Well, thank you very much for your time.

Catalina: Okay, thanks to you!

INTERVIEW # 5: SOFIA

Researcher: Hello, good afternoon. Thank you very much for your time and for wanting to participate in this study

Sofia: Thank you very much, Caro.

Researcher: I will start with the first question; how did you learn about the Au Pair program?

Sofia: Well, it started mainly because my mother at work, my mother is a realtor, she works selling houses, and her boss sent her daughter to Germany, and then he showed the program to all his employees, and my mother liked it a lot. And well, because of everything that was happening in Venezuela, my mother wanted me to have an experience abroad, so that's how I met it.
**Researcher:** What motivated you to participate in the Au Pair program in the United States, specifically in El Paso, Texas?

**Sofia:** Well, first of all, because I don't know another language, I only know English and Spanish. But I also wanted to improve it, so in El Paso, it was more because no family came to me very quickly. I mean, it was significantly delayed, and honestly, well, I came blind, and it was the first family that came to me, and I honestly just wanted to go to the program. I mean, I didn't want to wait any longer.

**Researcher:** How long did it take you to get your first family?

**Sofia:** They started in August, in October, like three or four months or so.

**Researcher:** Which were your daily activities in your country of origin?

**Sofia:** Well, I left as soon as I graduated from high school. Then, it was literally going to class, studying, and doing homework, and that's it.

**Researcher:** What main skills and abilities made you an eligible candidate for the program?

**Sofia:** Well, I think I am very responsible. I am a very responsible person with my feet on the ground. Even though I was eighteen years old, I mean, very young, they chose me, and I think they took a lot of confidence in me, and I am also very affectionate with children; I am creative. Well, I believe, mainly because I am very responsible.

**Researcher:** How was your process to become an Au Pair?

**Sofia:** Okay, it was very long. It took me a long time because I had to present my school diploma, but it started. It was like a year, and I started taking swimming classes, first aid, and practicing my English because they gave me an exam; and I also had to do hours with children. So I spent about two months in a daycare, and that's it. I did all the above, and then, when I finished all the
requirements, I had to wait to graduate to deliver the diploma, and then we started the process when they put me on the page.

**Researcher:** Why were you interested in participating in this program?

**Sofia:** Mostly because I wanted to improve my English and because I had never come to the United States, so I wanted to know another culture.

**Researcher:** How many families did you interview?

**Sofia:** Only one.

**Researcher:** Which were the cities from which you had the option to select for Au Pair program?

**Sofia:** Sadly, only El Paso, but I would have liked to go somewhere else.

**Researcher:** Why sadly? Where would you have liked to live your experience?

**Sofia:** In New York or California. Well, I got used to living in El Paso, but at first, I didn't like it very much.

**Researcher:** Why?

**Sofia:** Because it was very different from my country, I mean, I am from the capital, and this city was tiny for me. Also, the weather, I mean, I arrived during the wintertime, and it seemed to me that it was very cold and very dry. I don't know; it took me a while to get used to it. I didn't have many friends at first, so that's why I didn't like it very much, and there aren't many things to do here.

**Researcher:** Okay. ¿In the process of selecting a location for your Au Pair experience, did the agency that advised you provided specific information on the particularities of living in a border city?

**Sofia:** No.
**Researcher:** Do you think that the program should inform candidates about the peculiarities of living in border city?

**Sofia:** Yes, I mean, it seems super important to me in border cities and anywhere you go. Because you will arrive in a city you do not know, and well, the family will talk to you, but it is very different if the agency talks to you about that. But no, they didn't tell me anything.

**Researcher:** How do you feel about living in El Paso, Texas? Did you initially expect to have this experience in another city?

**Sofia:** Excuse me?

**Researcher:** How do you feel about living in El Paso, Texas? And, did you initially expect to have this experience in another city?

**Sofia:** Well, right now I like it a lot. I like it a lot! I got used to it. At first, it was tough for me, but when I started classes, I think my adaptation process was very fast because I started to make friends, I started to go out more, and the fact that I was only at home with the children made me feel suffocated. Well, I love them very much, but then came a time when I felt that I could do nothing else, but only that. But at the moment, I like it a lot, I do think about leaving here in the future, but I do like it.

**Researcher:** What was your image of life in the United States when you were in your country?

**Sofia:** Well, I imagined like this, kind of an American life, gringos everywhere. As I came to El Paso, I expected a much bigger cultural blow, but since I came here, the atmosphere was very Latin, so I didn't feel like I was in America, but at the same time, I did, it was kind of strange.

**Researcher:** Now that you live in the United States, as a member of the Au Pair program or as a participant that you were, how close to reality was your image?
**Sofia:** Well, before I came, I saw many YouTube videos about Au Pair showing their day-to-day with the children; it seemed fake to me. It looked very happy, everything very joyful, and I was like, mmm, it sounds broken to me. I had also read experiences of many people doing well and many people doing very badly, so I was left very open-minded, that is, with a very open mind. But I was still terrified. I do think that many people believe they are coming to work. However, in truth, it seemed to me that it was a heavy job, that I had never worked with children so much. Well, it depends a lot on the family that touches you. It depends a lot because I had a very good family, so my experience was incredible. I mean, I felt that maybe I was not going to get so close to the family, maybe because of the culture, the traditions they had, but, in truth, on the contrary, they are lovely with me, they are incredible.

**Researcher:** From your experience, what are the advantages and disadvantages of being an Au Pair in El Paso, Texas?

**Sofia:** Advantages, well, here in El Paso, being Latino, you have a Latino community around you, that Hispanic heat. That seems to be a super advantage. Also, because you have the border so close, you can go to Juarez whenever you want. It also seems to me that it is very central if you want to travel and then also Spanish, it seems to me that, if you are not very fluent or you do not speak English very well, here most people speak Spanish and you can understand very well. And disadvantages, it looks pretty boring to me, if you are a person who likes doing lots of activities, there is not much to do. Suppose you come just to do your job, only to babysit. In that case, you will obviously not care, or if you come from a very small city, you will not care either. But if you come from a big city like me, green, with trees all over the sides, it will hit you a bit, because it is a desert and there is not much to do.
**Researcher:** Have the economic benefits received from your participation in the AU Pair program met your needs and expectations?

**Sofia:** No, it seems to me that they pay you very little. Well, thank God, they paid me a little more, because the family wanted to help me more, but there are people, there are Au Pairs that literally get paid them with pennies, and in my opinion, it is very little because I really think that it should be adapted to the city. Because some cities are much more expensive than others, thank God, El Paso is a bit cheaper than other places. However, I felt sometimes I could not afford it, and then for study purposes they give you five hundred dollars, but some universities charge you a lot for just one English class, so I think they should improve that.

**Researcher:** How much more did your family pay you? How much did they pay you?

**Sofia:** They paid me two hundred and fifty, and I think the salary is not even two hundred dollars.

**Researcher:** Yes, one hundred and ninety-five dollars and seventy-five cents, if I am not wrong. What are or were your responsibilities as an Au Pair?

**Sofia:** Well, they changed over time. At first, I felt like it had to be perfect. Literally, I got up, fixed the children, helped with breakfast, and sometimes I took them to classes but sometimes not. It depends on the parents if they are busy or not. Then I had the whole morning free, I would look for them in the afternoon, and at about half-past six, I would finish working, and what we did was do homework, play outside; we didn't do much.

**Researcher:** Okay. Have you felt alienated for being a foreigner being a member of the Au Pair program?

**Sofia:** Yes, I have sometimes received weird comments. It seems very strange to me because I am Latina and here every one is Latino. I have been told comments, just a few, like twice, that I thought were unnecessary, but they did not affect me.
**Researcher:** Could you tell us what kind of comments were those?

**Sofia:** I remember about one. Someone asked me if I had been enjoying that I had a phone, an iPhone, and I was like, mmm, in Venezuela, we also have iPhones. That person's last name was Pérez, I mean, very Latin, but well.

**Researcher:** When you were in your country, what was the American dream for you?

**Sofia:** I think, being an Au Pair or in general?

**Researcher:** In general, or if you had two different ones.

**Sofia:** I think the American dream is to live in a beautiful house, in the suburbs, with your children, to earn very well. I mean, I think it's like having your family already formed, with your house, with your car, economically stable, with a good job, and well, practically that.

**Researcher:** Has your concept of the American dream changed now that you are part of the Au Pair program?

**Sofia:** I think it doesn't exist, and it's very idealized. It depends a lot on you. If you want to get to that point or not, but I think it doesn't exist, I mean, it's the way you want to live and, that's it.

**Researcher:** As part of the AU Pair program, do you feel that you are or were you living your American dream?

**Sofia:** No, no, not at all.

**Researcher:** Why? What made you feel this way?

**Sofia:** Well, because I wanted to buy a lot of things. I mean, at that time, I thought that the American dream was to be able to buy everything I wanted, and I really didn't have enough money, and I didn't have time either, and I couldn't make more money either.

**Researcher:** Has your level of English competency improved since you have lived in El Paso, Texas?
Sofia: A lot, what is more, from the beginning I said I didn't want to speak a lot of Spanish, now I'm starting to speak more Spanish with people, but before I didn't like it. I mean, I wanted to speak to everyone in English, and the family I live with speaks one hundred percent in English, which helped me a lot.

Researcher: Have you felt that language has been a barrier to properly developing your responsibilities in the Au Pair program?

Sofia: No.

Researcher: Why?

Sofia: Because I had a good level of English since I was tiny, I think what I learned from here is to speak with American phrases, not so formal.

Researcher: What have been the biggest challenges you have faced in your adaptation process with your host family?

Sofia: Children's attitude, sometimes they are very rude to me. They have a very different way of raising children, they spoil them a lot, and we don't do that in my country. Sometimes I felt that I could not tell the mother the things that the girl told me because she gave me excuses that the girl felt tired, that she yelled at me because she was tired, so I reached a point where I decided not to say anything and how to put up with myself. Right? Well, it was a bit complicated.

Researcher: What do you enjoy the most about living with your host family?

Sofia: They are adorable and very polite; they make me feel at home, even though we don't have the same culture. I feel like we get along really well, and they have never made me feel bad, and they have always supported me.

Researcher: Do you feel like a member of the family of your host family?

Sofia: Yes.
Researcher: What makes you feel this way?

Sofia: It's kind of strange, but I feel that the girls' mother sees me as her daughter, and at the same time, she sees me as a friend. We have talked about many things, and she knows a lot about me. They have also included me a lot in their trips, at least at Christmas, on Thanksgiving, they have always included me. They never leave me out, never saying no to me or that I cannot go. They always ask me, even though they know I will say no, they have always asked me.

Researcher: ¿In the development of your experience, which cultural barriers have you faced, if any?

Sofia: How so is cultural order?

Researcher: Yes, as issues of language, traditions, cultural factors.

Sofia: Oh yes, the first December I spent here. Well, obviously, you know, we celebrate December, the New Year in our country; well, parties, songs, we are too much with those celebrations. I don't know, the first December here was very horrible. Literally, the family sat down on December 24 to watch a movie, and they went to bed at eight-thirty at night, and that affected me. Because I thought we would have dinner together, we would talk, drink, and do something, but nothing. That affected me a lot, and it was my first year here, and I cried a lot. I cried a lot, but afterward, I had people to spend Christmas with, so there was no need to feel that way again.

Researcher: Any other highlighter cultural factors that you remember?

Sofia: Not now. I think that was the one that hit me the most.

Researcher: Given that the Au Pair program is a cultural exchange program, what highlights have you received as a participant in this program?

Sofia: I think mostly about improving my language and adapting to the culture here. At least in our countries, we don't celebrate Thanksgiving or the Fourth of July. I am one of the people who
now celebrate or Valentine's Day or Halloween. So, I think that I adapted very quickly to that, and
I also contributed a lot to my family. I made food from my country for them, they showed me that
they don't have typical food here, but that's okay.

**Researcher:** Can you tell me a particular cultural anecdote associated with your experience in El
Paso, Texas, because it is a border city?

**Sofia:** When I made arepas for the family, arepas are a dish we make in Venezuela and Colombia,
and I remember once I decided to make them. They loved it, and they thanked me very much. I
also made them for my Mexican friends, who also loved them. So then, it seemed incredible to
show them a part of my country.

**Researcher:** To conclude, do you think that the agency you traveled with takes some kind of
advantage from the participation of Latin American immigrants who decide to live in the United
States?

**Sofia:** Sure! I think they make a lot of money with that because right now, everyone wants to come
to the United States as an Au Pair as it is an effortless way to come to the United States.

**Researcher:** From your personal experience, would you recommend future participants of the Au
Pair program to live their exchange experience in El Paso, Texas?

**Sofia:** It depends on how much you like it or your expectations of where you want to live, in what
city you want to live. Because many people want to live in New York and then come here, it is a
powerful blow because they think they are going to live in a beautiful, massive city with many
things to do. So, if you are a person who likes small, quiet cities, without much to do, more like
family, El Paso is perfect. If you are active all the time, you like doing stuff and going out, I would
not recommend it much.

**Researcher:** Thank you very much for your collaboration.
Sofia: Thank you.

**INTERVIEW # 6: MARCELA**

**Researcher:** Hello, good evening. Thank you very much for wanting to be part of this study. I will start with the first question. How did you learn about the Au Pair program?

**Marcela:** I found out when I was studying at the university. I was in the first semester, and I heard there was a meeting about exchange programs, so I have always been interested in that, and I went to the meeting, and it was about the Au Pair program.

**Researcher:** What motivated you to participate in the Au Pair program in the United States, especially in El Paso Texas?

**Marcela:** In the United States because I wanted to learn English and in El Paso, Texas because there weren't many options.

**Researcher:** How many families did you interview before choosing your host family?

**Marcela:** With four.

**Researcher:** And, why did you decide to go with them?

**Marcela:** Well, because I did the interviews with all the families, I asked many questions; what was my schedule like? What were my activities? What benefits did I have? If I could study. This family, together with another family from Pennsylvania, caught my attention. But finally, I decided to go with them because they needed me for a closer time than the other family. My interview was in August, and they needed me for November. On the other hand, the other family needed me for the next year, so it was very insecure, that's why I decided to come with them.

**Researcher:** Before taking part in the program, which were your daily activities in your country of origin?
Marcela: I was a mining engineer there. I was working in a coal mining company, and I was supervising underground mining operations.

Researcher: How was your process to become an Au Pair?

Marcela: Well, once I learned at university about the benefits of being an Au Pair, which was learning a new language, getting to know the American culture, taking care of children. All those things have always caught my attention. So, I said, that is the perfect program for me. In addition, it was at an affordable cost, compared to other programs in which you only come to study and have to pay a lot of money. So, I began to find out on the internet, and with people who had already come what this experience was like, and then when I was in the eighth semester of university, I paid for the program, and they already sent me all the forms, I filled them out. But then I began to postpone it because I said to myself, no, first I am going to graduate from my degree, and once I graduated, I started again as if to resume the process. But talking to some colleagues, mining engineers, knew that I had planned to come and told me that there was a lot of work in mining and that I had to stay there. I kind of said, okay, I'm going to pass resumes, and if I get a job, I take it; otherwise, it is because I have to go to the United States. It was very hard for me, since already having a career there as an engineer, to come here and leave everything. So, indeed, I passed resumes and found a job there, and I worked for about six months, but I was very bored, and I said no, I'm going to resume this process, and I'm going to leave. So, I went back to this, and it was actually super-fast. That is, the delay for me was to send the documents, they uploaded me on the platform, and the next day five families had sent me a request for an interview with me, and after fifteen days, I had already done a match with the family that I am currently.

Researcher: What main skills and abilities made you an eligible candidate for the program?
Marcela: That in Colombia, I had already taught English classes. When I was at the university, in my free time, I worked teaching English classes to children between eight and thirteen years old; then, I had already had experience with those ages. Also, in the video in my profile, I said that I really liked mathematics because that's the way it is, that's why I studied engineering; So, the family that I am with was very interested in me because I take care of two children. The boy is going to be fifteen next week, and the girl is thirteen years old. The boy also likes mathematics a lot, so it looks like I caught their attention because they had always had problems with all the Au Pairs, and the boy as Au pairs had always had more affinity with the girl, but not with the boy. He has a very different personality, so my profile kind of caught their attention for that, and I don't know, maybe because I had been in activities that I mentioned that had made me very disciplined. Since school, I was in the heraldic band, I lasted about eight years, so I said that those things had made me a very disciplined and responsible person.

Researcher: Why were you interested in participating in this program?

Marcela: Sorry, I didn't understand your question.

Researcher: Why were you interested in participating in this program?

Marcela: To learn English and to get to know the American culture.

Researcher: Which were the cities from which you had the option to select for Au Pair program? And, why did you choose to complete your Au Pair experience in El Paso, Texas?

Marcela: Pennsylvania, the State College in Pennsylvania, and the truth was I had three other cities. However, I don't remember where it was, but it was mainly Pennsylvania and El Paso. However, in the end, the decision was made, not for the city but for the family. Because, well, I had heard that here they spoke a lot of Spanish and since my purpose was to learn English I was a little scared because I said, I'm going to go to El Paso, what will happen to my English, so I said,
what if I choose a family, in a state where they speak English, but I do not feel comfortable with the family, so I finally leaned more towards the family than the place.

**Researcher:** ¿In the process of selecting a location for your Au Pair experience, did the agency that advised you provide specific information on the particularities of living in a border city?

**Marcela:** No.

**Researcher:** Do you think that the program should inform candidates about the peculiarities of living in a border city?

**Marcela:** Yes, because if the people come as Au Pair, they have a clearer picture of what they come to face here.

**Researcher:** How do you feel about living in El Paso, Texas?

**Marcela:** Well, in the beginning, as I was saying, since my goal was to come to learn English, I felt very uncomfortable because, in my view, in Colombia, my English was good. However, when I got here, I realized that I definitely did not have a good level of English because I didn't understand people when they spoke to me in English, nothing. So, when I went somewhere, for example, Walmart or something like that, to a store and I spoke in English, they answered me in Spanish because they realized that my native language was not English. So, at first, that made me very angry because I was not practicing my English, and that way I was not going to improve it, but after a while, I started to like the fact that people here are not very similar to people in Colombia. It maybe has a bit more warmth people from further north, that makes me feel a bit like in quotation marks "at home."

**Researcher:** Did you initially expect to have this experience in another city?

**Marcela:** No, actually, I did not have in mind to go to a specific city, no.

**Researcher:** What was your image of life in the United States when you were in your country?
Marcela: Well, more than anything about gastronomy. The food here is obviously very different from what we have in Colombia. About people's personality, that they ate not very warm. The technological advances, but I did not know much about it, basically that.

Researcher: And, now that you live in the United States, as a member of the Au Pair program, how close to reality was your image?

Marcela: Close but not much, because I knew that it is much more advanced, for example, technologically. However, once I got here, I, for example, had never used credit cards, but this also has to do with me coming from a tiny place. Maybe for people who live in big cities like the capital, Medellin or some other city like that, the difference is not very big. I don't know, but in my case, for example, putting gas in the car by myself, using a credit card, going shopping, and paying on my own. All those things at the beginning were very hard for me.

Researcher: From your experience, what are the advantages and disadvantages of being an Au Pair in El Paso, Texas?

Marcela: The disadvantages, maybe it takes much more time to acquire the level of English that someone would acquire if they were in another city where there were not so many Spanish-speaking people. Advantages: In terms of the human sense, you feel more like at home, as I said before.

Researcher: Have the economic benefits received from your participation in the AU Pair program met your needs and expectations?

Marcela: Yes, but it should be clarified that we know what the salary they will pay us before coming here. Then, once being here, we should not expect to be paid more because we already knew what the payment was. Also, we live with a family here, obviously, that is much less than what they pay an American nanny, but we already know what we are coming for.
**Researcher:** But considering, since you are in the program and your responsibilities, do you think the payment should be higher?

**Marcela:** Well, for example, in my case, that I started studying, it would be much better if they paid us more because with what I currently earn it is very, very difficult to pay for the study. Although we are supposed to only come here to the program, you don't come to study, right? However, taking into account the plans we have after the program, it would be better to raise the salary of the Au Pairs.

**Researcher:** What are or were your responsibilities as an Au Pair?

**Marcela:** Since I have been taking care of adolescent children, they were twelve and thirteen years old when I arrived here; my responsibilities were basically driving. I mean, in general, my job was to drive. Take them to school, pick them up, take them to extracurricular activities, swimming, private math classes, golf, driving, driving, driving and here at home, well, to wash their clothes, help them make their beds, but nothing else, in terms of cleaning their rooms, and all that, no. Before traveling, the family told me that my job was not to do things for them but to supervise them. Because they like children to be responsible for themselves; So my job is more like supervision than doing.

**Researcher:** Have you felt alienated for being a foreigner or being a member of the Au Pair program?

**Marcela:** No, I have never felt that.

**Researcher:** When you were in your country, what was the American dream for you?

**Marcela:** The American dream is to come to the United States, work, and have a lot of money to be able to fulfill dreams.
**Researcher:** Has your concept of the American dream changed now that you are part of the Au Pair program?

**Marcela:** No, I think it's the same.

**Researcher:** As part of the AU Pair program, do you feel that you are living your American dream?

**Marcela:** Maybe I see it as a step to get there.

**Researcher:** Why?

**Marcela:** Because if I had not come here through this program, I would not have been able to start studying for a career here in the United States. I did not have enough resources to dream of coming to the United States to study due to the Colombian economy and my family's economy. So, since my dream was always to learn another language, in fact, in Colombia I studied English for a year, always like I had in mind to study here, but I said, no, I don't have money to do that, but then well, I finally got to do it.

**Researcher:** Has your level of English competency improved since you have lived in El Paso, Texas?

**Marcela:** Yes, it has improved, the truth is not as I would expect it, but it has improved a lot.

**Researcher:** Have you felt that language has been a barrier to properly developing your responsibilities in the Au Pair program?

