Abstract

**Stream**: Creating Leaders Through the Eyes of Whiteness

**Title**: Transnationalism and the Flat World: Looking for Emerging Leaders in All the Right (?) Places.

Purpose: Education, broadly, should produce a well-informed, responsive, and productive citizenry (Goodlad, 2000; Harkavy, 2006; Wagner, 2010). As challenges of plurality increase in the public sphere and in our schools, there is equally a need to produce educators and leaders who can facilitate global and trans/national understandings. Critical theory, critical race theory, and black feminist perspectives have opened up spaces for dialogue across race, gender, and abilities. However, the dynamics of a globalized flattening world have raised further challenges in im/migrations, giving rise to newer discourse on cosmopolitanism and global citizenship (Hansen, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2008). Yet, much of this discourse continues to be lensed through whiteness and/or dominant representations of power and normalizations.

Design: Using analytical essay, and the framework of critical race theory and counterstorytelling, this paper builds on previous literature and author’s qualitative study to argue that emerging demographic changes should call to our attention the need to reframe who and what the leaders of the future will look like: transnational, cosmopolitan, and *othered (*Hansen*,* 2010*;* Ifedi, *2010*; Irizarry & Kleyn, 2011; Knight, 2011). They are currently populating our classrooms (Gallagher-Geurtsen, 2012) and producing leaders and educators who can inspire, encourage, and empower them is of essence.

Findings: A fuller portrait of transnational students and educators in the U.S., to include African immigrants and Latin Americans, demonstrates that their counterstories reflect global citizenship, resiliency, and leadership. However, little has been done to center their positions because they do not represent the norm. Schools, educators, and researchers are encouraged to acknowledge the counterstories of this population and remove barriers to such surfacing.

Limitations/Implications: U.S. schools are still lensed and operationalized through positivist strategies including standardized testing and standardized teacher preparation.

Originality/value of paper: This paper will contribute to the transnational voices in U.S. education and how these emerging transnational students and educators can move the conversation by their stories and lived realities such that they offer more global understanding and citizenship as well as collaborative, participatory leadership styles. There are implications for not only our educational systems but also for our local and globalized institutions and societies. The call is to find new transnational leaders in all the unexpected contexts.

Keywords: Immigration, Embodied Transnationalism, Global Perspectives, Citizenship, Critical Race Theory, Counterstories, Teacher Preparation and Development

Introduction

In the context of broader conversations on immigration, more recent focus has been given to the dynamics of transnationalism. Discourse on transnationalism is hardly a new phenomenon: the dynamics of border crossings and the impact of these movements on societies, cultures, and economies have largely been recognized in migration studies, etc. (Ernste et al., 2009; Portes and Zhou, 2012; Ramirez and Felix, 2010-2011). Of course, with immigrants traversing the globe, additional ramifications with technology continue to be identified and researched, leading to the intricate connection between globalization and transnationalism. According to Sanchez (2007), “Framed in this manner, globalization could then be defined as all the “transnationalisms” that exist in the world today” (p. 5). She highlights the movement of people across nations and even more significantly, the relationships that are maintained that include “sustained and meaningful flows of people, money, labor, goods, information, advice, care, and love; in addition, systems of power (i.e. patriarchy, Westernism) [that] can be created or reinforced in this process” (Sanchez, 2004, p. 5). Sanchez and Machado-Casas (2009) define transnationalism as a social process that has been enabled by easier access to mobility, communication, and social media. Immersion takes different forms because one does not need to be singularly immersed in local culture but can access and be immersed in the foreign/country of origin culture through entertainment, movies, and the like.

A key defining factor is that transnationalism is not recognized only as a geographic, economic, or social issue but also as an identity marker (Butcher, 2009; Chang, 2004; Dunn, 2010). In other words, many transnationals express a desire, commitment or/and need to be transnational. In defining transnationalism, Ernste et al. (2009) date it back to early 1900 and state that these cross border activities show that “today’s migration is more than moving from and to closed entities – the nation-states,” giving rise to transnational identities and “creating an in-betweeness, a cosmopolitan existence of sorts” (p. 577). From theirs and other researchers’ perspectives, transnational inquiry elicits a reexamination of terms like subjectivity, time, place, identity, place, home, belonging, political affiliations, and citizenship (Alviar-Martin, 2010/2011; Butcher, 2009; Ifedi, 2008; Knight & Oesterreich, 2011; Mirza, 2013; Osirim, 2008; Sanchez, 2001).