**Marcela:** No.

**Researcher:** Why?

**Marcela:** Because the children I live with are bilingual. So, communication with their parents, that is, even though their parents only speak English, communication with them has always been excellent. When maybe something is not clear, children like to serve as intermediaries there for,
well, before, currently my level is already much better, so I can communicate without problem, without the need for the children to be there translating.

**Researcher:** What have been the biggest challenges you have faced in your adaptation process with your host family?

**Marcela:** Oh, I don't know! Well, the truth is that this family is very good. That is, they have always made me feel like one more member of the family. The problem is because of my personality because I am like a very lonely person, so they always, in the beginning, have invited me to do activities with them. Everything, everything they do, they invite me and take me. But I'm always like in my room, locked up, and if they don't tell me "Come down," I do not come down from here, but it relies more on my personality than on them.

**Researcher:** What do you enjoy the most about living with your host family?

**Marcela:** That they, as I was saying, invite me to all the activities they do. For example, things like, let's say in quotes "basic" with my host mom we're going to paint our nails, then she tells me "Marcela, let's go, and we paint our nails" and things like that. She always invites me, takes me, and always makes me feel like a member of the family.

**Researcher:** In the development of your experience, which cultural barriers have you faced, if any?

**Marcela:** No. Well, like here in El Paso, I don't know exactly, but more or less eighty percent of the population is Mexican, so it is very similar to our culture. Hence, the truth is that I have not felt very different, and for my host family side, they are American, but the truth is that neither, I have not seemed, I have not felt that.

**Researcher:** Did living COVID 19 affect you in any way, living it during COVID 19?
Marcela: Yes, because when I arrived here in the United States, it was in November 2019. So, I started studying in December at a community college, and I was studying for about a month. I studied for a few days in December, and then we had a break. In 2020, I studied for about a month when all this began, and well, there was my whole study process. I did not have classes for about four months. Then, virtual classes began. Then, because I was unable to go out and share with people, my listening had improved a lot, but I was missing my speaking and locked up I couldn't practice. Because how was I supposed to do it? So, not being able to go anywhere and not meeting people affected me a lot in learning the language.

Researcher: Did your host family ever take advantage of the situation in the middle of the pandemic? I mean, that you had to work longer hours or similar, I don't know.

Marcela: No, not at all. In fact, with this family, never, neither on their part nor on my part, were careful to see if I was working more hours or working less. Because in reality, to be clear, I work less time than I should. Sometimes yes, some weekends, but that is scarce, that my host mom had to work because she is in the ARMY, so I stayed with them all day. However, I was not in the position of, oh look, I stayed two more hours! Because I know that other days I have stayed two hours less. So, my host parents continued to work during COVID because they are surgeons, so they always seemed to see me locked up here. They always told me, "Come out, Marce, no worries about us, you can leave, you can go with your friends." But well, nobody could go out, everything was closed, and no other Au Pair was allowed to go out, so what? I stayed here, but they never took advantage of it.

Researcher: Given that the Au Pair program is a cultural exchange program, what highlights have you received as a participant in this program?
Marcela: Well, here in El Paso, I have met many people from different countries. Both Latin and Asian have allowed me to open my mind a little more about how to understand the way of thinking of other people and the way of living, their culture, different cuisines, so that has allowed me to be a little more tolerant.

Researcher: Can you tell me a particular cultural anecdote associated with your experience in El Paso, Texas? because it is a border city?

Marcela: Well, maybe in ceremonies that I have participated. In events in which I have participated in which I meet people from different places, but the truth has not been like people from Mexico, so you say because it is a border city. Wait for me, wait for me, and I think what was I going to tell you about them, but from other countries, not people from Mexico.

Researcher: But let's say that counts. Being a border city unites people from many cultures. Or if you have another that you want to tell us.

Marcela: Well, for example, I really like to dance, and here in El Paso, there is an academy of salsa dance, of Latin music. I meet people from many countries, especially from different Latin countries, so there I have managed to meet different cultures of many people, just in that place.

Researcher: To conclude, do you think that the company you traveled with takes some kind of advantage from the participation of Latin American immigrants who decide to live in the United States?

Marcela: No.

Researcher: Why?

Marcela: Well, the company with which I traveled, in Colombia it is one company, and here it is another. It is not the same. For example, Cultural Care is an intermediary, so, while I was doing the process in Colombia, they were taking care of me, even though I never went to the office in
person because it was in Bogotá. The whole process was by email, so whenever I had questions, I wrote to them, and they responded very fast; they were always with me. They also clarified that once I arrive in the United States, who will be responsible for me, is the Europair company, so they no longer have anything to do with it. So, they made that clear to me. Once I got here, I have not had problems. A few times that I have needed help from Europair, such as letters to prove that I am part of the program to send to different places, they have responded to me. So, I really have not felt that at some point, they take advantage of this.

Researcher: From your personal experience, would you recommend future participants of the Au Pair program to live their exchange experience in El Paso, Texas?

Marcela: Well, I say that if the person, I mean, it depends on each person's goal. Because if the objective is to learn English quickly, it is challenging. I said, that also depends a lot on the person who comes and, well, supposedly I am a very responsible person, if I propose to do something, I do it. But despite that, it is tough to speak and that they respond in Spanish, and I have told them, no, I'm learning English, and they keep responding in Spanish. It's like, oh my God, it's so hard to learn English like that! But for anything else I would recommend it, that is, if learning English quickly is not the main objective, I do recommend it.

Researcher: Well, thank you very much for your collaboration.

Marcela: All right, Carolina, my pleasure.

Interview #7: Gabriela

Researcher: Well, thank you very much for wanting to be part of this research. Let us start with the first question of the interview, how did you learn about the Au Pair program?

Gabriela: Well, I worked in Colombia, there was a girl who came to my place of work to request a certificate of hours. So, I asked her what the certificate was for, and she told me that it was to be
an Au Pair in Germany, so I asked her what it was to be an Au Pair, and she informed me and gave
me all the information about it.

Researcher: What motivated you to participate in the Au Pair program in the United States,
especially in El Paso, Texas?

Gabriela: Well, mainly being an Au Pair in the United States was my easy option, or let's say it
was fast because I had the language. While another place that I wanted to go to, it will cost me
more because I had to learn the language. So, that’s basically why I went to the United States, and
I came to El Paso because of a rematch.

Researcher: Would like to comment, what city were you in initially, and what was the cause of
the rematch?

Gabriela: I was first in North Carolina, and I did the rematch because the mother of the home had
bipolar behavior problems, and sometimes, well, she always had behaviors that I said were not
normal. First of all, she played a lot with my time, I had no rest, and they made me work more
than forty-five hours a week. The reason I left was that she and her husband attacked each other,
and they threw all the implements they could find in the kitchen. So, that was my most significant
reason for leaving, and I just decided to do my rematch.

Researcher: How many families did you interview before choosing your first family?

Gabriela: Before traveling?

Researcher: Yes.

Gabriela: I interviewed about five or seven families.

Researcher: And after the rematch?

Gabriela: After the rematch, only with one, which was the one from El Paso, Texas and I stayed
with them.
**Researcher:** How long did you last with your first host family?

**Gabriela:** Three months.

**Researcher:** Which were your daily activities in your country of origin before being part of the Au Pair program?

**Gabriela:** I was an English teacher. My family owns a preschool and elementary school, and from a very young age, I know English because I lived in the United States with my parents. So, that's why I knew the language and was able to teach children. So, I worked as an English teacher for children.

**Researcher:** How was your process to become an Au Pair?

**Gabriela:** I was interested in leaving the country, and I had already done many things, such as the language and the hours it took to certify you. So, I really think the physical process was not so much because I had everything. I think it was an emotional process to want to leave and not find a family.

**Researcher:** How was the process of finding a family that made you say, I am ready to live the process now?

**Gabriela:** Well, it's always tricky, isn't it? Because you really don't know the other people, and because it is possible to act through a screen, right? In a certain way, I was more or less carried away by their attitude when they introduced me to the children because it is very normal for them to put them and just want them to be smiling and things like that. While I simply leave with them, because they always showed them as they were, that they ran everywhere, that if they didn't want to pay attention to the screen, they just left them and that's it. So, that made me feel like they were in a certain way, showing what it was, and they weren't hiding something from me.

**Researcher:** What main skills and abilities made you an eligible candidate for the program?
Gabriela: I believe it was my love for children, the patience that I can have with them, and my commitment.

Researcher: Which were the cities from which you had the option to select for Au Pair program?

Gabriela: Well, I had families from various places like San Francisco, if I'm not wrong, Utah. I also found one in Washington and more or less North Carolina and South Carolina.

Researcher: In the process of selecting a location for your Au Pair experience, did the agency that advised you provide specific information on the particularities of living in a border city?

Gabriela: No.

Researcher: Do you think that the program should inform candidates about the particularities of living in a border city?

Gabriela: It is important, and I think it is essential to inform, rather than to let people know something. It was not my case, but I did meet many girls in El Paso who were shocked because there was not much English and because you easily managed to find Spanish. Because they were really going to learn the language and that was a difficulty, that of course, they must say it.

Researcher: How do you feel about having lived in El Paso, the experience of being an Au Pair?

Gabriela: Excuse me, can you repeat it?

Researcher: How do you feel about living or having lived in El Paso, your experience of being an Au Pair?

Gabriela: Well, El Paso is beautiful and more than you can see visually. It was an experience, it was very nice to live there, and I liked it, everything was cool.

Researcher: With the program, did you initially expect to have this experience in another city?

Gabriela: Yes, when you start to know more about it, you imagine other kinds of things, right? But.
**Researcher:** What did you imagine?

**Gabriela:** I don't know, I imagine the big city, the buildings, the lights, like fancy ones, so to speak, which is totally another scenario.

**Researcher:** What was your image of life in the United States when you were in your country?

**Gabriela:** As I mentioned to you, I had already lived in the United States with my parents as a child. I lived with them for several years, so I already had an idea of what it was. Basically, my perception, at that moment, was to emigrate to feel good emotionally. So, I wanted to escape from the overwhelming environment at that moment and start a new experience.

**Researcher:** Now that you live in the United States, as a member of the Au Pair program, how close to reality was your image? Perhaps in your case, the power to escape from that experience you were having in your country.

**Gabriela:** Yes, at the time what I was looking for it, but being emphatic as in the entire program, I feel that there are many gaps and that they sell false advertising in a certain way.

**Researcher:** Why do you think so?

**Gabriela:** Because they tell you, "you are going to take care of the children, you are going to be part of the family," and yes, I was part of the family. They really did treat me like an older sister. However, in the other family, it didn't happen. I was the girl who had just arrived from another country and who came exclusively to take care of my children, and that is why things don't fit together. When you want to talk about it, there are people who no longer have an answer because they are in charge of the same, right? They no longer have an answer for that, and all they say is, "you have to wait three months, and after three months, you can maybe have another family," as if your feelings didn't really matter that much.
**Researcher:** From your experience, what are the advantages and disadvantages of being an Au Pair in El Paso?

**Gabriela:** In El Paso?

**Researcher:** Yes.

**Gabriela:** I think it was cool because it was not that far from some places that I wanted to know. Well, although it had some distance, I liked that it was close to California and Utah in Arizona. Places that caused me a lot of uncertainty, and I wanted to know; it was okay for me.

**Researcher:** And what would be the disadvantages? If any.

**Gabriela:** I think the language. That many people speak Spanish to you, then a serious disadvantage is that you cannot really face that bilingual world.

**Researcher:** What are or were your responsibilities as an Au Pair?

**Gabriela:** Tell me? Excuse me!

**Researcher:** What were your responsibilities as an Au Pair?

**Gabriela:** I had to pick up the little boy, give them breakfast, get them ready for school, take them to school. I pick them up in the afternoon, give them some half-nines, bathe them, and wait for their father to arrive. Sometimes, I also put them to sleep.

**Researcher:** Have the economic benefits received from your participation in the AU Pair program met your needs and expectations?

**Gabriela:** No, no.

**Researcher:** Why?

**Gabriela:** I feel that what we do is so important. Caring for children -interference- That compensates for everything we do because sometimes we become their mother, the children's father. So, I feel that it is not valued as it should be.
**Researcher:** The first part was broken. Could you repeat what you said initially?

**Gabriela:** Let's see if I remember. I don't think so, we play a fundamental part in families, not simply providing a service, we give everything so that the children are very well, we become their parents, so I think not.

**Researcher:** Financial recognition is not what it should be. Have you felt alienated for being a foreigner or being a member of the Au Pair program?

**Gabriela:** No, no.

**Researcher:** When you were in your country, what was the American dream for you?

**Gabriela:** I don't know. We think the American dream is to have money, to travel, to have a life.

**Researcher:** Comfortable?

**Gabriela:** Yes, more than comfortable, it could be a little easier and more accessible with luxuries than in your country.

**Researcher:** Has your concept of the American dream changed now that you are part of the Au Pair program?

**Gabriela:** Yes, in a certain part.

**Researcher:** Where?

**Gabriela:** Well, that is based on days too. Right? Because as I told you, everything varies, it varies that families also have their bad days. So, sometimes you have fewer hours, more time, so you feel like that dream of enjoying money is coming true, but then you have to go back, and then it's not so cool anymore.

**Researcher:** Has your level of English competency improved since you have lived in El Paso, Texas?
**Gabriela:** Yes, of course, of course.

**Researcher:** Have you felt that language has been a barrier to properly developing your responsibilities in the Au Pair program?

**Gabriela:** Excuse me?

**Researcher:** Have you felt that language has been a barrier to properly developing your responsibilities in the Au Pair program?

**Gabriela:** Has the English language being an advantage or a disadvantage?

**Researcher:** A barrier to properly developing your responsibilities in the Au Pair program?

**Gabriela:** No, no. I feel that the family I had always had a good disposition if I did not understand or perhaps did not understand something.

**Researcher:** Hello?

**Gabriela:** Yes, I hear you. Did you hear me?

**Researcher:** I was in that they were in the disposition to repeat.

**Gabriela:** Yes, to repeat and to help me understand in another way if I did not comprehend something.

**Researcher:** What have been the biggest challenges you have faced in your adaptation process with your host family?

**Gabriela:** Sometimes, feeling lonely. Also, the drastic change in food and the sensations that come from not having what we call "my stuff."

**Researcher:** What did you or do you enjoy the most about living with your Host Family?

**Gabriela:** I liked to, well, I was very closed. I was not particularly eager to share time with them. Not because they were bad, but because no, if it was my free time, it was for me. So I liked doing
my stuff. But I liked to dine with them, we did kind of BBQ, so I liked to share with them making the BBQ and stuff.

**Researcher:** Did you feel or do you feel like a part or member of your Host Family? What makes you feel that way?

**Gabriela:** Yes, of the second, yes. Not of the first one.

**Researcher:** What made you feel this way? What yes and what not? In each of the cases.

**Gabriela:** Yes, they did treat me like a daughter. They cared about my opinion. They considered it necessary to listen to me, while in the other family, it was simply what they said and treated me as their employee.

**Researcher:** In the development of your experience, which cultural barriers have you faced, if any?

**Gabriela:** Yes, but I feel that it is also a matter of personalities, right? Some people are happy, others are spontaneous, so I feel that it was not so much the culture, but the personality of each one.

**Researcher:** Given that the Au Pair program is a cultural exchange program, what highlights have you received as a participant in this program?

**Gabriela:** Excuse me, it was broken.

**Researcher:** Given that the Au Pair program is a cultural exchange program, what highlights have you received as a participant in this program?

**Gabriela:** Well, I feel that the change of language is already the first factor. Because not all people speak the same English, let's say they have differences; and the food, I feel that it is the most essential, that they teach you how to eat differently. Let's say, in my case, the family only ate once
a day, and it was at night, so the amount of protein and endless things they did with things that I did not have in Colombia or that I had not visualized in that way.

**Researcher:** Can you tell me a particular cultural anecdote associated with your experience in El Paso, Texas? because it is a border city?

**Gabriela:** Well, let's say that more than living it in El Paso, it is the fear they have for being a border city, right? Because the family told me not even consider going to Mexico. That if I crossed there, they would surely kill me, and I found it very curious. Because being so bordering and so open, you can cross normally, but they see it so bad.

**Researcher:** Did you ever go to Mexico?

**Gabriela:** Yes, yes. I crossed three times.

**Researcher:** And what can you say about your experience of crossing over?

**Gabriela:** Honestly, it was fine, normal, nothing special. In fact, it seemed much cooler to me to live there in El Paso because the tickets to anywhere else were cheaper from Mexico, so my experiences that I had going to Mexico were traveling from the airport in Mexico.

**Researcher:** To conclude with the interview, do you consider that the company you traveled with takes some kind of advantage from the participants or from the participation of Latin American immigrants who decide to live this experience in the United States?

**Gabriela:** I feel like they charge a lot for a program, really, they sell it to us at a very high price and pay us very little.

**Researcher:** From your personal experience, would you recommend future participants of the Au Pair program live their exchange experiences in El Paso, Texas?

**Gabriela:** Yes.
**Researcher:** Why?

**Gabriela:** Because personally, it was nice. I liked the weather, which wasn't the greatest either. It was a hot summer, but it wasn't terrible, and winter wasn't the worst either. So I feel that the weather is fine. As I'm telling you, I feel it is very close to places people would like to know, like Los Angeles. El Paso, having such easy access to Mexico and cheaper tickets there to know the rest of the world, is okay.

**Researcher:** Well, thank you very much for your time.

**Gabriela:** No, thank you very much for the invitation.
Appendix F: Interviews Transcripts (Spanish)

ENTREVISTA # 1: PAMELA

Investigador: Bueno, vamos a iniciar con la primera pregunta. Déjame un momento… ya estamos grabando, para tu conocimiento. Entonces, quisiera preguntarte, ¿Cómo te enteraste de la existencia del programa Au Pair?

Pamela: Cuando yo empecé la universidad, en la universidad había un programa que era como conferencias para hacer intercambios en otros países y en una de las experiencias que contaban los estudiantes de cada intercambio, de cada tipo de intercambio que habían hecho, fue el de Au Pair y me pareció como súper chévere ese tipo de intercambio, por todas las condiciones que ofrecía, entonces decidí empezar a buscar como qué agencias ofrecían ese programa en Colombia.

Investigador: ¿Qué te motivó a realizar el programa Au Pair en los Estados Unidos y de manera específica en El Paso Texas?

Pamela: A ver. En El Paso no fue exactamente que yo haya elegido, como uy, que chévere irme para El Paso a vivir mi experiencia de Au Pair, no. Pero una de las cosas, primero, una de las cosas que me motivó ser Au Pair fue, que a mí me gustan mucho los niños y en especial los niños chiquitos, entonces cuando encontré mi familia anfitriona, los tres niños me parecieron súper lindos y yo tuve una muy buena conexión con mi host mom, entonces la verdad no sabía de la existencia de El Paso, pero yo me baso como en la conexión que tuve con mi host mom, y por eso tomé la decisión de irme para El Paso.

Investigador: Y ¿por qué fue la decisión de realizar el programa en Estados Unidos y por qué no en Europa o en otro continente?

¿Aló, me escuchas? aló

Pamela: Había silenciado el micrófono, ¿en qué parte quedaste?
Investigador: Que por aquello de la conexión con tu host mom habías decidido vivir la experiencia de Au Pair en El Paso y yo te preguntaba que por qué habías decidido vivir el programa Au Pair en Estados Unidos y no en otro continente.

Investigador: La razón por la que escogí Estados Unidos era porque, bueno, primero, pues yo ya tenía un poquito de conocimiento en el idioma y segundo porque mi familia vive aquí, entonces cualquier cosa que me pudiera pasar o si en algún momento necesitaba a mi familia, pues los iba a tener más cerca para lo que sea que me pasara.

Investigador: Perfecto, ¿Cuáles eran tus actividades cotidianas en tu país de origen?

Pamela: Ir a la universidad, estudiar, ir a mi casa, seguir estudiando, salir con mis amigos y ya.

Investigador: ¿Cómo fue tu proceso para ser Au Pair?

Pamela: Primero, contacté la agencia con la que quería empezar a realizar el proceso. Después fui a unas reuniones informativas.

Luego empecé a aplicar para ser Au Pair y en la aplicación eran como varios pasos. Entonces el primero era una entrevista en la que me preguntaban como todo mi record judicial, si había tenido problemas legales, bueno, un montón de preguntas sobre mí. El segundo paso era una entrevista que era para, para ver mi nivel de inglés y si era el adecuado para empezar el proceso. Entonces ahí, estuve en contacto con unas niñas de la agencia, me hicieron unas preguntas y a los días me dieron el resultado si sí iba a aplicar o pues si sí podía aplicar para el programa. Luego tenía que llenar unos formularios y uno de esos era como con unas referencias personales y entrevistar a una gente para que hablara sobre mí.

Que más, yo creo que después de eso era como, yo creo que ya activaban la plataforma para empezar a buscar familias y ya a uno le iba llegando las familias que estuvieran interesadas en uno.
Investigador: ¿Con cuántas familias te entrevistaste?

Pamela: Como tres.

Investigador: ¿Qué habilidades y destrezas principales te hicieron candidata elegible para formar parte del programa?

Pamela: ¿Del programa en general, o de la familia que me escogió?

Investigador: Del programa en general, y bueno, si nos quieres comentar las dos.

Pamela: ¡No sé! Yo creo que era las horas que tenía con el cuidado de niños y realmente cualquier persona puede aplicar al programa. Nadie debe tener como una característica o una habilidad en especial y la familia yo creo que ellos me eligieron porque, primero, ellos querían a alguien que supiera español, porque los niños estaban en, como inmersos en el lenguaje y querían a alguien que les ayudara a fortalecer el idioma y que nos llevamos bien mi host mom y yo.

Investigador: ¿Cuáles fueron las ciudades que tuviste la opción de seleccionar para realizar el programa Au Pair?

Pamela: San Francisco y New York

Investigador: ¿Por qué escogiste vivir tu experiencia de Au Pair en El Paso Texas?

Pamela: Porque me gusta la familia con que vivía en El Paso Texas.