It is my intent to show that while embodied transnationalism does level some unequal relationships among immigrants and others, it also allows for an affirmation of the strengths such leveling brings. One such strength is how transnationals students and educators can and do foster global understandings, especially within our schools and communities.

Nevertheless, there are some obvious and not so obvious underlying barriers to such empowerment. In addition to the highly polarized immigration debates, and quite ironically for the United States, the nation of immigrants, both right and left ideologies deter the U.S. from reaping the rewards of transnational discourse/dynamics, particularly in education. While factors such as politics, security, global terror may cause some caution in the U.S., they nonetheless should not deter us from investigating the value of transnationals in education, specifically, and in the U.S in general.

**How to Begin: Who Are the Transnationals in the U.S.?**

Using critical race theory (CRT) as a framework for re-presenting transnational voices in literature and lived experience, while at the same time articulating limitations and barriers to this voicing, this paper builds on existing research /literature on transnational youth and educators (Gallagher-Gallagher-Guertsen, 2012; Ifedi, 2008; Ikpeze, 2013; Irrizarry and Kleyn, 2011; Sanchez and Machados, 2009; Zhou, 1998). Much of the research has looked at who they are, how to serve them, and why this is an important area for educators to study (Brittain, 2009; Zhou, 1998). I plan to synthesize some of the foregoing research to build a case and support what has been done already but also present their rather disparate voices as counter stories of portraits of leadership.

The ultimate goal is to open up more spaces for transnational understandings in the literature, discourse, and lived experiences of transnational students and educators who inhabit spaces that are yet to be fully recognized in U.S. education. Added in the discourse is an analysis of some barriers to recognizing these transnational voices as well as suggestions for recognizing emerging leadership embedded in their counterstories.

To achieve the goal thus presented, the first section of this paper draws on the budding research on transnationals in U.S. education and the second section synthesize the voices of embodied transnationals --immigrant youth and educators-- not just from Latin America but also from Africa in selected research studies, from a critical race perspective. CRT is used to frame their voices as they offer more global and shared understandings and then draws out commonalities in their stories. In the final section, I present limitations to this discourse as well as how to overcome them from equally a counterstorytelling perspective in teacher preparation. Again, as Sanchez and Machado-Casas (2009) stress how understudied the topic is, it is one that that is highly needed to better understand, recognize, and empower the transnational identity. While the authors point out that the Latina population embodies unrecognized and “invincible groups” such as Puerto Ricans, El Salvadoreans, and Cubans, I reiterate that in the U.S., a more complete portrait of transnationals needs to include Africans, Asians, and the rest of the world (Harushimana and Awokoya, 2011; Kambutu et al., 2009; Villenas, 2009). Paying attention to some of the common themes in all their narratives will be beneficial for better understanding and praxis in our schools and society.

**Why transnationalism in Education**

Because the world is flat and getting flatter, the forces of globalization including technology continue to impact the nature of migrations and the world’s socio-political, economic and educational systems (Apple, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2008; Friedman, 2008; Hernandez, 2010). Transnational flows are therefore described always in terms of the ability to not totally migrate from one place to another but to maintain ties seamlessly between two (or more) national identities, cultures, and so on. Sanchez and Machado-Casas (2009) offer that in this way, “many immigrants under globalization worldwide can potentially live transnationally without having to sever ties to their countries of origin” (p. 5).

Additionally, because world economies have been affected on macro levels, the tendency to compare nation states, economies, education, and health on a global scale have necessitated global comparisons which inherently are restructuring global hierarchies and creating a flatter world [Alba, 2012; Hernandez, 2010) . Transnational organizations are implicated in these changes (Portes and Zhou, 2012).