Investigador: ¿En el proceso de seleccionar El Paso Texas para vivir tu experiencia de Au Pair, la empresa que te asesoró, te suministro información específica sobre las particularidades que se tendrían al vivir en una ciudad fronteriza?

Pamela: No

Investigador: ¿Usted cree que el programa debería informar a sus candidatos acerca de las particularidades de vivir en ciudades fronterizas?

Pamela: No
Investigador: ¿Por qué?

Pamela: Porque no sé, creo que cada persona debe descubrir lo que ofrece cada ciudad sin que haya una segunda opinión. Porque cuando alguien te cuenta sobre equis cosa, vas a estar prevenido. En cambio, si no sabes nada, vas dispuesto a conocer todo sobre la ciudad.

Investigador: ¿Cómo te sientes con el hecho de haber vivido tú experiencia en El Paso Texas?

Pamela: Fue chévere, conocí personas chéveres, pero no es la ciudad ideal para perfeccionar el idioma, si eso es lo que uno quiere.

Investigador: ¿Cuáles eran tus imaginarios sobre la vida en los Estados Unidos cuando estabas en tu país?

Pamela: Creí que las personas, al ser la jornada laboral más corta que en Colombia, iban a tener más tiempo para hacer diferentes actividades. Pero realmente me di cuenta que, a pesar de que la jornada laboral es más cortica que en Colombia, aquí el tiempo no alcanza para nada.

Investigador: ¿Ahora que tuviste la experiencia de vivir en los Estados Unidos como miembro del programa Au Pair, qué tan cerca de la realidad estaban tus imaginarios?

Pamela: Cero.

Investigador: ¿Por qué?

Pamela: Porquenaquí la vida es trabajar, trabajar y trabajar. Realmente me di cuenta que las familias no tienen el tiempo suficiente para compartir con los niños.

Investigador: ¿Te hubiese gustado vivir la experiencia de Au Pair en otra ciudad?

Pamela: Si, en una ciudad que fuera más grande y que tuviera un aeropuerto más grande para que los vuelos fueran más baratos y pudiera, poder viajar más.

Investigador: Desde tu experiencia, ¿cuáles son las ventajas y desventajas de ser Au Pair en El Paso?
**Pamela:** Las ventajas es que El Paso es una ciudad barata, entonces realmente el salario de Au Pair es muy bajo y pues con eso uno puede comprar muchas cosas en El Paso. Si no sabes inglés, perfecto, porque no necesitas saber inglés. Me parece chévere el que es una ciudad militar, entonces es como aprender todo sobre los militares. La desventaja es que, si quiere aprender inglés, no va a aprender inglés y que es muy costoso viajar.

**Investigador:** Perfecto, ¿Sientes que el beneficio económico y de prebendas recibido por formar parte del programa Au Pair es adecuado para cubrir tus necesidades y expectativas?

**Pamela:** Si, si, a mí me parece que bien.

**Investigador:** ¿Te has sentido aislada por ser extranjera o por ser miembro del programa Au Pair?

**Pamela:** No.

**Investigador:** ¿Cuándo estabas en tu país, ¿qué era para ti el sueño americano?

**Pamela:** ¡Uy, Caro! Nunca había pensado en eso. No sé, tener mucha plata.

**Investigador:** ¿Ha cambiado tu concepto sobre el sueño americano ahora que formaste parte del programa Au Pair?

**Pamela:** Si

**Investigador:** ¿En qué sentido?

**Pamela:** No sé, yo creo que, cuando uno está en, no sé, en Colombia, cree que las cosas en este país son súper fáciles, que todo llega como, como que la plata cae del cielo, por el hecho de estar aquí ya eres rico. Pero realmente, uno se da cuenta que conseguir cualquier peso en este país es muy difícil y no cae del cielo.

**Investigador:** Perfecto, durante tu participación en el programa Au Pair, ¿has sentido que has vivido el sueño americano?

**Pamela:** No.
Investigador: ¿Por qué?

Pamela: Porque no es fácil cuidar niños ajenos, trabajar tanto y la plata que uno tiene como Au Pair le alcanza exactamente para tus necesidades básicas.

Investigador: Desde tu experiencia viviendo en El Paso Texas ¿ha mejorado tu nivel de inglés?

Pamela: Si

Investigador: ¿Has sentido que el idioma inglés ha sido una barrera para desarrollar adecuadamente tus responsabilidades en el programa Au Pair?

Pamela: No

Investigador: ¿Por qué?

Pamela: Porque la familia con la que yo vivía, digamos que, si en algún momento no llegaba a entender algo, mi host mom habla español entonces nunca fue como un limitante el idioma.

Investigador: Okay. ¿Cuáles han sido los mayores desafíos que has tenido que enfrentar en tu proceso de adaptación con tu host family o que tuviste que enfrentar?

Pamela: Primero, la comida; ellos tenían una forma de comer super diferente a la mía, entonces fue algo que me dio muy duro. La forma en la que crían a los hijos es diferente, y ya... bueno y estar lejos de mi familia y de mis amigos, fue difícil en el proceso de adaptación.

Investigador: ¿Qué es lo que más disfrutabas de convivir con tu host family?

Pamela: Las noches de películas y pizza.

Investigador: ¿Te sientes como miembro de la familia de tu host family?

Pamela: Sí me llegué a sentir como miembro de la familia.

Investigador: ¿Qué hizo que te sintieras así?

Pamela: Los niños todo el tiempo le decían a todo el mundo que yo era la big sister, mi host dad todo el tiempo era como, tú eres como nuestra hija mayor, estamos muy agradecidos, tú eres muy
linda, tenían detalles conmigo súper lindos como dejarme la comida en mi cuarto o comprarme cosas diferentes a las que ellos solían comer o hacer.

**Investigador:** ¿En el desarrollo de tu experiencia te enfrentaste a barreras de orden cultural?

**Pamela:** No creo, no.

**Investigador:** ¿Tanto con tu host family como con la ciudad en la que viviste?

**Pamela:** No, no.

**Investigador:** Dado que el programa Au Pair es un programa de intercambio cultural, ¿qué aportes destaca de haber recibido en ese campo mientras has estado o estuviste en el programa?

**Pamela:** ¿Cómo?, ¿cómo?

**Investigador:** Dado que el programa Au Pair es un programa de intercambio cultural, ¿qué aportes destaca haber recibido en ese campo, mientras que estuviste en el programa?

**Pamela:** No sé, yo creo que, probablemente, probablemente los holiday days que son diferentes en Colombia y aquí son como súper ¡wow! como Thanksgiving, el día de San Valentín, el día de pascua, fueron cosas que eran diferentes para mí y ellos lo celebran como algo grande.

**Investigador:** ¿Qué otro beneficio crees que te quedó de este intercambio cultural?

**Pamela:** ¡Uy! que uno aprende, primero uno crece como persona, aprende a no tomarse nada personal. Porque a pesar de que yo siento que culturalmente somos muy parecidos hay cosas que pueden ser diferentes tanto en la personalidad de ellos como en la mía y eso ayuda a que uno se fortalezca mucho y aprenda a tratar a diferentes personas y a ser paciente. Uno como Au Pair desarrolla un grado muy alto de paciencia.

**Investigador:** ¿Nos podrías narrar alguna anécdota cultural particular asociada a tu experiencia de vivir en El Paso Texas por ser una ciudad fronteriza?
Pamela: ¿Tiene que ser como de El Paso o puede ser como una experiencia o de la familia, diferente, de diferentes culturas?

Investigador: Pues, pues sí, si tienes alguna experiencia que viviste al estar con tú familia viviendo en la zona fronteriza.

Pamela: Creo que sí.

Investigador: Si, esa anécdota puede involucrar tu host family o con amigos o con el hecho de vivir como tal en la ciudad, cualquier tipo de anécdota que recuerdes.

Pamela: ¡Ah bueno! Algo que fue como impactante para mí, fue la forma como manejan los horarios de las comidas y es que nosotros como colombianos, la comida mayor es el almuerzo y ellos no almuerzan o almuerzan como un sánduche y en cambio la comida es el plato más grande. Para nosotros la comida realmente no es tan importante, eso fue algo diferente pero chévere y algo bueno de vivir en frontera es que es fácil ir a México y es chévere ir a México porque las cosas son más baratas y por ejemplo arreglarse las uñas es mucho mejor en México que en El Paso, entonces es bien.

Investigador: Desde tu experiencia personal, ¿Recomendarías a futuros participantes del programa Au Pair vivir sus experiencias de intercambio en El Paso Texas?

Pamela: No.

Investigador: ¿Por qué?

**Investigador:** Para concluir con la entrevista, ¿Considera que la empresa con la que usted viajó toma algún tipo de ventaja de las participantes o de la participación de los inmigrantes latinoamericanos que deciden vivir esta experiencia en los Estados Unidos?

**Pamela:** No, realmente a la agencia no le importa el lugar o lo que sea que uno vaya a hacer, solo les importa que ingreses al programa y que haya una familia anfitriona que ingrese al programa y ya.

**Investigador:** Okay. ¡Muchísimas gracias por su colaboración!

**Pamela:** ¡Dale, a ti Caro!

**ENTREVISTA # 2: ANDREA**

**Investigador:** Bueno, te doy la bienvenida a este estudio, muchas gracias por haber tomado este tiempo para ayudarnos a contestar algunas preguntas, la primera pregunta es ¿cómo te enteraste de la existencia del programa Au Pair?

**Andrea:** Por Facebook. Un amigo estaba buscando opciones para estudiar fuera del país y nos salió la publicación de Facebook, comentamos y bueno así me llamaron y me explicaron del programa.

**Investigador:** ¿Qué te motivó a realizar el programa Au Pair en los Estados Unidos, y de manera específica en El Paso, Texas?

**Andrea:** Bueno me motivó hacer el programa en Estados Unidos porque era un idioma que ya relativamente manejaba, porque era más económico que hacerlo en Europa, porque América también es más económico que Europa y bueno en El Paso fue porque fue la familia que conseguí luego de hacer rematch.

**Investigador:** ¿Podrías contarnos un poco por qué entraste en proceso de rematch y en qué ciudad estabas?
Andrea: Viví en Chewaka, Michigan, entré en proceso de rematch porque mi jefe en ese momento, el papá del bebé que cuidaba, tenía algunas actitudes agresivas y bueno, en algún momento me gritó, bueno, en algún momento no, varias veces me gritó y la última vez que lo hizo decidí cambiar de familia y que ya no estaba cómoda ahí.

Investigador: Okay! Para devolvernos un poco, ¿Cómo fue tu proceso para ser Au Pair?

Andrea: Bueno, primero me llamó la agencia, me dijo que tenía buen perfil, que debía ir a Caracas, que es la capital de Venezuela, a hacer una entrevista para ver si quedaba, por así decirlo.

Para esto debía cancelar una cuota como de inscripción, fui con mi mamá, me hicieron todas las pruebas, me dijeron que sí calificaba y luego ya de ahí me explicaron cómo era, de qué se trataba, cuánto se pagaba; y luego de eso, nosotros tomamos la decisión como a la semana. cancelamos parte del programa y empezamos los papeleos.

Como yo estaba en la universidad en ese momento, tardé dos años en entregar todo mi papeleo porque, bueno, quería adelantar la mayor cantidad posible de mi carrera y nada, luego de eso fueron entrevistas, todos los documentos, recoger todos los requisitos que pedía el programa, sacar la visa y ya cuando conseguí la familia pues irme para Estados Unidos.

Investigador: ¿Qué habilidades y destrezas principales te hicieron candidata elegible para formar parte del programa?

Andrea: Mucha experiencia con niños, el manejo de inglés, creo que ser estudiante de Psicología también influyó un poco y el vivir, ya yo vivía lejos de mi casa entonces no era como un factor de riesgo que yo pusiera llegar a Estados Unidos y que no me sintiera bien, porque ya tenía mucho tiempo viviendo sola.

Investigador: ¿Por qué se interesó en participar en este programa?
Andrea: Porque siempre me han gustado los niños, porque me gustaba la idea de vivir en Estados Unidos por un año; y dije pues bueno, qué mejor manera que hacerlo con algo que me gusta.

Investigador: ¿Con cuantas familias se entrevistó para realizar el programa, antes de seleccionar la primera host family?

Andrea: Una.

Investigador: ¿Cuáles fueron las ciudades que tuviste la opción de seleccionar para realizar el programa de Au Pair? y ¿Por qué escogiste vivir tu experiencia de Au Pair en El Paso, Texas?

Andrea: Bueno, las opciones fueron nulas, porque realmente dependía de donde estuviese la familia y bueno, la primera familia que me contactó me gustó y además que en ese momento el país estaba en una situación crítica. Ya tenía tres meses buscando familia y nada que llegaba y bueno, como era un bebé, quizás debí haberlo pensado un poco más, pero bueno, en ese momento acepté y me fui para Míchigan. Luego para El Paso, hablé con varias familias, pero ya en donde vivía en Míchigan era en el medio de la nada y ya yo quería una experiencia diferente. Lo que pasa es que hablé con varias familias, digamos que ya yo quería una experiencia diferente a la que ya había tenido, hablé con varias familias que también vivían en lugares muy lejos de la ciudad y bueno, al final me gustó la familia de El Paso porque realmente siento que conecté muchísimo con mi host mom y por eso decidí irme al Paso y porque también tenía una amiga allá.

Investigador: ¿En el proceso de seleccionar El Paso Texas para vivir tu experiencia de Au Pair, la empresa que te asesoró, te suministró información específica sobre las particularidades que se tendrían al vivir en una ciudad fronteriza?

Andrea: No, para nada.

Investigador: ¿Usted cree que el programa debería informar a sus candidatos acerca de las particularidades de vivir en ciudades fronterizas?
Andrea: Sí, de ciudades fronterizas y de todas las ciudades donde vayan a ir las Au Pair´s.

Investigador: ¿Por qué?

Andrea: Porque si a mí me hubiesen explicado un poco más de dónde era la primera ciudad donde viví, quizás yo me lo hubiese pensado dos veces, de repente, como uno no sabe y siempre ha pensado que cualquier ciudad en Estados Unidos es igual a las ciudades grandes, uno no se imagina que va a vivir en un pueblito en el medio de la nada; entonces yo realmente si hubiese sabido un poco más del lugar donde iba a vivir con la primera familia, no lo hubiese aceptado.

Investigador: ¿Cómo te sientes con el hecho, o cómo te sentiste, de vivir en El Paso Texas?

Andrea: La verdad mi experiencia fue excelente. Tenía un grupo de amigas que hicieron de mi experiencia algo inolvidable. Creo que mi experiencia, más allá del lugar fue con quién lo compartí. Siempre la ciudad era muy pequeña, pero no sé, siempre la sentí un poco como hogar.

Investigador: ¿Con el programa esperabas vivir la experiencia en otra ciudad?

Andrea: Sí, sí, tenía muchos amigos, siempre he tenido muchos amigos en New York o en Miami y realmente esperaba conseguir una familia allá, pero bueno, nunca llegó.

Investigador: ¿Cuáles eran tus imaginarios sobre la vida en los Estados Unidos cuando estabas en tu país?

Andrea: Como todo muy moderno, todo muy controlado, todo muy accesible, todo muy diferente, la verdad.

Investigador: ¿Ahora que vives o viviste en los Estados Unidos, como miembro del programa Au Pair, qué tan cerca a la realidad estaban tus imaginarios?

Andrea: Creo que sí estaban cerca, pero a la vez nunca estuve consciente de que todas estas cosas, aunque sí son reales y sí se pueden tener, requieren de mucho trabajo.
**Investigador:** ¿Desde tu experiencia, cuáles son las ventajas y desventajas de ser Au Pair en El Paso, Texas?

**Andrea:** Las ventajas es que si no manejas muy bien el idioma, siempre vas a conseguir alguien que hable español. Además de que la experiencia de vivir en una ciudad fronteriza, creo que es muy diferente a cualquier otra experiencia. Aprendes mucho de lo que es la cultura del país que tienes al lado, conoces mucha gente del país que tienes del otro lado de la frontera. Las desventajas, en el caso de El Paso, es que era muy pequeño y había muy pocas cosas que hacer.

**Investigador:** ¿Cuáles son o eran tus responsabilidades como Au Pair?

**Andrea:** Hacer la comida de los niños, despertarlos en la mañana, darles el desayuno. Como los míos ya estaban grandes, no era ni vestirlos, ni bañarlos, ni nada por el estilo y llevarlos al colegio, luego buscarlos y llevarlos a todas las actividades.

**Investigador:** ¿Sientes que el beneficio económico y de prebendas recibido por formar parte del programa de Au Pair es adecuado para cubrir tus necesidades y expectativas?

**Andrea:** Siento que en mi caso sí porque la familia que yo tenía era muy buena y porque realmente los niños que yo cuidaba no requerían tampoco tanta atención. En el caso de otras compañeras que cuidaban más niños y más pequeños me parece que el pago, aunque fuera suficiente para cubrir necesidades, no era justo en relación a la cantidad de trabajo.

**Investigador:** ¿Sientes o te has sentido aislada por ser extranjera o por ser miembro del programa de Au Pair?

**Andrea:** En Estados Unidos no. Nunca me sentí, ni por ser Au Pair ni por ser extranjera.

**Investigador:** ¿Cuándo estabas en tu País, qué era para ti el Sueño Americano?
**Andrea:** Para mí el sueño americano era tener una casa grandísima y muy linda, los niños en el colegio, en un buen colegio. Siempre fue como ese sueño de familia en los suburbios, de una casa grande y bonita y un jardín grande. ¡Para mí era eso!

**Investigador:** ¿Ha cambiado tu concepto sobre el sueño americano, ahora que formas o formaste parte del programa Au Pair?

**Andrea:** Sí, definitivamente luego de tener la experiencia de haber vivido en Estados Unidos, creo que dependiendo de la familia que te toque, vivir como Au Pair en los Estados Unidos es un privilegio muy grande. Porque digamos que no pasas por el trabajo que pasan cualquier otro inmigrante que va por su cuenta, pero si creo que ahora el sueño americano es, para mí, el concepto ahora del sueño americano es, trabajar y trabajar sin descansar y todo es material, más allá de la calidad de vida es cuánto dinero puedes tener en cosas.

**Investigador:** ¿Durante tu participación en el programa Au Pair, sientes que estás viviendo o viviste el sueño americano?

**Andrea:** Sí, se podría decir que un poco, sí.

**Investigador:** ¿Por qué?

**Andrea:** Porque tuve la oportunidad de viajar sin preocupaciones, porque tuve la oportunidad de vivir tranquila en la casa en la que yo vivía. Una casa gigante como lo decía. Que para mí era eso, vivir en los suburbios, de salir sin problema con mis amigas, cosa que en mi país no se podía, ya sea por lo económico o por seguridad. Entonces viajar con mis amigas, poder planear un viaje con mis amigas sin pensar en que el dinero o esto o aquello. Creo que de una u otra manera sí alcancé a vivir mi pequeño sueño americano.

**Investigador:** ¿Desde tu experiencia, viviendo en El Paso, Texas, ha mejorado tu nivel de inglés?

**Andrea:** Sí, muchísimo.
Investigador: ¿Has sentido que el idioma inglés ha sido una barrera, o fue una barrera para desarrollar adecuadamente tus responsabilidades en el programa Au Pair?

Andrea: No, considero que ya yo tenía un nivel de inglés suficientemente bueno para que no fuera una barrera.

Investigador: ¿Cuáles han sido los mayores desafíos o fueron los mayores desafíos que has tenido que enfrentar en tu proceso de adaptación con tu host family?

Andrea: Con la primera, el hecho de que la cultura predominante en mi primera host family era la griega, que es una cultura bastante diferente y bastante fuerte. Además de que mi host dad, a mi parecer, no articulaba muy bien el inglés y a veces me costaba mucho entenderlo y con la segunda nunca tuve problemas de adaptación ni nada.

Investigador: ¿Qué es lo que más disfrutabas de convivir con tu host families?

Andrea: Los diferentes puntos de vista.

Investigador: ¿Te sientes o te sentiste como miembro de la familia de tu host family?

Andrea: Sí.

Investigador: ¿Qué lo hacía sentirse así?

Andrea: Mi segunda host family siempre consideraba mis emociones o por lo que yo estuviera pasando, si yo estaba bien, si no, nunca fueron como, ¿Cómo decirlo?, como que nunca fueron, ¿cómo se dice esta palabra?

Investigador: ¿Apáticos?

Andrea: No, no, de posición, de ¡tienes que estar aquí!, de obligar, sino que siempre me dieron mi espacio. De si quieres, los brazos están abiertos y si no quieres, también está bien.

Investigador: Te dieron la opción de escoger.

Andrea: Sí.
Investigador: Y ¿por qué no te sentiste como parte de la familia con tu primer host family?

Andrea: Realmente es que el host dad, como te digo, me costaba mucho comunicarme con él, además solía hablar en un tono muy fuerte y bueno, yo prefería mantener el contacto al mínimo.

Investigador: ¿En el desarrollo de tu experiencia, te enfrentaste a barreras de orden cultural?

Andrea: Quizás un poco porque bueno, la primera, por eso, porque el señor era griego y la segunda porque eran muy meticulosos, eran muy rígidos y eso no es algo a lo que yo estoy acostumbrada, pero supimos acoplarnos, tanto yo a ellos, como ellos a mí.

Investigador: ¿Y durante tu experiencia en El Paso Texas, te enfrentaste a algún tipo de barreras de orden cultural?

Andrea: No, porque es que en El Paso la mayoría de las personas son mexicanas, entonces tampoco es tan diferente.

Investigador: ¿Dado que el programa Au Pair, es un programa de intercambio cultural, qué aportes destacas haber recibido en este campo, mientras has estado o estuviste en el programa?

Andrea: Realmente aprendí muchas cosas de México, más que de Estados Unidos, comida mexicana o todas las diferencias que tenemos entre países, sí, los aportes culturales realmente no fueron muy americanos.

Investigador: ¿Nos puedes narrar una anécdota cultural particular asociada a tu experiencia en El Paso, Texas por ser una ciudad fronteriza?

Andrea: Pues bueno, yo iba con mis amigas a veces a México y era un poco extraño como poder pasar de un país a otro caminando en el mismo día, ida y vuelta. Creo que eso es lo único.

Investigador: ¿Era mucha la diferencia entre El Paso y Ciudad Juárez?

Andrea: Abismal, muchísima.
Investigador: ¿Nos podrías contar algo en particular que te haya llamado la atención, entre las diferencias que notaste entre una y otra ciudad?

Andrea: Al entrar a México nadie te controla, ni te ven el pasaporte, ni absolutamente nada, además se nota. Se nota en la calidad de vida, en las calles, en todo, la verdad. En cambio, al entrar de México a Estados Unidos pues, hay mucho control, sí, básicamente eso y se nota sobre todo en la infraestructura.

Investigador: Para concluir, ¿considera que la empresa con la que usted viajó, toma algún tipo de ventaja de la participación de los inmigrantes latinoamericanos que deciden vivir en los Estados Unidos?

Andrea: Sí, por supuesto, en mi caso yo pagué dos mil dólares para poder aplicar al programa. Luego me enteré de que mis amigas de otros países cancelaron mucho menos, entonces sí, definitivamente, y bueno, no se cuánto les pagarán las agencias.

Investigador: ¿Desde su experiencia personal, recomendarías a futuros participantes del programa Au Pair vivir su experiencia de intercambio en El Paso, Texas?

Andrea: Honestamente no. si yo le recomiendo a alguien que se va de Au Pair, que es un año que no va a pagar alquiler, que no va a pagar ese tipo de gastos, yo recomendaría escoger una ciudad mucho más grande y más emocionante.

Investigador: Okay, muchísimas gracias por su participación en este estudio.

Andrea: Por nada, siempre a la orden.

Entrevista #3: Sandra

Investigador: Bueno, vamos a dar inicio con esta entrevista, la primera pregunta es, ¿Cómo te enteraste de la existencia del programa Au Pair?
Sandra: Buenos días Caro, primero te cuento que yo soy de Colombia y del programa me enteré por varias, digamos como voz a voz, de gente acá en mi país y en mi ciudad, que ya había viajado con ese programa y específicamente una persona como que me puso más en contacto con la agencia y todo este proceso.

Investigador: ¿Qué te motivó a realizar el programa Au Pair en los Estados Unidos y de manera específica en El Paso, Texas?

Sandra: Bueno, en primer lugar, lo que me motivó era el aprender el segundo idioma, en este caso el inglés y no menos importante el conocer otra cultura, aprender nuevas cosas, expandir mis visiones personales y también profesionales. Tengo que mencionar que inicialmente en el programa, cuando yo viajé, no viajé al El Paso, Texas, estuve en otro lugar y ya por situaciones que se presentaron dentro del programa tuve que hacer el cambio de familia que, en ese caso, cuando ya pasaron seis meses, desde que había iniciado, fue cuando viajé al Paso, Texas y allá encontré la familia con la que terminé el programa. También es importante mencionar, que teniendo en cuenta la situación que se había presentado con la agencia y todo esto, realmente no tenía como más opción de digamos de pronto poder ir a otra ciudad o a otro lugar, así que digamos que mi única opción era ir con la familia que estaba en contacto, que en ese momento vivía en El Paso Texas. Si me causaba curiosidad porque era al otro extremo del país en el que yo me encontraba en ese momento y que era un lugar fronterizo con México, entonces también me iba a permitir como empaparme un poquito más de otra cultura.

Investigador: Quisiera preguntarte, ¿a qué ciudad llegaste inicialmente? y también si nos quisieras comentar un poco, ¿cuál fue esa situación, si te sientes cómoda haciéndolo, que se presentó que te hizo entrar en rematch, que entiendo es, buscar una nueva familia y seguir el programa con esa nueva familia de acogida?
Sandra: Exactamente, eso es. Bueno, la primera ciudad a la que yo viajé fue a Washington DC. Pues no era exactamente ahí, pero era cerca. El lugar en el que yo estaba se llamaba Potomac, es muy cerca, esa es la región. Bueno, les comento que era una familia de cuatro niños. Los niños ya eran grandes, había uno de trece, once, ocho y cinco. Eran unos niños que no tenían como muchas normas, de hecho, uno de ellos tomaba medicamento porque tenía diagnosticado como hiperactividad, no recuerdo muy bien el nombre, pero algo así era, entonces pues, bueno, ahí como que se veía, era un poco como complicado. El tema con ellos y algo que siento yo que me generó mayor dificultad para interactuar con la familia era el idioma. Si bien nos piden un cierto nivel para poder viajar y todo eso, pues yo soy consciente que mi nivel de inglés era muy básico entonces pues la comunicación con los niños era más difícil y con la familia en general. Yo decidí irme con esa familia porque la señora, es decir, mi host mom de esa familia, hablaba un poco de español entonces yo me acogí de ahí, en que con ella iba a poder hacer ese canal de comunicación mientras yo aprendía el idioma y pues iba mejorando en todo ese aspecto, ¿no? Sin embargo, cuando llegué allá, bueno, cuando estaba acá antes de viajar, pues cuando hice las entrevistas y todo eso, la señora siempre me decía que tranquila, que ella me iba a ayudar, que se iba a sentir como en casa, bueno, todo ese tipo de cosas y pues, entonces bajo esas condiciones de lo que ella me mencionaba más teniendo en cuenta como el tema del idioma en que ella hablaba español, pues yo decidí irme con ellos.

Cuando llegue allá, digamos que no fue como tan así, como tan real lo que ella me mencionaba. Recuerdo mucho el primer día que yo llegué allá donde la familia y cuando entramos a la casa. Me acuerdo que era una casa muy muy grande, y bueno, llegamos y ya me dijeron como ven, te vas a ubicar en tu cuarto, no sé qué y pues de entradita, mi cuarto quedaba en el sótano, entonces pues en ese momento ya yo me sentí menos, como nosotros estamos acá y usted pues va
a estar allá. Y pues es algo que, desde ese momento generó un impacto para empezar el programa. Siento que no fue un impacto positivo y bueno, entonces a eso hay que sumarle el estar en un país diferente, solo, sin conocer mucho del idioma y entonces así empezó todo y ya obviamente la agencia también nos da a nosotros unos parámetros ¿no? de nuestras responsabilidades dentro de la familia y pues bajo eso yo me regía, ¿no?, cosas como estar pendiente de los niños, como llevarlos al colegio. No sé, ayudarles con las tareas, prepararles las onces, estar como pendientes de sus cuartos, de su ropa y todo esto, y yo pues con esto no tenía ningún inconveniente. Pero luego, al paso de eso, la señora me escribía en la agenda que la agencia nos da, digamos que es donde nos explican las actividades que tenemos que hacer a diario o semanalmente y se organiza el horario, entonces pasaba que, ya dentro de esas actividades habían cosas que no eran parte del programa como por ejemplo, ella me pedía que tenía que aspirar toda la casa, ordenar la cocina.

**Investigador:** Quiero que sepas que si prefieres que sigamos a la siguiente pregunta o que paremos está bien. En ningún momento quiero exponerte a ninguna situación en la que no quieras estar y si no te sientes cómoda contándonos lo que fue esa experiencia, está bien. Podemos continuar a la siguiente pregunta o como prefieras.

**Sandra:** Pues sí, es que me causa un poco de impacto recordar. Pero sí quiero mencionarlo porque sé que de pronto esto que a mí me pasó, pues a otras niñas les puede estar pasando o de pronto como para que estén atentas a todo esto que puede pasar cuando nosotros viajamos en estos programas.

**Investigador:** Claro, aprecio tú sinceridad y tus ganas de querer compartir esta información con futuras participantes.

**Sandra:** Y bueno, entonces, como mencionaba ya cuando ella me pedía cosas como lo que digo, ósea, limpiar la casa, aspirar, lavar la ropa de ellos, entonces muchas veces yo le decía a ella que
no, pues porque eso no era lo que estaba estipulado dentro del programa y pues de ahí entonces empezó a generarse no sé si rivalidad, pero sí como una situación muy tensa porque, pues la señora quería que yo hiciera todo eso y yo le decía que no, entonces como que se empezaron ahí como a generar roces y bueno.

Entonces eso se fue volviendo como una bolita de nieve y ya luego ellos querían que yo pagara el gas que utilizaba cuando llevaba a los niños al colegio y todo esto. Adicional a eso muchas veces la señora hablaba cosas malas de mí, decía, “no, es que como que ella no sabe nada, no sé qué”, y lo hacía en inglés frente a mí con otras personas y yo pues, como mencionaba al inicio, no sabía mucho del idioma, así que no entendía hasta que personas con las que yo compartía me contaron, entonces pues todo eso era muy complicado.

Ya después yo muchas veces hacía el intento de cambiarme de familia y pues ella me decía como “pues es que usted no va a conseguir otra familia, o nadie va a querer una Au Pair”, me decía, “nadie va a querer una Au Pair que no hable bien inglés y que no maneje, entonces pues, claro a mí eso me frenaba y por eso aguanté tantas cosas estando ahí esos seis meses con esa familia que realmente fue muy complicado. Ya después cuando se dio ya finalmente una situación como que detonó pues todo eso, entonces yo dije “no, pues ya, sea como sea me voy a ir de esta familia” y fue pues cuando empecé a hacer el proceso de rematch. Sin embargo, esta señora, la de la primera familia, me había colocado unas referencias bastante fuertes, entonces me fue muy difícil conseguir otra familia; entonces yo por eso al inicio, mencionaba que no tuve más opción de poderme ir con otra familia sino fue con la que yo fui a El Paso, que realmente agradezco mucho a ellos que pues me dieron la oportunidad de continuar y terminar mi programa.
**Investigador:** Bueno, entonces ya que nos has compartido un poco acerca de esta primera experiencia que tuviste como Au Pair, devolvámonos un poco en el proceso. ¿Cuáles eran tus actividades cotidianas en tu país de origen, antes de decidir ser Au Pair?

**Sandra:** Bueno, yo soy docente y pues acá en mi país yo me desempeñaba como docente, así que mi rutina era a las siete de la mañana empezaba a trabajar, a medio día tenía un espacio de almuerzo, luego en la tarde nuevamente trabajaba en el mismo colegio. Entonces ponle que trabajaba de 7:00 a 5:30 de la tarde, más o menos, de lunes a viernes y los sábados yo estaba terminando de estudiar mi licenciatura, entonces los sábados yo estudiaba y pues básicamente era esa mi actividad.

**Investigador:** Perfecto, ¿cómo fue su proceso para ser Au Pair?

**Sandra:** ¿De cómo empecé a hacer todo el proceso?

**Investigador:** Así es.

**Sandra:** Bueno, pues como mencionaba, me enteré de todo esto, pues del programa y de las oportunidades que se abrirían. Entonces en ese momento tenía el contacto de una persona que tenía conocimiento más cercano de todo ese proceso y ya de pronto conocía la experiencia de otras personas que habían viajado. Así que esa persona me empezó a orientar muy muy de cerca, cómo hacer el proceso, como hacer, digamos diligenciar los documentos, los requisitos que se necesitaban y con esa persona yo hice todo el proceso muy paso a paso, ósea, desde sacar el pasaporte, pedir las referencias que solicitaban, la experiencia de trabajo con los niños y teniendo en cuenta de que iba a viajar a otro país pues empecé a estudiar el idioma de a pocos.

**Investigador:** ¿Qué habilidades y destrezas principales te hicieron candidata elegible para formar parte del programa?
Sandra: La primera yo pienso que era mi experiencia como docente, el tener el conocimiento de cómo actuar en diferentes situaciones con los niños y ya pues también como en el ámbito educativo de pronto de aportar como tal a su formación académica de los niños que iba a cuidar. Pienso yo que ese era el factor principal o lo que más llamaba la atención de mi perfil.

Investigador: ¿Por qué se interesó en participar en este programa?

Sandra: Como mencionaba anteriormente, por el inglés, por el querer aprender otro idioma y también en busca de nuevas oportunidades ¿no? Pues todo partiendo del idioma. Pues cuando uno tiene un idioma extranjero como que se abren más puertas en el campo laboral y en cuanto a lo personal pues el poder no sé conocer otras culturas y ver el mundo de otra forma, poder entrar en contacto más fácil, digamos no solo con países de habla inglesa, pero también con gente de otros lugares, entonces eso.

Investigador: ¿Con cuántas familias se entrevistó antes de escoger su primera host family?

Sandra: Hice entrevista con dos familias -interferencia en la conexión- Con dos familias.

Investigador: ¿Cuáles fueron las ciudades? -interferencia en la conexión- ¿Perdón?

Sandra: ¿Señora? -interferencia en la conexión- Que iba a mencionar que, por cierto, con esas dos familias pues fue muy difícil. Yo creo que cero y nada en la entrevista por el inglés, porque había cosas que yo entendía y podía responder, pero había otras que no, pues ni idea. Entonces como partiendo de ahí pues obviamente las familias como que paraban el proceso ahí conmigo y no recuerdo los lugares -interferencia en la conexión- creo que una familia era de California pero la otra no recuerdo de donde era.

Investigador: ¿En el proceso de seleccionar El Paso, Texas para vivir tu experiencia de Au Pair, la empresa que te asesoró, te suministro información específica sobre las particularidades que se tendrían al vivir en una ciudad fronteriza?
Sandra: La agencia no. Pues yo realmente no recuerdo que la agencia como tal me hubiese dicho mira acá, esto, no. Mi familia sí, con la que yo me fui recuerdo mucho que en el perfil de ellos si estaba muy como en detalle, ellos me mencionaban, porque bueno los dos trabajaban en el ejército, entonces ellos me mencionaban que pues ahí estaba la base militar. Que estaba pues ubicado en la frontera con México y yo recuerdo que cuando empecé a leer la información y leía que la ciudad se llamaba así “El Paso” y yo decía, “¿pero eso si será una ciudad o será un pueblo, cómo será?” entonces yo también pues como que empezaba a buscar un poquito acerca de la ciudad, pero realmente nunca antes había escuchado esa ciudad.

Investigador: ¿Usted cree que el programa debería informar a sus candidatos acerca de las particularidades de vivir en ciudades fronterizas?

Sandra: Sí.

Investigador: ¿Por qué?

Sandra: Pienso que sí es importante que ellos lo mencionen porque muchas veces las niñas, no sé, o la gente, se va a aun lugar sin saber más información digamos de lo que sucede alrededor y de pronto eso puede ser una información buena o puede ser una información mala, de acuerdo a lo que las personas busquen ¿sí? Por ejemplo, de El Paso, ósea, yo pienso que era importante mencionar que la empresa hubiera mencionado, que estaba justo a la frontera, que podía, de alguna manera, cruzar y pues ver, conocer otra ciudad que ya pertenecía a otro país, entonces yo pienso que en mi caso eso me hubiese pues motivado más porque era el entrar en contacto con otra cultura. Hay muchas niñas que lo desconocen o por esa misma razón deciden no ir a El Paso o a otros lugares que están como a las fronteras, entonces yo pienso que sí es importante que ellos lo mencionen.

Investigador: ¿Cómo te sientes con el hecho de vivir o haber vivido en El Paso, Texas?
Sandra: Bien, realmente me siento muy bien y muy contenta, satisfecha de haber estado en esa ciudad haciendo mi programa, terminando mi programa; no sé, pienso que influyen muchas cosas, empezando pues por la familia con la que llegué, con ellos fue excelente la experiencia y por ende como que yo siempre le vi todo bueno a El Paso, ósea, sé que es una ciudad más pequeña comparada con otras, que de pronto no tiene tantas atracciones como otras ciudades que uno escucha y ve en Estados Unidos, pero para mí, fue excelente, ósea, tenía el college, tenía acceso como a los lugares más fácil, conocí gente genial allí. Entonces no sé, para mí fue muy bonita esa experiencia en El Paso.

Investigador: ¿Con el programa, esperabas vivir la experiencia en otra ciudad?

Sandra: Pues no, bueno, inicialmente como me fui a otra ciudad, pues, realmente yo pensé que iba a terminar por lo menos el año allá ¿sí? bueno, voy a mencionar que inicialmente mi plan era quedarme un año ¿sí? allá en Estados Unidos, pero luego decidí quedarme los dos años, entonces mi plan o yo me veía pues terminando mi primer año, es decir, el programa allá en Washington, donde lo empecé.

Investigador: Okay. ¿Cuáles eran tus imaginarios sobre la vida en los Estados Unidos cuando estabas en tu país, antes de vivir el programa?

Sandra: Era lo que veía yo en las fotos de niñas que ya habían viajado o lo que escuchaba y pues se escucha que todo es maravilloso, que de pronto, bueno, también como el cambio de moneda ¿no? Pero si digamos que de pronto se podía tener un poco más de dinero, una vida más cómoda, viajar, sí, como eso era lo que yo veía. Como todo color de rosa, pues.

Investigador: ¿Ahora que vives o viviste en los Estados Unidos como miembro del programa Au Pair, qué tan cerca de la realidad estaban tus imaginarios?
Sandra: No, creo que inicialmente, muy lejos. Osea, por lo menos en los seis meses estuvieron demasiado lejos, pues por todo lo que me pasó a mí con esta familia. Bueno, digamos que, en cuanto al dinero, si estaba un poco más cerca, porque es un pago semanal, entonces como que semanalmente yo recibía el dinero, el cual enviaba a mi país para poder digamos pagar lo que yo había gastado cuando viajé, entonces en ese sentido en cuanto al dinero, creo que si estaba como muy cerca. Ya como el pensar y ver que todo era color de rosa y perfecto y solo alegrías, pues no. La verdad no osea, ni siquiera era como tan consciente del hecho de estar, bueno, pues en otro lugar. Pero, sobre todo, con el tema de la comida, osea, no se tenía como, o yo no tenía referencia de eso, como ser tan consciente de ese tema de la comida.

Investigador: Okay. ¿Desde tu experiencia, cuáles son las ventajas y desventajas de ser Au Pair en El Paso, Texas?

Sandra: Bueno, las ventajas, pienso que, en primer lugar, pues que todo está muy cerca, osea, es una ciudad pequeña en la que tú puedes acceder a diferentes lugares de forma fácil. Por esa misma razón el dinero te alcanza un poquito más, de pronto al ser latina encontramos como un sentimiento de pronto de hermandad con ¿sí? Con gente pues que es de México, entonces pues está ahí ese común denominador que es el ser latinos. Pues yo siempre vi como todo muy tranquilo, un ambiente seguro, amable. Entonces pienso que esas son como las ventajas. Desventajas, que de pronto no hay como mayor atracción digamos, como parques temáticos o sí, como cosas así tan grandes que uno pues pueda explorar.

Investigador: Okay. Nos podrías contar ¿cuáles son o eran tus responsabilidades como Au Pair?

Sandra: Sí, bueno, cuando estaba en El Paso, la familia de la que yo llego, mis niños por ejemplo, ellos no iban a la escuela, a ellos se les hacía homeschool y pues afortunadamente, bueno, desde mi experiencia como docente, me acuerdo que cuando leí eso de mi familia, me gustó mucho eso,
me llamó mucho la atención, así que bueno, empezaba yo mi rutina a las ocho de la mañana, hacía el desayuno de los niños, los organizaba en la mañana, ósea como su rutina normal de aseo, desayuno y luego empezábamos como tipo nueve de la mañana a hacer clase, yo les ayudaba a ellos guiándoles sus currículums que tenían de homeschooling, lo hacíamos ahí juntos; luego yo les preparaba el almuerzo y en la tarde, generalmente tenían clases adicionales como gimnasia, piano, futbol, música, taekwondo, bueno, entre otras. Entonces en las tardes yo los llevaba a todas sus clases, los acompañaba y ya luego regresábamos. Adicional a ello, pues, una vez a la semana hacía el lavado de la ropa, organizarles eso, porque púes ellos eran pequeños. Sin embargo, ellos también me ayudaban, también sí, como el estar pendiente muy de sus cosas, realmente no tuve inconveniente con ello.

Investigador: ¿Sientes que el beneficio económico y de prebendas recibido por formar parte del programa Au Pair es adecuado para cubrir tus necesidades y expectativas?

Sandra: No, bueno, yo pienso que, digamos que el pago que recibía convirtiéndolo a mis pesos colombianos pues era bien, pero ya como tal para estar allá y todo lo que de pronto uno necesita, pienso que sigue siendo un salario muy bajito. Pues digo, además por la responsabilidad que le implica a uno estar al cuidado y pendiente de los niños ¿no? Entonces pienso que el pago sí debería ser un poco mejor.

Investigador: Okay, ¿te has sentido o te sentiste aislada por ser extranjera o por ser miembro del programa Au Pair?

Sandra: En la primera familia sí, desde el primer día que llegué, como lo mencioné. En la segunda familia no, para nada, realmente en la segunda familia me sentí como en mi casa. Bueno quiero mencionar que, en mi segunda familia, mi host dad, él tiene origen latino, o él no, pero si su familia
es de descendencia mexicana. Entonces no sé si también como por eso, el hecho de estar ahí con ellos me sentía como en familia.

**Investigador:** Okay. Gracias, ¿Cuándo estabas en tu país qué era para ti el sueño americano?

**Sandra:** Bueno, pues es que la verdad yo creo que no le había puesto mucha atención a eso, la verdad como que ni siquiera lo había escuchado mencionar, así como tal “el sueño americano” no, pues realmente no lo había escuchado, solamente cuando estaba allá a veces que en las noticias mencionaban y eso, pero de lo contrario no.

**Investigador:** Y ahora, después de tu experiencia y del conocimiento acerca de este sueño americano ¿ha cambiado tu concepto de ese sueño americano, después de que formaste parte del programa Au Pair?