Therefore, overall, immigration provides the backdrop to transnational discourse. Much of the literature on world immigration and immigrants has largely focused on culture, race, and identity. Scholars on immigration in the U.S. have also addressed issues of cultural assimilation, acculturation, and difference, but the overtones or responses many times have been largely deficit-laden or/and negative, leading to continued dissension, debate, or support for immigration and multiculturalism (Banks, 2004; Faist, 2009; Laren, 2007; Spring, 2010; Valencia, 2013).

Kymlicka (2004) offers that recognizing ethnicities of immigrants is one strand of multiculturalism that opens the door to transnationalism. He acknowledges the tension that more transnationalism disrupts nation state identities; but urges a shift from “democratic nation building” as a goal of multiculturalism to “borderless neo-liberal ethos” that creates citizens of the world (p. xvi). Faist (2009) equally posits that transnationalism strengthens diversity and extends multiculturalism by allowing it to exist across borders.

It is clear that transnationalism is intertwined with globalization and immigration. On the one hand, transnationals can be looked at as a subset of immigrants who are typically expected to assimilate; on the other hand, they live as transnationals in “cosmopolitan space” (Hansen, 2010). Additionally, the school of thought that ascribes transnational activities to only first generation immigrants who are better able to maintain ties with their home nations is insufficient to explain contemporary transnational flows (Brown and Bean, 2006). Many of the immigrant faculty presented here fall into the first generation category (Espino, 2012; Ifedi, 2008; Moyo, 2013), but so also do their second generation children (Faist, 2009). Sanchez and Machado-Casas (2009), focusing on Latina/o immigrants, proffer that transnationalism is an “important lens with which to ‘see’ immigrant students in general. Irizarry and Kleyn (2011) categorize the approximately 40 million foreign-born, constituting five sub-groups and 12% of U.S. total population into four major categories: naturalized; green card residents; the illegal or undocumented, and temporary workers. Indeed, they are diverse, but a common shared voice is their harboring the ideas about going back (home).

**Embodied Transnationals in U.S. Schools**

Transnational youth in U.S. schools have been variously described as “emergent bilinguals” (Irizarry and Kleyn, 2011); “children of migration” “who are already living globalization” (Sanchez, 2007, p.490), and “children of globalization,” with President Barak Obama being named as one of them (Allen, 2008; also see Ifedi, 2010).

In this way, transnationals are a very unique mosaic: multi-generational, multi-national, foreign as well as native-born. They cut across racial categories and come from diverse geographical areas. In other words, transnationals are not limited to any particular racial group, socio-economics, or geography. They do not share all the assumptions and connotations harbored for (not ‘of’ nor ‘by’) immigrants generally, who are still subjected to class, race, and geographical marginalization.

One major reason to pay attention to this identity is accentuated by current demographic realities. In the sense that regions of the U.S. are becoming more diverse, they are also getting flatter. It is known that for instance school performance is correlated with socioeconomics and poverty. Accordingly, much has been written to create equity, level the opportunity field, and close achievement and opportunity gaps (Darling-Hammond, 2008). Here again, while it is true that immigrants populate six major states (U.S. Census, 2012), what is obscured is the fact that this only reflects the largest groups of immigrants in the U.S. Consequently, 53% of the foreign-born in the U.S. come from Latin America and the Caribbean; the remaining half come from Africa (4%), Asia (28.2%), Europe (12.1%), Northern America (2%) and Oceania (.5%). Another piece of data to be recognized is that the line between foreign-born and native-born will matter less with these transnational youth. For one, approximately half of the foreign-born were between ages 8-44. Yet, when it is reported that 27% of the native-born compared to 7% of foreign-born were under 18 (the school age population), it should also be important to note that the transnational population is increasing anyway because the children of the foreign-born are native-born citizens (U.S. Census, 2012).

The lived reality is that U.S. immigration percentages translate to very diverse local communities across the nation. Technology, nature of migrations, and jobs place these transnationals and their families in smaller towns like Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and Wisconsin (Knight, 2011). Transnational youth are located all over the U.S. A closer look at district and school data shows the presence increasingly of linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms. School populations in the U.S. are leveling. For example, Dublin City Schools, an upper middle income suburb near Columbus, Ohio reports that its Fall 2012 enrollment was 14, 600 students. Of this number, approximately 1,200 were identified as English Language Learners (ELL’s), constituting more than 60 different languages other than English in the district (Dublin Schools, n.d.). Similarly, Irizarry and Kleyn’s (2011) study is situated in north eastern U.S. and so is outside of the typical and contentious southern border states. Participants were pulled from two main district communities –one more rural, with strong 50-50 Mexican presence and one large city with Latin American and Asian immigration. Students in my ELL class report similar new diversities in their classrooms.