**Sandra:** Pues es que yo pienso que como bien dice “el sueño” es que como que la gente tiene la expectativa de que todo es perfecto, que todo es muy bien y la mayoría de gente se va en busca de una mejor vida, de estar mejor o en mejores condiciones especialmente como económicas. Yo pienso que la gente sigue viajando con ese mismo objetivo, entonces yo creo que después del programa sigue siendo la misma visión, el mismo objetivo.

**Investigador:** Okay y desde tu experiencia personal ¿tú alcanzaste tu sueño americano o no es tanto así, o no?

**Sandra:** Yo pienso que sí, yo pienso que sí. Porque mi objetivo era aprender inglés y poder tener mejores condiciones laborales cuando regresara a mi país y afortunadamente lo logré. Tengo que mencionar que eso sí no fue para nada fácil, el aprender un idioma prácticamente en dos años es muy complicado, pero se puede, porque yo lo hice y lo hice con muchísima dedicación. Osea, tiempo libre que yo tenía era estudiar, estudiar y estudiar por mi cuenta y adicionalmente ir al college y todo eso y pues para certificar eso, yo realicé uno de los exámenes internacionales que
es con el cual yo pude tener mejores oportunidades acá en mi país, entonces sí, yo lo logré y pues me siento muy afortunada de haberlo logrado.

**Investigador:** ¿Desde tu experiencia viviendo o haber vivido en El Paso, Texas, ha mejorado tu nivel de inglés?

**Sandra:** Bueno, sí. Porque afortunadamente en el college encontré a un maestro que me ayudó bastante de forma adicional. Osea, adicional a mis clases que yo veía en el college, él me daba como unas tutorías adicionales, lo cual me ayudó muchísimo, pero si no hubiese sido ese el caso, pienso que en ese punto no nos favorece tanto porque pues de pronto a donde vayamos no se genera tanto la necesidad porque mucha gente habla español, entonces al escuchar que otra persona habla español, pues uno se siente más cómodo y sigue hablando en español en lugar de esforzarse para mejorar su inglés, entonces pienso que en ese punto no favorece mucho y lo olvide mencionar en las desventajas, sí, creo que para aprender el segundo idioma, no nos favorece tanto.

**Investigador:** ¿Has sentido o sientes que el idioma inglés fue una barrera para desarrollar adecuadamente tus responsabilidades en el programa Au Pair?

**Sandra:** Sí, sobre todo en la primera familia. Sí, siento que para mí el inglés en ese momento se me convirtió como en una barrera, como en el monstruo. Pues, que de pronto por eso me generó mayor impacto y que las cosas con esa familia fueran como tan difíciles.

**Investigador:** Okay. ¿Cuáles han sido los mayores desafíos que has tenido que enfrentar en tu proceso de adaptación con tu host family?

**Sandra:** ¿Con cualquiera de las dos?

**Investigador:** Si quieres mencionarlas por aparte, cada caso, no hay ningún problema.

**Sandra:** Bueno, con la primera, sobre todo con la primera era, digamos, en nuestras familias latinas nos educan de una forma distinta a como educan los niños allá. ¿No? Entonces, por ejemplo,
los niños allá como sus rutinas, por ejemplo, sus rutinas de que se levanten y pues siempre todas sus cosas que utilizan, no sé, juguetes, ropa y demás, lo utilizan y lo tiran en el lugar que caiga. Pues, de pronto la forma como piden a veces las cosas, la forma de decir las cosas es como muy concreta, es como al punto y pues acá digamos por cultura, pues no, osea, siempre uno lo que utiliza lo recoge. Que si desordenó algo, pues lo organiza, de pronto un poco como una relación humana más calurosa, el hecho de preguntar ¿cómo estás? ¿cómo te fue? y pues entonces claro, cuando yo sentía eso con esta familia, era como ese impacto todo el tiempo.

Con mi otra familia, siento que no fue tan difícil la adaptación con ellos, porque bueno ya como que tenía un poquito de experiencia, dos, porque como mencione antes, mi host dad era como de esa cultura latina, entonces coincidía mucho y ya, pero pues yo pienso que eso.

Investigador: Okay. ¿Qué es lo que más disfrutas de convivir o de la convivencia con tus host families?

Sandra: Disfrutaba mucho cuando cocinábamos justos y cenábamos todos o cuando viajábamos también, siempre se sentía esa relación muy amena y realmente no sentía como que yo estuviera trabajando así, porque me sentía como parte de la familia, entonces una cosa como que todos en la familia ayudamos. ¡Entonces eso!

Investigador: Entonces ¿tú si lograste sentirte miembro de esa familia?

Sandra: Sí, con la segunda familia me sentí totalmente como en casa, osea, con ellos fue genial. En esa segunda familia si puedo sentir y decir que me sentí en familia y que son mi familia. Ya han pasado, hace más de un año que yo regresé a mi país, pero yo sigo en contacto con ellos, casi todos los días hablo con ellos, con mis niños. Entonces realmente se hicieron unos lazos muy fuertes.

Investigador: ¿En el desarrollo de tu experiencia te enfrentaste a barreras de orden cultural?
**Sandra:** Sí, claro, como mencionaba ahorita, un poco el tema de la comunicación. Ellos son como muy concretos. También el tema de la comida, de pronto como que el desayuno es más o menos similar, el almuerzo para ellos es algo muy rápido y la cena es como la comida grande. Para nosotros acá es, al contrario, el almuerzo es la comida grande y en la cena algo más pequeño. Entonces cuando pasaba eso era un poco raro, pero bueno, con el tiempo me adapté. Pero también tenía libertad de mantener mi costumbre en cuanto a las comidas. En cuanto a la música, la celebración de fechas especiales y todo eso, también había mucha diferencia.

**Investigador:** Dado que el programa Au Pair es un programa de intercambio cultural ¿Qué aportes destacas haber recibido en ese campo, mientras estuviste en el programa?

**Sandra:** Pienso que sí, que ese aporte cultural se da total, por ejemplo, el tema de la comida, yo aprendí a cocinar diferentes platos típicos que ellos cocinan allá o que se comen en ciertas festividades como por ejemplo cuando es Thanskgiving que se come pavo y todo eso, pues yo nunca lo había vivido antes de ir al programa. Como cuando es lo de easter, la pascua, todo el juego de los huevitos y todo eso, entonces sí, todo ese tipo de celebraciones se da muchísimo entonces creo que sí y de esa misma forma siento que yo le aporté mucho a mi familia, les compartía mucho acerca de la música que era típica de mi región, de la comida, varias veces yo les cocinaba cosas de acá de mi país, pues para también compartir con ellos.

**Investigador:** ¿Nos podrías narrar una anécdota cultural particular asociada a tu experiencia en El Paso Texas por ser una ciudad fronteriza?

**Sandra:** Bueno, como mencionaba, encontré allá otras niñas que también eran latinas y había otra compañera que era italiana, ya casi íbamos a terminar los programas entonces decidimos hacer como un viaje de despedida, entonces decidimos ir a Cancún y el vuelo lo tomábamos desde Ciudad Juárez, es decir, pasando la frontera, porque era más económico, entonces como era un
vuelo corto hay muchas restricciones con el equipaje, entonces pues cada una llevaba como organizado su equipaje para la semana, para la semana que nos íbamos a quedar. Sin embargo, dos compañeras habían empacado más cosas y tenían exceso de equipaje y pues obviamente íbamos a tener que pagar ese extra. Dentro de esos extra, pues era ropa y eran zapatos, entonces ellas empezaron a abrir las maletas y se empezaron a colocar toda la ropa, mucha ropa, y yo recuerdo que toda la gente en el aeropuerto las miraba y las miraba y yo recuerdo que yo las miraba y a mí me daba mucha risa verlas haciendo eso, pero y yo les dije, pero igual, ósea, uno, ya íbamos a tener que pagar porque ya nos habían medido el equipaje, así que, ya sabían que teníamos equipaje extra, ósea, sí o sí, o teníamos que pagarlo o teníamos que dejarlo, igual ellas intentaban colocarse la ropa y todo eso, pero ya no sirvió de nada, la gente se reía mucho y yo también me reía mucho, pero nada, pues al final efectivamente nos tocó pagar ese dinero extra para poder llevar todo el equipaje.

**Investigador:** Para ir concluyendo con la entrevista, ¿usted considera que la empresa con la que usted viajó toma algún tipo de ventaja de la participación de los inmigrantes latinoamericanos que deciden vivir la experiencia en los Estados Unidos?

**Sandra:** Pues yo pienso que sí, yo pienso que sí y lo hacen de forma económica, porque de todas formas nosotros tenemos que pagar. De hecho, pienso yo que es bastante y luego las familias allá también deben pagar, entonces pienso que la empresa sí claro tiene esa ventaja de ganar ese dinero para ellos y vendiendo de alguna forma la imagen de que todo es perfecto, es la mejor experiencia, como todas las familias, maravilloso, pero ya uno sabe que no es tan así.

**Investigador:** La última pregunta, ¿desde su experiencia personal les recomendaría a futuros participantes del programa Au Pair, vivir su experiencia de intercambio en El Paso Texas?
Sandra: Sí, yo pienso que sí ósea es que yo pienso que, para mí, mi experiencia en El Paso, Texas, tuvo que ver muchísimo con la familia con la que yo estuve. Entonces yo pienso que si uno tiene una buena familia donde se siente muy bien, donde lo hacen sentir muy bien, pienso que el lugar no marca mucha diferencia, siendo que tú puedes viajar a otros lugares, y conocer otros lugares, pienso yo que es más importante el bienestar de la familia o el lugar donde uno esté y ya lo demás uno lo puede solucionar más fácil. Pero sí, yo tuve una experiencia bonita en El Paso. Entonces pues sí, yo realmente le recomendaría a otra persona que lo hiciera allí.

Investigador: Bueno, muchísimas gracias por tu tiempo y colaboración, toda esta información será muy importante para los propósitos del presente estudio.

Sandra: Bueno pues a ti muchísimas gracias por invitarme y espero que esta información de verdad sea para ese uso, que a ti te sirva para tu estudio y para las experiencias de otras personas en este tipo de programas.

Investigador: ¡Gracias!

Sandra: ¡Bueno, gracias!

Entrevista # 4: Catalina

Investigador: Buenos días, muchas gracias por querer participar en esta entrevista. Vamos a dar inicio con la primera pregunta, ¿Cómo te enteraste de la existencia del programa Au Pair?

Catalina: Mmm, me enteré por medio de un volante, un flyer, que estaban repartiendo en mi universidad.

Investigador: ¿Qué te motivó a realizar el programa Au Pair en los Estados Unidos y de manera específica en El Paso, Texas?

Catalina: Bueno, lo que me motivó principalmente es poder tener una experiencia de intercambio, también porque tiene que ver mucho con mi profesión, digamos que estar con niños y enseñar, es
algo que me interesó bastante. Y en El Paso, bueno pues la verdad fue que la familia con la que estuve allá y con la que me entrevisté se veía muy buena y de hecho fue así. Cuando tuve la entrevista con esta familia en El Paso, pues no estaba muy convencida de ir a El Paso, pero al final dije bueno pues es más importante estar con una buena familia, sin importar el lugar, a estar en un buen lugar como con una mala familia, básicamente eso me motivó a estar allá.

**Investigador:** ¿Qué te hacía dudar de irte para El Paso, Texas?

**Catalina:** ¿Qué me hacía dudar? Mmm, pues digamos que había escuchado comentarios, como que era un lugar muy aburrido, no había mucho que hacer. También porque no había casi Au Pairs en ese lugar pues básicamente por eso. Pero es que realmente yo no tenía mucho conocimiento, osea, realmente como te dije, realmente el lugar no era muy importante para mí, osea era como más importante escoger una buena familia.

Pero pues El Paso, realmente cuando yo escogí, osea cuando yo revisé ese lugar, no tenía mucha idea de qué clase de lugar iba a ser, simplemente yo estaba como abierta a conocer un nuevo lugar.

**Investigador:** ¿Cuáles eras tus actividades cotidianas en tu país de origen?

**Catalina:** Mmmm, actividades cotidianas yo lo que hacía era trabajar y estudiar mi carrera. Estudiaba pues en la universidad. Mi carrera es sobre pedagogía, enseñanza de idiomas y trabajaba en un colegio enseñando inglés.

**Investigador:** ¿Cómo fue su proceso para ser Au Pair?

**Catalina:** ¿En qué sentido? ¿Cómo fue de difícil o?

**Investigador:** Desde que recibiste el flyer, empezaste a investigar, ¿cómo todo ese proceso hasta el viaje?
Catalina: ¡Vale! Realmente yo había escuchado mucho antes del programa, si no que no estaba muy segura de hacerlo. Realmente la que me impulsó hacer este programa fue mi mamá. Desde antes yo había hecho como otros viajes a otros países haciendo voluntariados y yo dije bueno sesta sería como otra oportunidad para ir a otro país. Este sería el tercer país que visito en los últimos cuatro años y pues nada yo realmente estaba muy abierta a una nueva experiencia y fue realmente muy sencillo empezar el proceso.

Yo lo primero que hice fue asistir a las reuniones informativas de la agencia y ya, desde ahí empecé con todo el proceso de papeleo, de entrenamiento y pues de informarme y ya, realmente fue muy sencillo para mí hacer todo el proceso.

Investigador: ¿Qué habilidades y destrezas principales te hicieron candidata elegible para formar parte del programa?

Catalina: Mi nivel de inglés me ayudó bastante a que me aprobaran en la agencia. También mi experiencia con los niños y así mismo, pues en mi opinión creo que influyó mucho la carrera que estaba haciendo porque estaba muy relacionada con estar en contacto con niños.

Investigador: ¿Cuáles fueron las ciudades que tuviste la opción de seleccionar para realizar el programa Au Pair?

Catalina: Yo no me acuerdo mucho, pero pues la verdad yo no recibí como muchas solicitudes en ese momento. Mmmm, los lugares que más me llegaban eran como por los estados del Florida y de California, estaban ciudades como San Francisco, ciudades como Orlando, me llegaban más que todo de lugares del sur del país, me llegaban de Texas también.

Investigador: ¿En estos momentos vives en El Paso, Texas?

Catalina: -Sin sonido-

Investigador: Aló, ¿me escuchas?
Catalina: ¡No se escucha bien!

Investigador: Te preguntaba si ¿en estos momentos vives en El Paso, Texas?

Catalina: No, en estos momentos estoy en otra ciudad con otra host family.

Investigador: ¿Cuántos meses viviste en El Paso, Texas? Y ¿Por qué estás viviendo con otra familia?

Catalina: Viví en El Paso por nueve o diez meses aproximadamente, y mi anterior host family tuvo que irse del país porque ellos son del Army y ellos tuvieron que irse a otro país como de deployment algo así, para trabajar en Italia -Problemas técnicos con la conexión-

Investigador: Aló? Ellos se mudaron a Italia y tú conseguiste una nueva host Family?

Catalina: Sí, tuve que entrar en rematch. Quería seguir en Texas después de eso. Yo quería seguir en El Paso porque yo había conocido a alguien, estaba saliendo con alguien y pues la verdad quería seguir viviendo en El Paso. Desafortunadamente no pude, nunca me llegó como una familia de allá porque como te digo no hay muchas familias allá que necesiten Au Pairs. Realmente fue muy difícil así que simplemente conocí una familia en Houston. No me fue muy bien con esa familia, así que decidí como simplemente volver a hacer rematch y en ese segundo rematch decidí como ser un poco más abierta a cualquier lugar por lo que te decía uno muchas veces escoge el lugar, pero las familias muchas veces no son muy buenas. Pero sí, básicamente tuve que dejar El Paso por eso, no quería, pero pues tocó.

Investigador: ¿En qué ciudad te encuentras en estos momentos?

Catalina: En estos momentos estoy en Washington, DC, en el área del DMV que es como el triángulo de Maryland, Virginia y DC, y pues acá estoy.

Investigador: ¿Con cuántas familias te entrevistaste al iniciar el programa?

Catalina: Yo me entreviste con dos, con la que hice match y con otra.
Investigador: ¿En el proceso de seleccionar El Paso, Texas para vivir tu experiencia de Au Pair, la empresa que te asesoró, te suministro información específica sobre las particularidades que se tendrían al vivir en una ciudad fronteriza?

Catalina: No, nunca me dijeron sobre eso.

Investigador: ¿Usted cree que el programa debería informar a sus candidatos acerca de las particularidades de vivir en ciudades fronterizas?

Catalina: No, no lo veo necesario, creo que una misma puede hacer eso sí le interesa.

Investigador: ¿Cómo te sientes con el hecho de vivir en El Paso o de haber vivido tú experiencia en El Paso, Texas?

Catalina: ¿Cómo me siento? Me siento bien, digamos que vivir allá fue muy chévere, aunque la verdad solo lo pude vivir por un mes porque después de un mes de haber llegado empezó la cuarentena y pues fue una cuarentena de cuatro meses, sin salir a absolutamente a nada. Siempre estuve ahí en la casa, ehhh pues sí, desafortunadamente mi experiencia en ese sentido no fue muy agradable pues porque quería salir y explorar la ciudad y todo, pero pues por cuatro meses todo estuvo cerrado. Digamos que en el mes que pude -Problemas técnicos con la conexión-

Digamos que como es fronterizo, pues digamos que la cultura es más mexicana que americana, realmente entonces pues no sentí como mucha diferencia o mucho cambio entre mi cultura y la cultura en El Paso.

Investigador: Antes de que siguieras, me había quedado en que en el único mes que pude salir. ¿No sé si dijiste algo más después de eso?

Catalina: (Risas) Osea, cuando yo llegué solo pude salir y disfrutar de la ciudad por un mes, no más. Después de un mes empezó la cuarentena por la pandemia del COVID-19, y estuve encerrada los siguientes cuatro meses. Entonces no pude básicamente hacer nada, realmente esa fue la parte
negativa de haber estado allá y nada después de los cuatro meses fue cuando la familia estaba planeando pues conseguir otro trabajo en el Army y fue cuando les salió en otro país.

Investigador: ¿Con el programa esperabas vivir la experiencia en otra ciudad inicialmente?

Catalina: No, la verdad yo nunca he tenido preferencia con equis o y ciudad, siempre he querido como dejarme llevar.

Investigador: ¿Cuáles eran tus imaginarios sobre la vida en los Estados Unidos cuando estabas en tu país?

Catalina: Imaginarios, bueno yo pensé que todo el mundo iba hablar en inglés, algo que fue completamente chocante cuando llegué a El Paso porque realmente en El Paso se habla mucho español, también entonces digamos que no sentí ese cambio. El imaginario también que tenía era que, aparte de que todo el mundo iba a estar hablando inglés era que iba a estar comiendo en Mc Donald’s todo el tiempo y que me iba a engordar (Risas) como los americanos, ese era mi imaginario. Pues era más que todo sobre la comida y sobre la cultura, el estilo de vida que yo veía en las películas, digamos que es un país donde se trabaja mucho por ser tan capitalista y pues pensaba estar rodeada de eso. Básicamente es eso.

Investigador: ¿Ahora que tuviste la experiencia de vivir en los Estados Unidos como miembro del programa Au Pair, qué tan cerca de la realidad estaban tus imaginarios?

Catalina: Pues estaban muy cerca de todas maneras. Igualmente digamos que con respecto a la comida puedo ver que no todo el mundo come comida chatarra. Realmente aquí la gente sí trata especialmente los niños, cuando hay niños especialmente es que la gente trata de ser más saludable. También pues me di cuenta que realmente hay mucha gente que aquí habla español y no fue muy chocante con respeto al idioma y nada creo que mis imaginarios estaban muy cerca a la realidad (risas). Básicamente eso.
Investigador: Desde tu experiencia, ¿cuáles son las ventajas y desventajas de ser Au Pair en El Paso, Texas?

Catalina: Bueno las ventajas, hay mucha interculturalidad allá, la comunidad como tal es muy amable, me gusta mucho. También digamos que es muy fácil hacer, digamos que la gente sí es muy sociable y las desventajas, en mi caso, es que no había casi Au Pairs entonces no había como mucha mmm ¿cómo se dice? -Problemas técnicos con la conexión-

No era que duraran mucho en El Paso, no sé era súper raro, porque -Problemas técnicos con la conexión-

Investigador: Me quede en, es que se cortó. Qué pena cortarte, es que se cortó y me quede en qué no había muchas Au Pairs. ¡No sé qué dijiste después de eso!

Catalina: Okay, ¿ya me escuchas?

Investigador: Sí, ya te escucho. Que no había muchas Au Pairs, ya no.

Catalina: ¿Me escuchas?

Investigador: Ahora sí, por momentos sí, por momentos no.

Catalina: Sí, yo también te escucho entrecortada. (Risas) Otra vez te voy a decir todo, las ventajas -Problemas técnicos con la conexión-

Investigador: Sí quieres solo las desventajas, las ventajas sí quedaron, las desventajas me quede en que no habían muchas Au Pairs -Problemas técnicos con la conexión- ¿Aló?

Catalina: También una desventaja era que no había mucho que hacer en El Paso, es como un desierto, entonces no hay como muchos lugares que visitar, eso era también una desventaja.

Investigador: Para retomar la primera acerca de las Au Pairs, tú decías que se iban rápido o qué era difícil socializar
Catalina: No, era que se iban rápido. Precisamente El Paso no es una ciudad o un lugar muy atractivo, entonces muchas simplemente decían que no les gustaba y pues hacían rematch. Mmmm y pues bueno la verdad es que es una de las desventajas de El Paso realmente no hay mucho que hacer, es como un desierto entonces pues nada no había mucha Au Pairs y ya, solo eso.

Investigador: ¿Cuáles son o eran tus responsabilidades como Au Pair? -Problemas técnicos con la conexión- ¿Me alcanzaste a escuchar?

Catalina: Sí. Mis tareas como Au Pair era cuidar de los niños, digamos que mi situación era especial porque los niños nunca iban a la escuela era home school. Los papás o la mamá específicamente era la encargada de en las mañanas enseñarles o darles clases y yo trabajaba pues ocho horas diarias todos los días y realmente fue duro porque como te digo estábamos en cuarentena y fue un largo tiempo estando con los niños en la casa todo el tiempo y era muy estresante la verdad. Mis tareas pues también era estar con ellos, jugar con ellos, prepararles el almuerzo no más y ya, y pues lavarles la ropa, organizarles la habitación y ya ese era básicamente mi trabajo.