Finally, another reason to highlight this discussion is teacher education and preparation, which as earlier stated, a number of researchers have articulated the importance of this intersection. Sanchez and Machado-Casas (2009) in presenting stories about Latina/o immigrants stress that a better understanding of transnationalism will help us facilitate education for immigrant children. Irizarry and Kleyn (2011) note that with the “mostly White, U.S.–born, English speaking, middle-class teaching workforce” and “and an increasingly diversifying student body, the disconnect between the background and experiences . . . can be a severe issue if not addressed in teacher education programs, K-12 schools and through broader education and immigration policies” (p. 12).

The question of why more work has not been done in this area will be explored through the voices of transnational educators.

**CRT Gives Voice**

Critical race theory (CRT) has been used extensively and effectively to challenge and surface marginalization arising from race and racism (Ladson-Billings, 1999; Solorzano and Yosso, 2002). It approaches all contexts with a suspicion to expose all hidden racial and ethnic inequities (Espino, 2012; Ifedi, 2010) and in whatever contexts—policy (Taylor, 2006) or nation (Gillborn, 2002). It challenges therefore all claims of race neutrality and attempts to decenter master narratives with counterstories (Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012; Knight et al., 2004; Mirza, 2013; Solorzano and Yosso, 2002; Taylor, 2006). For instance, in studying achievement gaps, reflected in NCLB reports and student performance, Taylor (2006) exposes from a CRT lens the inherent inequity in lumping unique diversities into racial categories that are not helpful; the lack of action on something as useful as preschool that benefits minority children. In Knight et al (2004), the narrative of urban Latina/o youth not going to college is challenged by their lived experiences and counterstories of alternative pathways to the college attendance process.

For the most part, the counter narratives have been employed to “jar dysconscious racisms” (Ladson-Billings, 1999, p. 16), in order to surface the silenced person’s lived experiences and expose its effects and structures. Again, whether it is to explore the lives and work of minorities in education, in academia or K-12 schooling, CRT has been a useful tool in education (Espino, 2012; Ifedi, 2008; Moyo, 2013; Yosso, 2005).

However, even as some call for CRT to be applied in spaces outside of its home in the U.S. (Gillborn, 2006), a number of researchers have noted its seeming limitations (Awokoya and Clark, 2008; Ifedi, 2010; Taylor, 2006). So while CRT is lauded for its power to produce the other story not yet heard, it presents two problems. One is that it runs the counterintuitive possibility of reproducing the same master narratives it seeks to remove (Solorzano and Yosso, 2002). Secondly, some of its tenets have been challenged: As racial categories give way to ethnic pluralities, does its race permanence and pervasiveness hold up? Taylor (2006) questions whether improved Black/minority scores disprove CRT’s claim that race is permanent? I posed a similar question in dissecting observed differences within Black students’ performance in the U.S (Ifedi, 2010) and so have many other researchers (Moyo, 2013). As we add the plurality and transnationalism of immigrants, this question requires more investigation.

The rest of the paper demonstrates those two tensions with embodied transnationals while suggesting how to overcome some of the limitations in order to point out the voices of leadership being produced within this group.

**Voices from Literature: Problematized with CRT.**

In this section, in order to avoid the problem of reproducing master narratives, I have chosen to present a certain kind of counterstory of the voices of transnational youth and educators. Thereafter, we can delineate what their contributions are and summarize the goal of this analysis –presenting their strengths as globally-sensitive enactors. By doing so, I do not suggest that counterstories that expose race-based inequities are no longer necessary; I merely exercise resistance in moving to the next stage of providing affirming counterstories. So for example, instead of providing voices of Latino youth that critique inequity in their schooling experience (thereby reinforcing lowest school performance narrative), Brittain’s (2009) participants’ transnational message that U.S. schools are too easy could be very instructive in how educators structure curriculum content for newcomers.

**Who they are**: Irizarry and Kleyn (2011) present portraits of Alberto from Mexico who started school in the U.S. at Age 7. Natasha is from Mexico and has attended school in the U.S for at least10 years. She has consistent commitment which is not translating to school success. Ramon, a citizen from Puerto Rico, came at age 14, and speaks Spanish - an important point to remember in the context of immigration policy debates for ‘eligibility to speak English as a necessity to being truly American’. He expressed *Outsider* feelings because of security profiling by school personnel. Ritha is from Haiti, has accent and outsider feelings but also has strong school commitment. Tatiana is U.S. born, but goes back and forth from the Dominican Republic and has similar experiences. Edwidge is also from Haiti; he felt misunderstood but fitted in at immigrant school; Marat and family came from Georgia on Diversity Lottery. His experiences as a White, racial minority in his school are also noteworthy as he felt very much at home and accepted.

**What they say**: Alberto reminds us of his immigrant status and his emerging transnational identity by stating “Don’t hold my immigrant status against me” even if people “don’t really see us.” The youth in this study exercised agency, highlighting the “the drive and resolve that many immigrants possess but that is often undervalued and unnoticed by schools” (Irizarry and Kleyn, 2011).

In “Urban Immigrant Students”, Sanchez (2007) presents three second generation transnational students. The original team studied consisted of 200 students in ESL program in California, in sheltered instruction in one tenth grade class, with students from at least 11 countries. The Duarte girls with their return trips to Mexico offered detailed stories of their lives here and in Mexico, in two homes. We are shown how they acquired cultural flexibility, bending what it means to be “Mexican,” “female,” “daughter,” “youth,” or “U.S.-born” in either context” (p. 503). Additionally, they acquired transnational social capital, developing sensitivities, and understanding s beyond their immediate U.S. classrooms and communities, what Sanchez calls “world learning.” At such young ages, they were able to deal with gendered situations. It appeared that they possessed a better appreciation of freedoms here in the U.S. but were equally appreciative of strong community ethos in Mexico. I construe that they acquired local here and there knowledge comparable to teachers in my international education study [1].

The picture of their lives out of school is nothing like the master narrative of “lazy Mexicans” adopted by Nicole and Scott, White students in Howard’s study (2010). On the contrary, Alejandro worked 30 hours beyond school; Chandana, Indian, also worked; and Hakan worked in his family Pakistani store. Jimmy from Japan, was a frequent traveler, who brought back technology not even yet in the U.S. These students possessed cultural flexibility and funds of knowledge that informed their sense of global citizenship. For example, they exhibited a real sensitivity to working class immigrants, a contrast to sentiments in media. It was also a contrast with ideas of “global citizenship that highlight an elite, cosmopolitan consciousness derived from traveling to many countries and appreciating other cultures” (Sanchez, 2009, p. 511).

The second portrait comes from Knight (2011). She presents Kwame, a transnational, Ghanaian-American, and dual citizen who self-identifies and has strong allegiance to both countries - something Knight (2011) describes as “He breathes at least two nations in his everydayness and it is apparent how his transnational identity mediates his civic involvement.” He constantly negotiates values from both contexts –roots of family and respect from Ghana, but equally seizes on opportunities to demonstrate his love of the U.S. It is as if he lives a balance of legal and emotional citizenship, which makes us wonder why some never develop the latter. Kwame’s civic engagement is sustained through high school to adulthood in college where he participated in United Nations project with real life issues. It is such real life learning that the CCSS emphasizes (Mansilla and Jackson, 2011).

Kwame’s transnationalism imbues him with not just a love for country (ies) but a concern for global issues. For him, President Obama’s election was a “hope of democracy worldwide”, allowing Knight (2011) to state that such transnational civic engagement could be a “center of hope of addressing societal issues such as homelessness, AIDS,” which even answers the author’s question on whether his transnational identity played a role in his sense of belonging to a larger society.