Investigador: ¿Sientes que el beneficio económico y de prebendas recibido por formar parte del programa Au Pair, es adecuado para cubrir tus necesidades y expectativas?

Catalina: No, realmente creo que no es suficiente porque por más que digan que nos están cubriendo el hospedaje y la alimentación, realmente no es suficiente la cantidad que nos pagan pues tampoco espero que paguen mucho más, pero diría que debería estar un poco más sujeto a que pueda aumentar.

Investigador: ¿Aló? -Problemas técnicos con la conexión-

Investigador: ¿Te has sentido aislada por ser extranjera o por ser miembro del programa Au Pair?

Catalina: Ya, ¿me escuchas?
**Investigador:** ¡Ahora sí, -Problemas técnicos con la conexión- ya no!

**Catalina:** Creo que no es suficiente el pago, porque a pesar de que nos dan el hospedaje y comida aun así creo que no es suficiente para vivir en este país donde realmente pues la realidad que ganamos no es suficiente por los costos que hay alrededor. Digamos para comprar nuestras cosas personales, realmente no es sostenible nuestro sueldo para poder mantener nuestras necesidades básicas. Adicional creo que la agencia o las agencias no tienen en cuenta que no solo trabajamos para ganar el dinero y gastárnoslo en nuestras cosas personales, sino que también, necesitamos el dinero para ahorrarlo y para invertir. Osea, creo que las agencias no tienen en cuenta eso entonces simplemente creo que no es suficiente por eso.

**Investigador:** ¿Te has sentido aislada por ser extranjera o por ser miembro del programa Au Pair?

**Catalina:** ¡No!

**Investigador:** ¿Cuándo estabas en tu país, qué era para ti el sueño americano?

**Catalina:** El sueño americano? Pues la verdad nunca he pensado en eso, pero supuestamente un sueño americano creo que es cuando la gente viene y quiere quedarse acá, emigrar para tener una vida mejor.

**Investigador:** ¿Ha cambiado tu concepto sobre el sueño americano ahora que formaste parte del programa Au Pair?

**Catalina:** No ha cambiado.

**Investigador:** ¿Durante tu participación en el programa Au Pair, sientes que estás viviendo tú sueño americano?

**Catalina:** Mmmm no para nada. Realmente yo no tengo ningún sueño americano honestamente. Pero si lo tuviera realmente, ser Au Pair puede que sea la forma o el camino para llegar a el sueño americano, pero no es como tal el sueño americano.
InVESTIGADOR: ¿Desde tu experiencia, viviendo en El Paso, Texas, ha mejorado tu nivel de inglés?
¿Has sentido que el idioma inglés ha sido una barrera para desarrollar adecuadamente tus responsabilidades en el programa Au Pair?

-Problemas técnicos con la conexión-

Catalina: Como te venía diciendo -Problemas técnicos con la conexión-

Investigador: ¡No te escuchaba!

Catalina: ¿Ya me escuchas?

Investigador: Ahora sí, pero, ¿Tú me alcanzaste a escuchar las últimas preguntas?

Catalina: Me quedé en el sueño americano.

Investigador: ¡Ah, no ya te había hecho otras preguntas!

Catalina: Okay.

Investigador: Bueno, ¿Desde tu experiencia viviendo en El Paso, Texas, ha mejorado tu nivel de inglés?

Catalina: ¡Sí, mucho!

Investigador: ¿Has sentido que el idioma inglés ha sido una barrera para desarrollar adecuadamente tus responsabilidades en el programa Au Pair?

Catalina: No, no ha sido barrera.

Investigador: ¿Por qué?

Catalina: Porque considero que tengo buen nivel de inglés para poder comunicarme con los niños y las niñas que cuido.

Investigador: ¿Cuáles han sido los mayores desafíos que has tenido que enfrentar en tu proceso de adaptación con tu “Host Family?”

Catalina: ¿Cómo?
Investigador: ¿Cuáles han sido los mayores desafíos que has tenido que enfrentar en tu proceso de adaptación con tu “Host Family?”

Catalina: Ah mis mayores desafíos, digamos que adaptarme a su estilo de vida, adaptarme a su rutina y ya no más, pues realmente no son como tales desafíos, pero sí es algo como de adaptarse. La parte de adaptación a veces es muy difícil y el estar con gente nueva que uno hasta ahora está conociendo, pues eso es un desafío convivir con gente completamente diferente.

Investigador: Y quizás como lo mencionabas en tu caso, el hecho de que hayas tenido que vivir parte de la pandemia la iniciar tu programa Au Pair.

Catalina: ¡Ah, sí claro, obvio! Eso sí que fue un desafío, ese fue el más grande creo yo. El estar en cuarentena por cuatro meses fue bastante duro.

Investigador: ¿Qué es lo que más disfrutas o disfrutabas de convivir con tu host family?

Catalina: Me gustaba que ellos viajaban frecuentemente, si digamos que era una host family a la que le gustaba viajar y eso era lo que más me gustaba. Desafortunadamente por el covid 19 tuvieron que cancelar muchos viajes que tenían planeados para el año, pero digamos que las veces que yo viajé con ellos pues digamos que me gustaba hacerlo.

Investigador: ¿A qué lugares fuiste con ellos?

Catalina: Con ellos estuve en Denver, Colorado y muy frecuentemente iban a Houston porque tenían familia allá. Tenían planeado ir a México a visitar a otra familia que tenían allá pero no pudimos salir porque las fronteras estaban cerradas.

Investigador: ¿Te sientes o te sentiste como miembro de la familia de tu host family?

Catalina: Sí, la mayor parte sí.

Investigador: ¿Qué lo hacía sentirse así y qué no?
**Catalina:** Lo que me hacía sentir parte de la familia es que siempre estaban pendientes de mí, de sí necesitaba algo, de sí quería algo básicamente eso, de sí estaba bien o no. Y pues lo que no, era que realmente yo al principio, bueno digamos que los primeros cuatro meses solamente estaba con la mamá porque el papá estaba trabajando en, creo que él estaba, mm, ¿dónde era que estaba? Bueno en una isla, no me acuerdo que isla, pero él estaba trabajando en esa isla por nueve meses. Cuando yo llegué, él no estaba entonces él solo llegó al cuarto mes. Digamos que en el tiempo que estuve solo con la mamá, yo estaba mis ocho horas con los niños y pues digamos que ella nunca estaba presente ahí, digamos que eso era agotador, pero me acostumbré y digamos que eso nunca fue un problema para mí.

**Investigador:** ¿En el desarrollo de tu experiencia, te enfrentaste a barreras de orden cultural?

**Catalina:** Mmmm ¿Barreras culturales? No, realmente no. Digamos con respecto al idioma sí, barreras que digamos a veces yo decía expresiones que no eran muy educadas pero que yo no sabía y ya, no más, eran cosas muy mínimas.

**Investigador:** ¿Dado que el programa Au Pair, es un programa de intercambio cultural, qué aportes destacas haber recibido en ese campo, mientras has estado en el programa?

**Catalina:** Mejoré mi inglés, tuve mi intercambio cultural, conocí nuevas personas, y aprendí mucho sobre estar aquí y aprendí también sobre lo que es digamos conocer gente emigrante también.

**Investigador:** ¿Nos puedes narrar una anécdota cultural particular, asociada a tu experiencia en El Paso, Texas por ser una ciudad fronteriza?

**Catalina:** Mmm, una anécdota, mmm. no la verdad no tengo ninguna en especial.

**Investigador:** ¿O algo que te haya marcado en lo que hayas vivido en El Paso? Que siempre recuerdes, sea por el idioma o por la cultura.
Catalina: Pues digamos que lo único era que yo no sabía manejar y era muy complicado ir de un lugar a otro porque todo es muy lejos de todo, y el transporte público era muy muy muy malo, entonces en algún momento intenté utilizar el transporte público, pero pues no. Usualmente tenía que usar o Uber o pedirles el favor a mis host parents de que me hicieran el favor de llevarme de un lugar a otro y ya.

Investigador: ¡Okay! Para concluir con la entrevista, ¿considera que la empresa con la que usted viajó toma algún tipo de ventaja de las participantes o de la participación de los inmigrantes latinoamericanos que deciden vivir esta experiencia en los Estados Unidos?

Catalina: Sí.

Investigador: ¿Por qué?

Catalina: Realmente la agencia es una empresa que se alimenta de las necesidades de los países tercermundistas o en vía de desarrollo, entonces digamos que principalmente estas empresas se alimentan de eso básicamente.

Investigador: Desde tu experiencia personal, ¿recomendarías a futuros participantes del programa Au Pair vivir sus experiencias de intercambio en El Paso Texas?

Catalina: Desde mi experiencia no. Digamos que, si no fuera por la cuarentena de pronto sí. Todo hubiera sido mejor y sí la verdad lo recomendaría, pero en lo que yo viví no se los recomendaría, la verdad no.

Investigador: Bueno muchísimas gracias por tú tiempo.

Catalina: Vale, ¡gracias a ti!

ENTREVISTA # 5: SOFÍA

Investigador: Hola, buenas tardes, muchas gracias por tú tiempo y por querer participar en este estudio.
Sofía: Muchas gracias Caro.

Investigador: Voy a iniciar con la primera pregunta, ¿cómo te enteraste de la existencia del programa Au Pair?

Sofía: Bueno, comenzó principalmente porque mi mamá en el trabajo, mi mamá es rector, trabaja vendiendo casas y el jefe de ella envió a su hija a Alemania y pues le mostró el programa a todos sus empleados y a mi mamá le gustó mucho y pues, por todo lo que estaba pasando en Venezuela, pues mi mamá quería que tuviese una experiencia en el extranjero entonces pues así fue como lo conocí.

Investigador: ¿Qué te motivó a realizar el programa Au Pair en Estados Unidos y de manera específica en El Paso, Texas?

Sofía: Bueno, primero que todo pues porque yo no sé otro idioma, solamente sé inglés y español, pero también lo quería mejorar, entonces, en El Paso fue más porque no me llegó ninguna familia muy rápido, osea, se retardó muchísimo y sinceramente, pues me vine a ciegas y fue la primera familia que me llegó y en verdad yo solamente me quería ir al programa, osea, no quería esperar más.

Investigador: ¿Cuánto tiempo te demoraste en conseguir tu primera familia?

Sofía: Comenzaron en agosto, en octubre, como tres o cuatro meses más o menos.

Investigador: ¿Cuáles eran tus actividades cotidianas en tu país de origen?

Sofía: Bueno, yo me fui apenas me gradué del colegio. Entonces, pues literalmente era ir a clases, estudiar y hacer tareas y ya.

Investigador: ¿Qué habilidades y destrezas principales te hicieron candidata elegible para formar parte del programa?
**Sofía:** Pues creo que soy muy responsable. Soy una persona muy responsable con los pies en la tierra. A pesar de que tenía dieciocho años, osea muy joven, me eligieron y pienso que me agarraron mucha confianza, además también soy muy cariñosa con los niños, soy creativa y bueno, yo creo principalmente, porque soy muy responsable.

**Investigador:** ¿Cómo fue tu proceso para ser Au Pair?

**Sofía:** Okay, fue muy largo, se me tardó muchísimo porque tenía que presentar mi diploma de que me gradué del colegio, pero comenzó, fue como un año y comenzó haciendo clases de natación, primeros auxilios, practicando más mi inglés porque me hicieron un examen y también tuve que hacer horas con niños. Entonces estuve como unos dos meses en un daycare y ya. Hice todo eso y luego, cuando terminé todos los requerimientos, tuve que esperar a graduarme para entregar el diploma y ya luego empezamos el proceso, cuando fue que me pusieron en la página.

**Investigador:** ¿Por qué se interesó en participar en este programa?

**Sofía:** Mas que todo porque quería mejorar mi inglés y pues nunca había venido a los Estados Unidos, entonces pues quería conocer otra cultura.

**Investigador:** ¿Con cuantas familias te entrevistaste?

**Sofía:** Una sola.

**Investigador:** ¿Cuáles fueron las ciudades que tuviste la opción de seleccionar para realizar el programa de Au Pair?

**Sofía:** Tristemente solamente El Paso, pero me hubiese gustado ir a otro lugar.

**Investigador:** ¿Por qué tristemente? ¿dónde te hubiese gustado vivir tu experiencia?

**Sofía:** En New York o California, pues ya me acostumbré a vivir en El Paso, pero al principio, pues no me gustó mucho.

**Investigador:** ¿Por qué?
Sofía: Porque era muy distinto a mi país, osea, yo soy de la capital y esta ciudad era muy pequeña para mí, también el clima, osea, yo llegué durante el invierno y me parecía que hacía mucho frío, era como muy seco, no sé, se me tardó el acostumbrarme, además no tenía muchos amigos al principio, entonces por eso no me gustó mucho, además no hay muchas cosas que hacer acá.

Investigador: Okay. ¿En el proceso de seleccionar El Paso, Texas para vivir tu experiencia de Au Pair, la empresa que te asesoró, te suministró información específica sobre las particularidades que se tendrían al vivir en una ciudad fronteriza?

Sofía: No.

Investigador: ¿Usted cree que el programa debería informar a sus candidatos acerca de las particularidades de vivir en ciudades fronterizas?

Sofía: Si, osea, me parece súper importante en ciudades fronterizas y cualquier lugar donde te vayas a ir, porque vas a llegar a una ciudad donde no conoces y pues, la familia te va a hablar, pero es muy distinto que te hable la agencia acerca de eso. Pero no, no me dijeron nada.

Investigador: ¿Cómo te sientes con el hecho de vivir en El Paso Texas?, ¿con el programa esperabas vivir la experiencia en otra ciudad?

Sofía: ¿Perdón?

Investigador: ¿Cómo te sientes con el hecho de vivir en El Paso Texas?, y si ¿con el programa esperabas vivir la experiencia en otra ciudad?

Sofía: Pues en el momento me gusta mucho, me gusta mucho, ya me acostumbré. Al principio me costó muchísimo pero ya cuando entré a clases, pienso que el proceso de adaptamiento fue muy rápido porque empecé a hacer amigos, empecé a salir más y el hecho de que solamente estaba en la casa con los niños me sentía como sofocada, pues yo los quiero mucho, pero pues llegaba un
momento en el que sentía que no podía hacer más nada, sino solamente eso. Pero en el momento, me gusta mucho, sí pienso en un futuro irme de acá, pero sí me gusta.

**Investigador:** ¿Cuáles eran tus imaginarios sobre la vida en los Estados Unidos cuando estabas en tu país?

**Sofía:** Pues bueno, me imaginaba así, tipo vida americana, gringos por todas partes, pero bueno, como me vine a El Paso, esperaba como un golpe cultural mucho más grande, pero como me vine para acá, el ambiente era muy latino entonces no me sentí como que estuviese en Estados Unidos, pero al mismo tiempo sí, fue como extraño.

**Investigador:** ¿Ahora que vives en los Estados Unidos, como miembro del programa Au Pair o como participante que fuiste, qué tan cerca de la realidad estaban tus imaginarios?

**Sofía:** Bueno, pues yo antes de venirme pues vi muchos videos en YouTube, acerca de Au Pair mostrando su día a día con los niños, me parecía súper falso, me parecía, así como todo muy feliz, todo muy contento y yo mmm, esto me suena como que medio roto. También había leído experiencias que a mucha gente le iba bien, a mucha gente le iba muy mal, entonces pues yo me iba muy open minded, osea, con la mente muy abierta, pero igual estaba muy asustada. Sí pienso que hay mucha gente que cree que viene aquí a trabajar, pero no, en verdad a mí me pareció que es un trabajo súper pesado, que nunca había trabajado con niños tanto y pues, depende mucho de la familia que te toque, depende mucho porque bueno, a mí me tocó una familia muy buena entonces mi experiencia fue, pues increíble. Osea, yo sentí que tal vez no me iba a acercar tanto a la familia, talvez por la cultura, las tradiciones que tenían, pero, en verdad, todo lo contrario, son un amor conmigo, son increíbles.

**Investigador:** ¿Desde tu experiencia, cuáles son las ventajas y desventajas de ser Au Pair en El Paso, Texas?
Sofía: Ventajas, pues, aquí en El Paso, pues siendo latina, es el hecho de tener a gente latina alrededor tuyo, ese calor hispano, eso me parece una súper ventaja y también pues tienes la frontera al lado, puedes ir a Juárez cuando tú quieras. También me parece que es muy central, si quieres viajar y pues también el español, me parece que, si no eres muy fluida o no hablas muy bien inglés, aquí la mayoría de la gente habla español y puedes entender muy bien. Y desventajas, me parece muy aburrido, si eres una persona que te gusta hacer cosas, no hay mucho que hacer. Si vienes a lo que vienes, solamente a cuidar niños, pues obviamente no te va a importar, o si vienes de una ciudad muy pequeña tampoco te va a importar, pero si vienes de una ciudad grande como yo, verde, con árboles por todos lados, si te va como que a pegar un poco porque es un desierto y no hay mucho que hacer.

Investigador: ¿Sientes que el beneficio económico y de prebendas recibido por formar parte del programa de Au Pair es adecuado para cubrir tus necesidades y expectativas?

Sofía: No, me parece que es muy poquito lo que te pagan, a mí pues gracias a Dios, a mí me pagaron un poco más, porque la familia me quería ayudar más, pero hay gente, hay Au Pairs que les pagan literalmente con los centavos y a mi parecer es muy poquito porque de verdad yo pienso que debería ser como adaptado a la ciudad. Porque hay unas ciudades mucho más costosas que otras, gracias a Dios, El Paso es un poco más económico que otros lugares, pero me parece que a veces, sentía que no me alcanzaba el dinero y pues para el estudio te dan quinientos dólares, pero hay universidades que te cobran muchísimo por solamente una clase de inglés, entonces pienso que deberían mejorar eso.

Investigador: ¿Cuánto de más te pagaba tu familia? ¿Cuánto te pagaban ellos?

Sofía: Ellos me pagaban doscientos cincuenta y creo que el sueldo es, ni siquiera los doscientos dólares.
Investigador: Sí, ciento noventa y cinco dólares con setenta y cinco centavos, si no estoy mal.

¿Cuáles son o eran tus responsabilidades como Au Pair?

Sofía: Bueno, cambiaron con el tiempo, al principio era como que sentía que tenía que ser como perfecto. Literalmente lo que hacía era levantarme, arreglar a los niños, ayudar con el desayuno y a veces los llevaba a clases, a veces no. Depende de los papás si estaban ocupados o no. Luego tenía toda la mañana libre, los buscaba en la tarde y ya como a eso de las seis y media terminaba de trabajar y pues lo que hacíamos era hacer tareas, jugar afuera, no hacíamos mucho.

Investigador: Okay. ¿Te has sentido aislada por ser extranjera o por ser miembro del programa Au Pair?

Sofía: No, sí he recibido comentarios a veces como medio extraños aquí, me parece muy raro porque yo soy latina y aquí todo el mundo es latino. Si me han dicho comentarios, muy poco, como dos veces, que sí me quedé como, no eran necesarios, pero no me afectaron.

Investigador: ¿Podrías contarnos qué tipo de comentarios fueron esos?

Sofía: Me acuerdo de uno que me dijeron que, si había estado disfrutando del hecho de que tenía un teléfono, un iPhone y yo mumm, en Venezuela también tenemos iPhone y me lo dijo una persona con apellido Pérez, osea, bien latino, pero bueno.

Investigador: ¿Cuándo estabas en tu país, qué era para ti el sueño americano?

Sofía: Pienso que ¿al ser Au Pair o en general?

Investigador: En general, o si tenías dos diferentes.

Sofía: Pienso que el sueño americano es vivir en una casa así super linda, en los suburbios, con tus hijos, ganar muy bien, osea, pienso que es como tener tú familia ya formada, con tú casa, con tú carro, estable, con un buen trabajo y bueno, prácticamente eso.
**Investigador:** ¿Ha cambiado tu concepto sobre el sueño americano ahora que formas parte del programa Au Pair?

**Sofía:** Pienso que no existe, es muy como idealizado, depende mucho de ti, si quieres llegar a ese punto o no, pero pienso que no existe, osea, es como una, es la manera como tú quieras vivir y ya.

**Investigador:** ¿Durante tu participación en el programa Au Pair, sientes que estás o estuviste viviendo tu sueño americano?

**Sofía:** No, no, nada que ver.

**Investigador:** ¿Por qué? ¿Qué lo hacía sentirse así?

**Sofía:** Pues porque yo quería comprar muchas cosas, osea, en ese momento pensaba que el sueño americano era poder comprarme todo lo que yo quisiera, y realmente no me alcanzaba el dinero y pues no tenía tampoco tiempo y hacer más dinero tampoco podía.

**Investigador:** ¿Desde tu experiencia, viviendo en El Paso, Texas, ha mejorado tu nivel de inglés?

**Sofía:** Muchísimo, es más, yo desde el principio dije que no quería hablar mucho español, ahora es que empiezo a hablar más español con la gente, pero antes no me gustaba. Osea, quería hablar con todo el mundo en inglés, además que la familia con la que vivo habla cien por ciento en inglés, entonces eso me ayudó muchísimo.

**Investigador:** ¿Has sentido que el idioma inglés ha sido o fue una barrera para desarrollar adecuadamente tus responsabilidades en el programa Au Pair?

**Sofía:** No.

**Investigador:** ¿Por qué?

**Sofía:** Porque yo tenía un buen nivel de inglés desde que era muy pequeña, entonces pienso que fue más que todo lo que aprendí de aquí es hablar con frases americanas, no tan formal.
Investigador: ¿Cuáles han sido los mayores desafíos que has tenido que enfrentar en tu proceso de adaptación con tu host family?