The portrait of a very engaged young American is an undeniably instructive one that even this professor is personally amazed at what she learned from Kwame, for instance to self-reflect on what she had previously taken for granted: her vote for a president. Secondly, she reconsiders, questions, and reflects on Kwame’s concept and enactment of civic responsibility that is inclusive and non-competitive to what she knew as civic engagement growing up. Kwame makes her question the “American ideal that people are driven only by competition,” a point similarly raised by Ruth Farmer (as cited in Ifedi, 2008). Michelle Knight’s points out the astute civic and curricular need to learn from and with transnational immigrant youth. In her opinion, the U.S. will lose if we are not able to attend to these powerful voices.

The next voice is of another Ghanaian-American, Emmanuel, interviewed by one of my students, Darcy D, a teacher in an affluent community in Ohio, for a foundational course in TESOL endorsement program. Emmanuel shared with Darcy that he was proud to have ties to both countries, spoke both English and Twi fluently, would gladly serve in the U.S. Army, felt welcomed and appreciated in his school where he was a track star, but also reflected that if “something happened to him,” he would like to be buried in Ghana. Even though he expressed that Americans have a meager picture of the richness of his Ghanaian background, he loved the fact he didn’t have to be sent away to a boarding school as may have happened if he were still in Ghana. Nancy wrote in her paper about Emmanuel: “I found him to be exactly what I thought he was; a polite, handsome, good natured, ornery young man that will be successful in any situation that he finds himself in—who has the added life experience of being an immigrant” also commenting that there was nothing in these interviews and readings for the course about “people coming to America because they thought it might *lessen* their quality of life. And not one story or statistic stated that immigrants expected a “free ride,” or to be taken care of. In fact, most seemed resigned to the fact that life would be difficult at first, and were willing to work hard to be given good opportunities.”

The next group of voices comes from studies by/on transnational women (Mayazumi, 2008; Mirza, 2013; Osirim, 2008). In the study of self-identified transnational faculty women, the nine educators I interviewed expressed efficacy and conflict, citing examples of “White ease”, mentoring, double discrimination, and roles as ambassadors and bridge builders as African-born educators (Ifedi, 2008). Fatima was guided by her “communal dreams” and everything including her research agenda was driven by her African identity. Many of them expressed contradiction of belongingness, related to place, home, and language/accents. Ifeoma stated: “To be African? I don’t belong anywhere. I mean as soon as I talk, whether it’s here or in a [different country], everyone will say, “OK, Where are you from?”” (Ifedi, 2008, p. 109). Cathy shared the same sentiment as Alonzo that people are not really listening. Ifeoma’s fear of being deported at every turn imbued her with sensibilities of a lived experience reflected in “That (immigrating) was an incredible, horrible experience. . . psychological burden” ( p.116).

As citizens always working to go back, they equally shared stories of success in academia: Fatima: getting a PhD was fun and about “learning how to learn, knowing how to do research, and how to create knowledge” (p. 121). As professors, they shared stories of finding meaning in their work, proving self, and working harder. They acknowledged political consciousness and humility in admitting areas of growth. Particularly, the global focus of their research agenda was noticeable, “self-satisfying and fulfilling” and linking them to a social consciousness orientation.

The faculty members exhibited curricular and pedagogical strengths as reflected in their use of alternative paradigms and oppositional strategies. “Rather than cower under weights of discrimination, the African-born female professors built a place of strength for themselves.” Finally, building relationship with students was an experience shared by all of them. In spite of being undermined, they shared stories of incorporating these as strategies for their own learning, very similar to Ikpeze’s (2013) pedagogical creativity in incorporating student feedback to improve course content and methods.

Ikpeze (2013) tells a counterstory of how she applied culturally responsive teaching in her own teaching and growth. She felt empowered and she transformed her teaching to overcome initial poor student evaluations, tackle misconceptions and increase self-efficacy. She overcame accent expectations by using self as pedagogy; introducing critical global perspectives, i.e. of accents across the globe. In addition to mostly positive student evaluations, the voices of these educators echoed a “professional identity [that] not only reflected the themes of resiliency, of being challenged and standing ground but also those of knowledge-base, alignments, meaning-making work, and finally of reflection and conscious efforts at personal growth” (Ifedi, 2008, p. 125).