Sofía: La actitud de los niños, a veces son muy groseros conmigo, tienen una manera muy diferente de criar a los niños, los malcrian mucho y pues en mi país no hacemos eso. Yo a veces sentía que no podía decirle a la mamá las cosas que la niña me decía porque me daba excusas de que la niña se sentía cansada, que me gritaba porque estaba cansada, entonces llegué a un punto que decidí no decir nada y como aguantarme ¿Sí? Pues fue un poco complicado.

Investigador: ¿Qué es lo que más disfrutas de convivir con tu host family?

Sofía: Que son muy lindos, son muy educados, me hacen sentir como en mi casa, a pesar de que no tenemos la misma cultura. Siento que nos llevamos muy bien y nunca me han hecho sentir mal y siempre me han apoyado.

Investigador: ¿Te sientes como miembro de la familia de tu host family?

Sofía: Sí.

Investigador: ¿Que lo hace sentirse así?

Sofía: Es como extraño, pero siento que la mamá de las niñas me ve como su hija y al mismo tiempo no, me ve también como una amiga. hemos hablado de muchísimas cosas, ella sabe mucho de mí, también me han incluido mucho en sus viajes, por lo menos en navidad, en Thanksgiving, siempre me han incluido, nunca me han sacado, así como diciéndome que no, que yo no puedo ir, siempre me preguntan, a pesar de que saben que voy a decir que no, siempre me han preguntado.

Investigador: ¿En el desarrollo de tu experiencia, te enfrentaste a barreras de orden cultural?

Sofía: ¿Cómo así orden cultural?

Investigador: Sí, como temas de idioma, de tradiciones, factores culturales.

241
Sofía: Ah sí, el primer diciembre que pasé acá, pues obviamente, tu sabes, en nuestro país se celebra diciembre, año nuevo, pues fiesta, canciones, somos muy extras en eso. no sé, aquí ese primer diciembre fue muy horrible, literalmente la familia se sentó un 24 de diciembre a ver una película y se acostaron a las ocho y media de la noche y eso a mí me afectó porque yo pensaba qué íbamos a cenar juntos, íbamos a hablar, a tomar, a hacer algo y no. A mí me afectó muchísimo eso y era mi primer año aquí y lloré mucho, lloré mucho, pero ya después tuve gente con quien pasar navidad, entonces no hubo necesidad de volver a sentirme así.

Investigador: ¿Algún otro factor cultural marcado que recuerdes?

Sofía: No por ahora. yo creo que ese fue el que más me pegó.

Investigador: ¿Dado que el programa Au Pair es un programa de intercambio cultural, qué aportes destacas haber recibido en ese campo, mientras has estado en el programa?

Sofía: Piensó más que todo, el mejorar mi idioma y en adaptarme a la cultura de aquí, por lo menos en nuestros países no celebramos acción de gracias, el Thanksgiving o el cuatro de julio. Yo soy una de las personas que ahora celebro eso o celebramos San Valentín o que celebramos Halloween, entonces pienso que me adapté muy fácil a eso y también yo le aporté muchísimo a mi familia, yo les hice comida de mi país, ellos me mostraron que sí, pues la comida aquí, tú sabes, aquí no tienen como algo típico de comida, pero bueno.

Investigador: ¿Nos puedes narrar una anécdota cultural particular asociada a tu experiencia en El Paso, Texas por ser una ciudad fronteriza?

Sofía: Cuando les hice arepas a la familia, arepas es un plato pues, que hacemos en Venezuela, también en Colombia y yo me acuerdo una vez que decidí hacerlas y a ellos les encantó, me dieron muchísimas gracias, también se las hice a mis amigos mexicanos, también les encantó. Entonces pues, me pareció increíble mostrarles una parte de mi país.
**Investigador:** Para concluir, ¿considera que la empresa con la que usted viajó, toma algún tipo de ventaja de la participación de los inmigrantes latinoamericanos que deciden vivir en los Estados Unidos?

**Sofía:** ¡Claro! Pienso que hacen mucho dinero con eso, porque ahorita todo el mundo quiere venirse a Estados Unidos de Au Pair, porque es una manera muy fácil de venirse para Estados Unidos.

**Investigador:** ¿Desde su experiencia personal recomendaría a futuros participantes del programa Au Pair vivir su experiencia de intercambio en El Paso, Texas?

**Sofía:** Depende, depende de qué tanto te guste o qué son tus expectativas de dónde quieras vivir, en que ciudad quieras vivir. Porque mucha gente quiere vivir en New York y luego vienen para acá y es un golpe muy fuerte, porque piensa que va a vivir en una ciudad muy bonita, muy grande, con muchas cosas que hacer. Entonces, si eres una persona que te gusta las ciudades pequeñas, tranquilas, sin mucho que hacer, más como familiares, El Paso es perfecto. Si eres una persona que eres activa todo el tiempo, te gusta hacer cosas, salir, no te lo recomendaría mucho.

**Investigador:** Muchísimas gracias por tu colaboración.

**Sofía:** Gracias a ti.

**ENTREVISTA # 6: MARCELA**

**Investigador:** Hola, buenas noches, muchísimas gracias por querer hacer parte de este estudio. Voy a iniciar con la primer pregunta ¿cómo te enteraste de la existencia del programa Au Pair?

**Marcela:** Me enteré cuando estaba estudiando en la universidad, estaba en primer semestre y escuché que había como una reunión sobre unos programas de intercambio, entonces siempre he estado interesada en eso y fui a la reunión y era sobre el programa Au Pair.
Investigador: ¿Qué te motivó a realizar el programa Au Pair en los Estados Unidos, y de manera específica en El Paso Texas?

Marcela: En Estados Unidos, porque quería aprender inglés y en El Paso, Texas, porque no había muchas opciones.

Investigador: ¿Con cuantas familias te entrevistaste, antes de escoger a tu host family?

Marcela: Con cuatro.

Investigador: Y ¿por qué decidiste irte con ellos?

Marcela: Porque bueno, cuando yo hice las entrevistas con todas las familias, yo traté de hacer muchísimas preguntas, ¿cómo era mi horario?, ¿cuáles eran mis actividades?, ¿qué beneficios tenía yo?, si podía estudiar y esta familia, junto con otra familia que era de Pensilvania, me llamaron mucho la atención, pero finalmente decidí con ellos, con los que estoy porque ellos me necesitaban para un tiempo más cercano que la otra familia. Mi entrevista fue en agosto y me necesitaban para noviembre, en cambio la otra familia me necesitaba para el otro año, entonces como que era algo muy inseguro, por eso decidí venirme con ellos.

Investigador: ¿Cuáles eran tus actividades cotidianas en tu país de origen, antes de hacer parte del programa?

Marcela: Yo era ingeniera de minas allá. Entonces trabajaba en una empresa minera de carbón y yo realizaba supervisión en labores mineras subterráneas.

Investigador: ¿Cómo fue tu proceso para ser Au Pair?

Marcela: Bueno, pues una vez me enteré en la universidad, de los beneficios que tenía ser Au Pair, que era aprender un nuevo idioma, conocer la cultura americana, cuidar niños, todas esas cosas a mí siempre me han llamado la atención, entonces yo como que dije, ese es el programa perfecto para mí. Además que era a un costo accesible, comparado con otros programas en los
que uno solo se viene a estudiar y pues hay que pagar muchísimo dinero entonces comencé a averiguar en internet y con personas que ya habían venido, cómo era esta experiencia y ya luego cuando estaba en octavo semestre de la universidad, pagué el programa y ya me enviaron todos los formularios, los llené. Pero entonces empecé a posponerlo porque me dije, no, primero voy a graduarme de mi carrera, y ya una vez me gradué, empecé otra vez como a retomar el proceso. Pero hablando con unos colegas, ingenieros de minas, me dijeron que había mucho trabajo en minería y que yo debía quedarme allá porque ellos sabían que yo tenía planeado venírmene y yo como que dije, listo, voy a pasar hojas de vida y si me sale trabajo, pues es porque tengo que quedarme allá y si no me sale es porque tengo que irme para Estados Unidos, porque para mí era muy duro, pues ya teniendo una carrera allá como ingeniera, venírmene para acá y dejarlo todo. Entonces, efectivamente, pasé hojas de vida y encontré un trabajo allá y llevaba como seis meses trabajando pero estaba muy aburrida y dije no, voy a retomar este proceso y me voy a ir. Entonces retomé esto y fue en realidad, súper rápido, ósea, la demora fue que yo enviara los documentos, me subieron en la plataforma y al siguiente día ya cinco familias me habían enviado solicitud de entrevista conmigo y como a los quince días ya había hecho match con la familia que estoy actualmente.

Investigador: ¿Qué habilidades y destrezas principales te hicieron candidata elegible para formar parte del programa?

Marcela: Que en Colombia ya había enseñado clases de inglés. Quando yo estaba en la universidad, en mis tiempos libres trabajaba enseñando clases de inglés a niños como entre ocho y trece años; entonces ya había tenido experiencia en esas edades. También en mi perfil, en mi video, yo dije que a mí me gustaban mucho las matemáticas, pues porque así es, por eso estudié ingeniería; entonces esta familia con la que estoy, se interesó mucho en mí, porque yo cuido dos
niños, actualmente el niño va a cumplir quince años la otra semana y la niña tiene trece años y al niño también le gusta muchísimo las matemáticas entonces como que eso les llamó mucho la atención, porque siempre habían tenido problemas con todas las Au Pairs y el niño. Como que siempre las Au pairs habían tenido más afinidad con la niña, pero con el niño no, porque él es de una personalidad muy distinta, entonces como que les llamó la atención mi perfil por eso y no sé, de pronto porque yo había estado en actividades que yo mencionaba que me habían hecho muy disciplinada. Desde el colegio yo estaba en la banda, la banda heráldica, duré como ocho años, entonces yo dije que esas cosas me habían hecho a mí una persona muy disciplinada y responsable.

**Investigador:** ¿Por qué se interesó en participar en este programa?

**Marcela:** Perdón, no te entendí la pregunta.

**Investigador:** ¿Por qué se interesó en participar en este programa?

**Marcela:** Por aprender inglés y por conocer la cultura americana.

**Investigador:** ¿Cuáles fueron las ciudades que tuviste la opción de seleccionar para realizar el programa Au Pair? y ¿por qué escogiste vivir tu experiencia de Au Pair en El Paso, Texas?

**Marcela:** Pensilvania, el State Collage en Pensilvania y la verdad tuve otras tres ciudades, pero no recuerdo dónde fue, pero digamos que principalmente fue Pensilvania y El Paso, pero entonces al final la decisión la tomé, no por la ciudad, sino por la familia, porque pues yo había escuchado que aquí hablaban mucho español y pues como mi propósito era aprender inglés estaba un poco asustada porque yo decía, voy a ir a El Paso y qué va a pasar con mi inglés, entonces dije, pero es que también, que tal yo elija una familia, en un estado donde hablen inglés, pero no me sienta cómoda con la familia entonces finalmente me incliné más por la familia que por el lugar.
Investigador: ¿En el proceso de seleccionar El Paso, Texas para vivir tu experiencia de Au Pair, la empresa que te asesoró, te suministró información específica sobre las particularidades que se tendrían al vivir en una ciudad fronteriza?

Marcela: No.

Investigador: ¿Usted cree que el programa debería informar a sus candidatos acerca de las particularidades de vivir en ciudades fronterizas?

Marcela: Sí, porque si las personas que se vienen de Au Pair, tienen un panorama más claro sobre lo que vienen a enfrentar aquí.

Investigador: ¿Cómo te sientes con el hecho de vivir en El Paso, Texas?

Marcela: Bueno, pues al principio, como te decía, como mi objetivo era venir a aprender inglés, me sentía muy incómoda porque mi inglés, en Colombia según yo, mi inglés era bueno, pero cuando llegué acá, me di cuenta que definitivamente no tenía buen nivel de inglés porque no entendía a la gente cuando me hablaba en inglés, nada. Entonces cuando yo iba a algún lugar, por ejemplo Walmart o así, a alguna tienda y yo hablaba en inglés, me respondían en español, pues porque se daban cuenta de que mi idioma nativo no era el inglés. Entonces al principio a mí eso me enojaba mucho porque yo no estaba practicando mi inglés y así no lo iba a mejorar, pero después de un tiempo, me empezó a gustar el hecho de que la gente aquí no es muy similar a la gente en Colombia, pero tiene un poco más de calidez de pronto, que de personas más hacia el norte, eso me hace sentir un poco como entre comillas “en casa”.

Investigador: ¿Con el programa esperabas vivir la experiencia en otra ciudad?

Marcela: No, en realidad yo no tenía como planeado o en mente como irme a una ciudad determinada, no.
**Investigador:** ¿Cuáles eran tus imaginarios sobre la vida en los Estados Unidos cuando estabas en tu país?

**Marcela:** Bueno, más que todo sobre gastronomía, que la comida aquí obviamente es muy diferente a la que tenemos en Colombia. Sobre la personalidad de las personas, que son personas que no son como muy cálidas. Los avances tecnológicos, pero pues no lo tenía muy claro la verdad. Básicamente eso.

**Investigador:** ¿Y ahora que vives en los Estados Unidos, como miembro del programa Au Pair, qué tan cerca de la realidad estaban tus imaginarios?

**Marcela:** Cerca pero no mucho, pues porque yo sabía, por ejemplo, yo sabía que si habían así como obviamente tecnológicamente es muchísimo más avanzado, pero una vez llegué acá, yo por ejemplo, nunca había usado tarjetas de crédito, pero esto también se debe a que yo vengo de un lugar muy pequeño, de pronto gente que vive en ciudades grandes como en la capital, Medellín o alguna otra ciudad así, de pronto la diferencia no es muy grande. No sé la verdad, pero en mi caso, por ejemplo el hecho de ponerle gas al carro por uno mismo, usar la tarjeta de crédito, ir a hacer compras y pagar por su propia cuenta, ósea todas esas cosas al principio para mí fueron muy duras.

**Investigador:** ¿Desde tu experiencia, cuáles son las ventajas y desventajas de ser Au Pair en El Paso, Texas?

**Marcela:** Las desventajas, que de pronto se toma mucho más tiempo para adquirir el nivel de inglés que uno adquiriría si estuviera en otra ciudad donde no hubiera tantas personas con habla hispana y ventajas, que en cuanto a la parte como humana, uno se siente como más, como te dije ahora, como en casa.

**Investigador:** ¿Sientes que el beneficio económico y de prebendas recibido por formar parte del programa de Au Pair, es adecuado para cubrir tus necesidades y expectativas?
Marcela: Sí, pero cabe aclarar que desde que nosotras, antes de venir acá, sabemos cuál es el salario que nos van a pagar. Entonces pues una vez estando aquí, pues uno no debe esperar que le paguen más porque uno con anticipación ya sabía cuál era, además que uno aquí vive con una familia, obviamente eso es muchísimo menos que lo que le pagan a una niñera aquí americana, pero pues nosotras ya sabemos a lo que venimos.

Investigador: Pero teniendo en cuenta, ya que estás en el programa y tus responsabilidades, ¿crees que el pago debería ser mayor?

Marcela: Pues, por ejemplo, en mi caso, que yo comencé a estudiar, sí sería muchísimo mejor que nos pagaran más porque con lo que yo gano actualmente es muy muy difícil pagar el estudio, aunque se supone que uno viene aquí solamente al programa, no viene a estudiar ¿no? Pero digamos teniendo en cuenta los planes que uno tiene después de eso, sí sería mejor que subieran el sueldo de las Au Pairs.

Investigador: ¿Cuáles son o eran tus responsabilidades como Au Pair?

Marcela: Desde que yo cuido niños adolescentes, cuando yo llegué aquí ellos tenían doce y trece años. Mis responsabilidades básicamente eran manejar, ósea, en general mi trabajo era manejar, llevarlos al colegio, recogerlos, llevarlos a las actividades extracurriculares, a natación, a clases privadas de matemáticas, a golf, manejar, manejar, manejar y aquí en la casa pues lavarles la ropa, ayudarles a tender las camas, pero nada más, en cuanto a aseo de sus habitaciones y todo eso, no. Aquí la familia me decía, desde un principio ellos me dijeron, antes de viajar, que mi trabajo no era hacerles las cosas, sino supervisarles, porque a ellos les gusta que los niños sean responsables por ellos mismos; entonces mi trabajo más es como de supervisión que de hacer.

Investigador: ¿Te has sentido aislada por ser extranjera o por ser miembro del programa Au Pair?

Marcela: No, nunca he sentido eso.
**Investigador:** ¿Cuando estabas en tu país, qué era para ti el sueño americano?

**Marcela:** El sueño americano es venir a Estado Unidos, trabajar y tener mucho dinero para poder cumplir los sueños.

**Investigador:** ¿Ha cambiado tu concepto sobre el sueño americano, ahora que formas parte del programa Au Pair?

**Marcela:** No, yo creo que es el mismo.

**Investigador:** ¿Durante tu participación en el programa Au Pair, sientes que estás viviendo tu sueño americano?

**Marcela:** De pronto lo veo como un paso para llegar a eso.

**Investigador:** ¿Por qué?

**Marcela:** Porque si yo no hubiera venido aquí mediante este programa, no habría podido empezar a estudiar una carrera aquí en Estado Unidos porque la economía colombiana y pues la economía de mi familia no era suficiente como para tener el sueño de venir a Estados Unidos a estudiar, entonces pues como mi sueño siempre era aprender otro idioma, de hecho, en Colombia yo estudié inglés por un año, siempre como que tenía en mente estudiar acá, pero como que decía: no, no tengo dinero para hacer eso, pero pues bueno, finalmente lo pude hacer.

**Investigador:** ¿Desde tu experiencia, viviendo en El Paso Texas, ha mejorado tu nivel de inglés?

**Marcela:** Sí ha mejorado, la verdad no como lo esperaría, pero sí ha mejorado bastante.

**Investigador:** ¿Has sentido que el idioma inglés ha sido una barrera para desarrollar adecuadamente tus responsabilidades en el programa Au Pair?

**Marcela:** No.

**Investigador:** ¿Por qué?
Marcela: Porque los niños con los que yo vivo son bilingües, entonces la comunicación con los papás, ósea, incluso a pesar de que los papás solamente hablan inglés, la comunicación con ellos siempre ha sido muy buena y cuando de pronto algo no está claro, los niños como que sirven ahí de intermediarios para... bueno, antes, actualmente mi nivel ya es mucho mejor, entonces ya me puedo comunicar sin problema, sin necesidad de que los niños estén ahí presentes traduciendo.

Investigador: ¿Cuáles han sido los mayores desafíos que has tenido que enfrentar en tu proceso de adaptación con tu host family?

Marcela: Ay no sé! Pues la verdad es que esta familia es muy buena, ósea, ellos siempre a mí me han hecho sentir como un miembro más de la familia, el problema ya viene es como por mi personalidad, porque yo soy como una persona muy solitaria, entonces ellos como que siempre, al principio, siempre ellos me han invitado a hacer actividades con ellos, todo, todo lo que ellos hagan me invitan, me llevan, pero yo siempre soy como que en mi habitación, encerrada y si ellos a mí no me dicen “baje” yo no bajo de acá; pero ha sido más que todo por mi forma de ser, que por ellos.

Investigador: ¿Qué es lo que más disfrutas de convivir con tu host family?

Marcela: Que ellos, como te decía, me invitan a todas las actividades que hacen, por ejemplo, cosas como, digamos entre comillas “básicas” con mi host mom nos vamos a pintar las uñas, entonces ella me dice: “Marcela, vamos y nos pintamos las uñas” y cosas así, ella siempre me invita, me lleva y siempre me hace sentir como un miembro más de la familia.

Investigador: ¿En el desarrollo de tu experiencia, te enfrentaste a barreras de orden cultural?

Marcela: No. Pues es que como aquí en El Paso, no sé exactamente, pero más o menos el ochenta por ciento de la población es mexicana, entonces es muy similar a nuestra cultura, entonces la
verdad no lo he sentido muy diferente y por parte de mi host family, que ellos sí son americanos, pues la verdad es que tampoco, no me ha parecido, no he sentido eso.

**Investigador:** ¿Te afectó de alguna manera tu experiencia de intercambio el vivir el COVID 19, el vivirla durante el COVID 19?

**Marcela:** Sí, porque cuando yo llegué aquí a Estados Unidos fue en noviembre del 2019, entonces yo empecé a estudiar en diciembre, empecé a estudiar inglés en un community college y llevaba estudiando como un mes, estudié unos días de diciembre porque ya luego salimos a break y en 2020 llevaba como un mes estudiando cuando comenzó todo esto y pues ahí ya quedó todo mi proceso de estudio, no tuve clases como por cuatro meses, luego empezaron las clases virtuales, luego, pues el hecho de no poder salir y compartir con gente. Porque mi listening ya había mejorado mucho, pero ahora faltaba mi speaking y aquí encerrada, pues no podía practicar porque ¿cómo? Entonces el hecho de no poder salir a ningún lado y no conocer gente, me afectó bastante en el aprendizaje de idioma.

**Investigador:** ¿En algún momento tu host family tomó ventaja de la situación en medio de la pandemia? Es decir, que tuvieras que trabajar más horas, que… no sé.

**Marcela:** No, para nada. De hecho, con esta familia nunca, ni por parte de ellos, ni por mi parte estamos como pendiente de que, si trabajo más horas, que, sí trabajo menos, porque en realidad, ósea, para ser clara, es como menos el tiempo que yo trabajo que lo que debería ser. Algunas veces sí, por ejemplo, algunos fines de semana, pero eso es escaso, que mi host mom tenía que trabajar, porque ella está en el ARMY entonces yo me quedaba con ellos como todo el día, pero pues, yo tampoco estaba así como que: ay mire me quedé dos horas más, pues porque yo sé que otros días me he quedado dos horas menos; entonces ellos, de hecho mis host parents, como ellos sí siguieron trabajando durante el COVID porque son cirujanos, ellos siempre como que me veían aquí
encerrada y siempre me decían “Salga Marce, tranquila, por nosotros no hay ningún problema, puede salir, puede ir con sus amigas” pero pues, nadie podía salir, todo estaba cerrado y a ninguna otra Au Pair la dejaban salir, entonces pues ¿qué? Yo me quedaba acá, pero igual ellos no se aprovecharon nunca de eso.