**What Do We Learn from these Transnational Voices and Portraitures?**

It appears there is congruence in the voices of these transnational youth and educators in a strong global mindedness that is positioned to add to understandings across race, gender, and nationalities. They seem to speak the language of a flat world as citizens of more than one place/home and therefore of the world. Grossman (2008) reminds us that “the path to democracy must address pluralism. In an increasingly globalized world, societies are ever more faced with the challenge of recognizing and/or integrating diverse groups in the polity. Inclusion is about how societies deal with “difference” in what are highly politically charged contexts.” (p. 36). Wagner (2008) reiterates that the 21st century demands change in economic as well as curriculum content and workplace skills. He remarks that “creating active informed citizenry” means students with new skills for college, careers, and citizenship (p. xxi). Just as Kwame in Knight’s (2011) study or Emmanuel (interviewed by Darcy, my student), a flat world calls for teachers and students to be authentically engaged citizens. Teachers not only should understand the place of citizenship as the “primary political office under a constitutional government”, but they must also possess “the intellectual tools to participate broadly in the human conversation and to introduce young people to it” (Goodlad, 1991). As Knight (2011) offers, we may all learn it together by acknowledging the leadership that the transnational students bring to bear in this area. In making a case for peace studies as a way of developing and teaching global consciousness and citizenship, Wisler’s (2009) opines that this is the type of democratic education that produces “a thoughtful and thought-filled citizenry”, one that understands and enacts the many freedoms, that is able to “distinguish fact from fiction, propaganda from news, and anecdote from trend” (2009, p. 128). Myers and Zaman (2009) again found clear differences between immigrant and non-immigrant students’ orientation to citizenship. So did Alviar-Martin (2010/2011) who states that the curriculum is disconnected from the lived experiences of these youth, adding that “To date, there is scant evidence of the potential to educate students for multiple, critical, and transnational citizenship” (p. 41). The ability to be flexible and to investigate global concerns all constitute the global competence the newly adopted CCSS seeks for our students (Mansilla and Jackson (2011).

As ambassadors and brokers bringing everybody up, their countries of origin as well as new countries of allegiance, the voices we hear in these counterstories embody social justice and equity concerns. As they make a case for the need for teachers to inculcate social justice –a continuum for multicultural education—through writing, Chapman et al., explicate on what social justice is and its relevance. “It affirms students’ multiple identities, creates solidarity among peers, builds student’ abilities to respond to and embrace supportive criticism of their work, and targets authentic audiences for their finished products” (2011, p. 539). Educators need to employ new pedagogies that allow for critical reflection to be developed.

**Road blocks** **to the transnational identity in the U.S.: Whiteness and CRT**

**Countering existing understandings**

What transnationalism brings to the table in its acquiescence to the retention, openly, to two or more cultures, languages, affiliations or even citizenships is important on different levels. For one, it challenges processes about assimilation and acculturation (Brown and Bean, 2006); it troubles theories and experiences of divided identities, i.e. Dubois’s double consciousness, and Black feminists’s triple consciousness in that transnationals seem comfortable and fluid in their different “skins” (Ifedi, 2008). Transnationals seem not to experience the ambivalence of their multiple identities, which raises this for further discussion and something to build on to forge common understandings.

**Language Instruction**: Another area that needs to be reexamined based on the lenses of transnational students is language instruction. Transnational students and educators report similar experiences of linguistic challenges and adjustment, but equally the importance of their primary language (Brittain, 2009; Lam and Warriner, 2012; Wassel, Hawrylak, and LaVan, 2010). However, Sanchez and Machado-Casas (2009) state that even more disconcerting, the discussion on ELL and L1/ L2 acquisition depict a “static picture”, a “linear trajectory” which is far from the lived experiences of those thus embodied. Alba (2012) made a similar conjecture in noting that in the U.S., emphasis is paid to instructional strategies while the cultural aspects of language acquisition are largely ignored. In implementing a TESOL program at our college, the program team rightly structured a foundational cultural, political, and historical course as a basis before the methods courses [ ].