Investigador: ¿Dado que el programa Au Pair es un programa de intercambio cultural, qué aportes destacas haber recibido en ese campo, mientras has estado en el programa?

Marcela: Pues aquí en El Paso, he conocido muchas personas de diferentes países tanto latinos como asiáticos, eso me ha permitido como abrir un poco más mi mente, como entender la forma de pensar de otras personas y la forma de vivir, su cultura, las diferentes gastronomías, entonces eso me ha permitido como ser un poco más tolerante.

Investigador: ¿Nos puedes narrar una anécdota cultural particular asociada a tu experiencia en El Paso, Texas por ser una ciudad fronteriza?

Marcela: Pues, de pronto en ceremonias que he participado, en eventos en los que he participado en los que conozco gentes de diferentes lugares, pero la verdad no ha sido como personas de México, por lo que tu dices por ser ciudad fronteriza. Espérame, espérame y pienso porque lo que te iba a decir es de personas, pero de otros países, no gente de México.

Investigador: Pero digamos que eso cuenta, al ser una ciudad fronteriza une gente de muchas culturas. O si tienes otra que nos quieras contar.

Marcela: Pues, por ejemplo, a mí me gusta mucho bailar y aquí en El Paso hay una academia de baile de salsa, de música latina y ahí conozco gente de muchos países, sobre todo de diferentes países latinos, entonces ahí he logrado conocer diferentes culturas de muchas personas, solamente como en ese lugar.
Investigador: Para concluir, ¿considera que la empresa con la que usted viajó, toma algún tipo de ventaja de la participación de los inmigrantes latinoamericanos que deciden vivir en los Estados Unidos?

Marcela: No.

Investigador: ¿Por qué?

Marcela: Pues, la empresa con la que viajé, en Colombia es una empresa y aquí es otra, no es la misma, por ejemplo, Cultural Care, es una intermediaria, entonces, pues ellos mientras yo estuve haciendo el proceso en Colombia, ellos estuvieron súper pendientes de mí, a pesar de que yo nunca fui a la oficina en persona, porque era en Bogotá, todo el proceso fue por correo electrónico, entonces siempre que yo tenía dudas, yo les escribía, ellos me respondían súper rápido, estuvieron siempre conmigo y eso sí ellos me aclararon que una vez llegue a Estados Unidos, ya quien va a estar responsable de usted, es la empresa Europair, nosotros ya no tenemos nada que ver ahí. Entonces pues ellos me dejaron claro eso, ya una vez llegué acá, la verdad es que no he tenido, así como problemas en los que yo tenga que hacer…las pocas veces que he necesitado ayuda de Europair, como cartas de que yo he estado con el programa que tengo que enviar, no sé, a diferentes lugares, ellos me han respondido, pero no he sentido que en algún momento ellos tomen ventaja de esto, la verdad.

Investigador: ¿Desde su experiencia personal, recomendaría a futuros participantes del programa Au Pair vivir su experiencia de intercambio en El Paso, Texas?

Marcela: Pues, yo digo que si la persona, ósea, depende del objetivo de cada persona, porque si el objetivo es aprender inglés en poco tiempo es muy difícil, porque yo decía, eso también depende mucho de la persona que venga y pues se supone que soy una persona así como muy responsable, que si me propongo a hacer algo, pues lo hago, pero es que a pesar de eso, es muy difícil el hecho
de hablar y que respondan en español y yo tengo que decir, no, yo estoy aprendiendo inglés y siguen respondiendo en español, es como que ¡Ay, Dios mío, es tan duro aprender inglés así! Pero por cualquier otra cosa sí lo recomendaría, ósea, si ese no es el objetivo principal, de aprender inglés rápido, sí lo recomiendo.

**Investigador:** Bueno, muchísimas gracias por tu colaboración.

**Marcela:** Listo Carolina, con mucho gusto.

**ENTREVISTA # 7: GABRIELA**

**Investigador:** Bueno, muchísimas gracias por querer hacer parte de esta investigación, vamos a iniciar con la primera pregunta de la entrevista, ¿cómo te enteraste de la existencia del programa Au Pair?

**Gabriela:** Bueno, yo trabajaba en Colombia, había una chica que llegó a mi lugar de trabajo a solicitar un certificado de horas y pues le pregunté para qué era el certificado y ella me dijo que era para ser Au Pair en Alemania, entonces yo le pregunté qué era ser Au Pair y ella me informó y me dio toda la información al respecto.

**Investigador:** ¿Qué te motivó a realizar el programa Au Pair en los Estados Unidos y de manera específica en El Paso, Texas?

**Gabriela:** Bueno, principalmente ser Au Pair en Estados Unidos era mi opción fácil, o digámoslo así rápida porque tenía el idioma, mientras que pues, a otro lugar que quisiera ir, me costaba más porque tenía que aprender el idioma y eso, entonces fui básicamente por eso a Estados Unidos y yo llegué a El Paso por causa de un rematch.

**Investigador:** ¿En qué ciudad estuviste inicialmente y qué fue la causante del rematch? Si nos quisieras comentar.
Gabriela: Yo estaba primero en North Carolina y el hacer rematch fue porque la madre del hogar tenía problemas de conducta bipolar y en ocasiones, bueno, siempre tenía conductas que yo decía que no estaban normal. Primero que todo jugaba mucho con mi tiempo, no tenía descanso y se pasaban de las cuarenta y cinco horas semanales y como el punto para irme fue porque ocurrió que ella se agredió con el esposo y se lanzaban todos los implementos que podían encontrar en la cocina. Entonces ese fue ya mi mayor motivo para irme y ya, simplemente decidí hacer mi rematch.

Investigador: ¿Con cuantas familias te entrevistaste, antes de escoger tu primer familia?

Gabriela: ¿Antes de viajar?

Investigador: Sí.

Gabriela: Me entrevisté como con cinco o siete familias.

Investigador: ¿Y después del rematch?

Gabriela: Después de rematch, solamente con una, que fue la de El Paso Texas y ya con ellos me quedé.

Investigador: ¿Cuánto duraste con tu primer host family?

Gabriela: Tres meses.

Investigador: ¿Cuáles eran tus actividades cotidianas en tu país de origen, antes de ser parte del programa Au Pair?

Gabriela: Yo era profesora de inglés. Mi familia tiene un colegio que tiene preescolar y primaria y desde muy pequeña sé inglés porque vivía en Estados Unidos con mis papás. Entonces por eso sabía el idioma y pude como enseñarles a los niños. Entonces trabajaba como profesora de inglés para niños.

Investigador: ¿Cómo fue tu proceso para ser Au Pair?
Gabriela: Realmente estaba muy interesada en querer irme del país y tenía ya muchas cosas hechas, como el idioma, las horas que se necesitaban para certificarte. Entonces realmente creo que el proceso tanto físico no fue tanto, porque tenía todo, fue más para mí creo que un proceso emocional el querer irme y que no encontrara una familia.

Investigador: ¿Cómo fue ese proceso de lograr encontrar una familia que tu dijeras “ya, estoy preparada para vivir el proceso?”

Gabriela: Bueno, siempre es difícil ¿no? Porque realmente no conoces a las otras personas y pues es que uno por medio de una pantalla sí puede actuar ¿no? De cierta manera, pero yo me dejaba llevar más o menos por la actitud que ellos ponían cuando me presentaban a los niños, porque es muy normal que los pongan y como que solamente quieran que estén sonriendo y cosas así, mientras que simplemente para yo irme con ellos fue porque ellos siempre los mostraban tal y como eran, que corrían por todo lado, que si no querían prestar atención a la pantalla, simplemente los dejaban y ya, entonces eso a mí me hacía sentir como que de cierta manera sí me estaban mostrando lo que era y no me estaban ocultando algo.

Investigador: ¿Qué habilidades y destrezas principales te hicieron candidata elegible para formar parte del programa?

Gabriela: El amor por los niños, yo creo, la paciencia que puedo tener con ellos y el compromiso.

Investigador: ¿Cuáles fueron las ciudades que tuviste la opción de seleccionar para realizar el programa Au Pair?

Investigador: ¿En el proceso de seleccionar El Paso Texas para vivir tu experiencia de Au Pair, la empresa que te asesoró, te suministró información específica sobre las particularidades que se tendrían al vivir en una ciudad fronteriza?

Gabriela: No.

Investigador: ¿Usted cree que el programa debería informar a sus candidatos acerca de las particularidades de vivir en ciudades fronterizas?

Gabriela: Es importante y yo pienso que es importante informar, más que el dejar saber algo; bueno, en mi caso no era, pero sí conocí muchas chicas en El Paso y que no hubiera mucho inglés y que fácilmente logras encontrar la facilidad del español, las chocaba mucho, porque ellas realmente iban a aprender el idioma y eso era una dificultad que claro, en su momento es muy importante que la digan.

Investigador: ¿Cómo te sientes con el hecho de haber vivido en El Paso, la experiencia de ser Au Pair?

Gabriela: Discúlpame ¿me puedes repetir?

Investigador: ¿Cómo te sientes con el hecho de vivir o haber vivido en El Paso, tu experiencia de ser Au Pair?

Gabriela: Bueno, El Paso es lindo y más como se pueda ver visualmente, fue una experiencia, fue muy lindo vivir ahí y me gustó, todo estaba chévere.

Investigador: ¿Con el programa esperabas vivir La experiencia en otra ciudad inicialmente?

Gabriela: Sí, cuando uno empieza a saber más al respecto, uno se imagina otro tipo de cosas ¿no? Pero.

Investigador: ¿Cómo qué te imaginabas?
**Gabriela:** No sé, uno se imagina como tipo así la ciudad grande, los edificios, las luces, como más top, por decirlo así, que es totalmente otro escenario.

**Investigador:** ¿Cuáles eran tus imaginarios sobre la vida en los Estados Unidos cuando estabas en tu país?

**Gabriela:** Como te comentaba, yo ya había vivido en Estados Unidos con mis papás de pequeña, yo viví con ellos varios años, entonces ya tenía una idea de lo que era, básicamente mi percepción del momento era emigrar para sentirme bien emocionalmente, entonces quería era como salir del entorno que me estaba abrumando en el momento y empezar una nueva experiencia.

**Investigador:** ¿Ahora que tuviste la experiencia de volver a los Estados Unidos, como miembro del programa Au Pair, qué tan cerca de la realidad estaban tus imaginarios? Quizás en tu caso, el poder escaparte de esa experiencia que estabas teniendo en tu país.

**Gabriela:** Sí, en el momento lo que buscaba, pero siendo enfáticos como en todo el programa, siento que hay muchos vacíos y que le venden publicidad falsa, de cierta forma.

**Investigador:** ¿Por qué lo crees así?

**Gabriela:** Porque sí te dicen “vas a cuidar a los niños, vas a ser parte de la familia” y sí, si era parte de la familia y realmente sí me trataban como a una hermanita mayor, pero en la otra familia no, era realmente la muchachita que acaba de llegar de otro país y que viene exclusivamente a cuidar a mis hijos y por eso como que no cuadran y no entran las cosas y cuando uno quiere hablar al respecto de eso, hay personas que ya no tienen respuesta, pues las encargadas de lo mismo ¿no? Ya no tienen respuesta para eso y lo único que dicen es “debes esperar tres meses y después de tres meses de pronto puedes tener otra familia” como si realmente los sentimientos de uno no importaran tanto.
**Investigador:** ¿Desde tu experiencia, cuáles son las ventajas y desventajas de ser Au Pair en El Paso?

**Gabriela:** ¿En El Paso?

**Investigador:** Ajá.

**Gabriela:** Yo creo que estaba chévere porque no estaba tan lejos de algunos lugares que yo quería conocer, bueno, aunque tenía alguna distancia, pero me gustaba que estuviera cerca a California y hacia allá, como a Utah también, en Arizona, como lugares que me causaban mucha incertidumbre y quería conocerlos; entonces para mí estuvo bien.

**Investigador:** Y ¿Cuáles serían las desventajas? Si hay alguna.

**Gabriela:** Yo pienso que el idioma, que hay muchas personas que te hablan español, entonces una desventaja sería que realmente no puedes enfrentarte a ese mundo bilingüe como tal.

**Investigador:** ¿Cuáles son o eran tus responsabilidades como Au Pair?

**Gabriela:** ¿Dime? Discúlpame!

**Investigador:** ¿Cuáles eran tus responsabilidades como Au Pair?

**Gabriela:** Yo tenía que levantar al niño pequeño, darles desayuno, alistarlos para el colegio, llevarlos al colegio, en la tarde recogerlos y darles unas medias nuevas, bañarlos y esperar que su papá llegara, en algunas ocasiones también los acostaba a dormir.

**Investigador:** ¿Sientes que el beneficio económico y de prebendas recibido por formar parte del programa Au Pair es adecuado para cubrir tus necesidades y expectativas?

**Gabriela:** No, no.

**Investigador:** ¿Por qué?
Gabriela: Yo siento que hacemos tan importante... el cuidar niños es ... que compense todo lo que hacemos, porque en ocasiones nos volvemos hasta su propia mamá, su propio papá de los niños, entonces siento que no está valorado como debe ser.

Investigador: En esa parte del inicio se cortó un poco ¿tú crees que me podrías repetir lo que dijiste inicialmente?

Gabriela: A ver si me acuerdo. Creo que no, que nosotros jugamos una parte muy fundamental en las familias, no simplemente prestar un servicio, damos todo para que los niños estén muy bien, nos convertimos en sus padres, entonces creo que no.

Investigador: El reconocimiento económico no es el que debería ser. ¿Te has sentido aislada por ser extranjera o por ser miembro del programa Au Pair?

Gabriela: No, no.

Investigador: ¿Cuándo estabas en tu País, qué era para ti el sueño americano?

Gabriela: No sé, uno piensa que el sueño americano es tener plata, es viajar, tener una vida…

Investigador: ¿Cómoda?

Gabriela: Sí, más que cómoda, con lujos, podría ser un poco más fácil y accesibles que en tu país.

Investigador: ¿Durante tu participación en el programa Au Pair, sientes que estabas viviendo tu sueño americano?

Gabriela: Sí, en cierta parte.

Investigador: ¿En qué parte?

Gabriela: Pues eso se basa como en días también ¿no? Porque como te digo, todo varía, varía que también las familias tienen sus días malos, entonces en ocasiones te tocan menos horas, más tiempo, entonces como que lo de disfrutar del dinero, tú sientes como que ese sueño se está haciendo realidad, pero luego tienes que volver y entonces ya no está tan chévere.
Investigador: ¿Desde tu experiencia, viviendo en El Paso Texas, ha mejorado o mejoró tu nivel de inglés?

Gabriela: Sí claro, claro que sí.

Investigador: ¿Has sentido que el idioma inglés ha sido o fue una barrera para desarrollar adecuadamente tus responsabilidades en el programa Au Pair?

Gabriela: ¿Discúlpame?

Investigador: ¿Has sentido que el idioma inglés ha sido una barrera para desarrollar adecuadamente tus responsabilidades en el programa Au Pair?

Gabriela: ¿El idioma inglés ha sido una ventaja o desventaja?

Investigador: ¿Una barrera para desarrollar adecuadamente tus responsabilidades en el programa Au Pair?

Gabriela: No, no, siento que siempre la disposición de la familia que me tocó, estaba muy dispuesta por si no entendía o quizás no comprendía algo…

Investigador: ¿aló?

Gabriela: Sí, te escucho. ¿Me escuchaste?

Investigador: Me quedé en que ellos estaban en la disposición como de repetir.

Gabriela: Ajá, de repetir y de hacerme de otra manera entender si yo no les comprendía algo.

Investigador: ¿Cuáles han sido los mayores desafíos o cuáles fueron los mayores desafíos que has tenido o que tuviste que enfrentar en tu proceso de adaptación con tu host family?

Gabriela: En ocasiones sentirme sola, también el cambio de comida tan drástico y de sensaciones que da el no tener lo que generalmente uno puede llamar “de uno”

Investigador: ¿Qué es lo que más disfrutabas o disfrutas de convivir con tu host family?
Gabriela: A mí me gustaba, bueno, yo era muy cerrada realmente, no me gustaba compartir casi con ellos, no porque fueran malos, sino porque no, me gustaba si era mi tiempo libre, era para mí, entonces hacía mis cosas; pero me gustaba cenar con ellos, hacíamos tipo asados, entonces me gustaba compartir con ellos como haciendo el asado y eso.

Investigador: ¿Te sientes o te sentiste como miembro de la familia de tu host family?

Gabriela: Sí, de la segunda sí. De la primera no.

Investigador: ¿Qué lo hacía sentirse así? ¿qué sí y qué no? En cada uno de los casos.

Gabriela: Sí, que ellos sí me trataban como a una hija, les importaba mi opinión, les parecía necesario escucharme, mientras en la otra familia, simplemente era lo que ellos dijeran y me trataban como su empleada.

Investigador: ¿En el desarrollo de tu experiencia, te enfrentaste a barreras de orden cultural?

Gabriela: Sí, pero siento yo que es un tema también de personalidades ¿no? Hay personas que son alegres, hay otras que son espontáneas, entonces siento que no fue tanto la cultura, sino la personalidad de cada uno.

Investigador: ¿Dado que el programa Au Pair es un programa de intercambio cultural, qué aportes destacas de haber recibido en ese campo, mientras estuviste en el programa?

Gabriela: Disculpa, se cortó.

Investigador: ¿Dado que el programa Au Pair es un programa de intercambio cultural, qué aportes destacas de haber recibido en ese campo, mientras has estado en el programa?

Gabriela: Bueno, siento que el cambio de idioma, ya es el primer factor, porque no todas las personas hablan el mismo inglés, digamos que tienen diferencias y la comida, siento que es lo más esencial, que te enseñan como a comer diferente, digamos, en mi caso la familia solamente comía
una vez al día y era en la noche, entonces como la cantidad de proteínas y sinfín de cosas que ellos lo hacían con cosas que yo no tenía en Colombia o que no lo había visualizado de esa manera.

**Investigador:** ¿Nos podrías narrar alguna anécdota cultural particular asociada a tu experiencia de vivir en El Paso Texas por ser una ciudad fronteriza?

**Gabriela:** Bueno, digamos que, más de vivirla ahí en El Paso, es el miedo que le tienen al ser fronteriza ¿no? Porque la familia me decía que ni se me fuera a ocurrir pasar a México, que si pasaba allá seguro me mataban y eso a mí se me hacía bien curioso, porque al ser tan fronteriza y al estar tan realmente tan abierto, pues porque tú puedes pasar normal, lo ven tan mal.

**Investigador:** ¿Alguna vez pasaste a México?

**Gabriela:** Sí, sí. Yo pasé tres veces.

**Investigador:** Y ¿qué puedes decir de esa experiencia al haber cruzado?

**Gabriela:** La verdad estuvo bien, normal, nada del otro mundo. De hecho, me parecía mucho más chévere vivir ahí en El Paso porque los tiquetes hacia cualquier otro lado eran más económicos desde México, entonces mis experiencias que tuve pasando a México fue viajando desde el aeropuerto de México.

**Investigador:** Para concluir con la entrevista ¿considera que la empresa con la que usted viajó, toma algún tipo de ventaja de las participantes o de la participación de los inmigrantes latinoamericanos que deciden vivir esta experiencia en los Estados Unidos?

**Gabriela:** Siento que ellos cobran mucho por un programa, realmente si nos venden a un precio muy alto y nos pagan muy poquito.

**Investigador:** Desde tu experiencia personal ¿recomendarías a futuros participantes del programa Au Pair vivir sus experiencias de intercambio en El Paso Texas?

**Gabriela:** Sí.
**Investigador:** ¿Por qué?

**Gabriela:** Porque en lo personal estuvo rico. Asomeone mí me gustaba el clima, que tampoco era el gran… era un verano duro, pero no era terrible y el invierno tampoco estaba lo peor, entonces siento que por el clima está bien, como te digo, siento que está muy cerca a unos lugares que a uno le gustaría conocer, como no sé, Los Ángeles y esto y El Paso al tener el acceso a pasar a México tan fácil y de que los tiquetes sean mucho más económicos para conocer el resto del mundo, está bien.

**Investigador:** Bueno, muchísimas gracias por tu tiempo.

**Gabriela:** No, muchísimas gracias a ti por la invitación.
Curriculum Vitae

Nathaly Carolina Hernández García was born and raised in Bogota, Colombia. Nathaly as a high school student identify that her purpose was to dedicate her life to study the complex realities of Colombia and Latin America. In 2007, Ms. Hernández entered the program of Social Communication and Journalism at the University of Bogota Jorge Tadeo Lozano. As an undergraduate, she wrote “One night in a delivery room”, a chronicle that was published in the First Edition of the magazine El Taller: La crónica de la Tadeo (The workshop: The Tadeo Chronicles).

In 2013, Nathaly undertook a trip to the United States, under a two-year exchanged program, with the desire to have a total immersion in America culture, and considerably improve her strengths in communication in the English language with the motivation to study a master’s degree in Communication in a University in a first world country. In the Fall 2019, Ms. Hernández entered the Master of Art program in the Department of Communication at the University of Texas in El Paso. During her graduate program, she maintained a GPA of 4.0 and worked as a Teaching Assistant in the Communication department for two consecutive semesters. Ms. Hernández provided assistance to Dr. Sabiha Khan and Dr. Frank Pérez in the Documentary Cinema and Communication Theory classes.

In December 2021, Nathaly graduated from UTEP after defending her thesis, titled “Experiences of Latin American Au Pairs in El Paso Texas: Perceptions and Challenges in a Border City.”, supervised by her graduate committee: Dr. Frank Pérez (Chair), Dr. Tarla Peterson (Member), and Dr. Victor Vazquez (Member). Her short-term goal is to find a job opportunity in the Communication field in the United States.

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