**The politics of education**: Apple (2010) challenges us to adopt the kind of questioning that leads to “immense progress in our understanding of the cultural politics of education in general and of the relations among curricular, teaching, evaluation, and differential power” (p. 190).

As educators and citizens, are we ready for the tough questions? Are we ready to listen to and learn with and from these transnational voices, i.e Kwame, Emmanuel, Tatiana, and their transnational educators (Adair, Tobin, & Arzubiaga, 2012). Some of the transnational messages (Brittain, 2009) could have great impact on school curriculum, policies, and ultimately success of all students, if as they indicated i) content in U.S. schools was easy, making them apathetic towards school; ii)that even though English was difficult to learn, it was very important for academic and social reasons; iii)that caring teachers matter, iv) that respect mutually was appreciated and v) that discrimination between ethnicities especially African American was to be expected. How do educators and policy makers respond to these countermessages?

**Limitations of CRT**: The U.S is still dealing with overt and covert racism. It appears that CRT’s focus on race, blackness and whiteness is limited in and may not be enough for analyzing and surfacing all perspectives centered on race and color (Essed and Trienekens, 2008; Giroux, 2007) . Rather, we should concentrate on producing voice and empowerment (Ifedi, 2008, Ikpeze, 2013) by retelling and recreating (Solorzano and Yosso, 2002) counter storytelling that frees, liberates and affirms strength. This in turn provides a path forward for uncovering embedded leadership in the lives of transnational youth and educators.

**How Transnationals Counter Whiteness/CRT:** As earlier depicted, transnationalscrossracial, ethnic, socio-economic and geographical divides. The transnational space they inhabit may become not only beneficial for them, but for mainstream understandings. Should we continue to encourage and support engaged and civically minded youths and educators by recognizing and affirming coalitions over shared goals and understanding, we are likely to find common grounds to build on. Briefly, two areas of such coalition emerge with CCSS curriculum and teacher preparation and evaluation.

The very thing that stands in the way of such work would be Eurocentric approaches and the educational systems that are built on and reinforced by positivist strategies. The reproduction of systems of standards in K-12 and academia are good examples of these strategies and stand in direct contrast to interdisciplinary, critical pedagogy, more overwhelmingly advocated by less traditional approaches (Antonio, 2002; Ifedi, 2008).

The overarching goal, therefore, is to produceleadership from teachers, students, the changing globe and critical masses in order to capture the heart of democracy (Levy and Murnane, 2006). The challenge is to critique, but also to move to/away from victim narratives. It will be beneficial to continue proposing and reinforcing counterstories of success that do not perpetuate victimization –personal or systemic- that do not counter-intuitively reinforce deficit views that they are trying to eliminate. Educators need to go beyond victim/survival discuss about race and marginalizations –undergirded by critique of “whiteness” to counter-stories of success, equally undergirded by CRT.

Implications for Teacher Educators and Candidates: Re-learning Diversity from a Transnational Stance

I argue for a transnationalism that is educative, cosmopolitan, and reflective of current demographics. At the same time, it is unapologetic yet sensitive, grounded, collaborative and inclusive of all diversities. One of the many criticisms of MCE is that it requires teachers to learn about all the different national/cultural/ethnic backgrounds they are likely to encounter in a school year, which seems herculean. It sounds something like this: The need is for teachers who even with the best of intentions are ill-prepared and unable to “teach from a culturally relevant perspective, support native language while providing instruction in learning English or understand students’ home countries educational systems”(Irizarry & Kleyn, 2011, p.11), to be “diversity experts” with “knowledge of diversity in the U.S. and the world. . . .” (Akiba et al., 2010, p. 452), or to have a curriculum which multicultural paradigm is extended and adjusted to include authentic African experiences (Harushima & Awokoya, 2011). It is an expectation that is broad and wide; yet narrow and specific. Is it realistic though?

I suggest that teachers tap into what Hansen (2010) rightly posits is both realistic and practicable. The particular standpoint would be transnational; the universal position cosmopolitan. Educators can reach into their cosmopolitan orientation as he describes it:

Teachers who stand in “cosmopolitan space” not because they agree on everything –curriculum, content, methods . . . . On the contrary, it signals the ability of many educators to bring to bear an intimate grasp, literally at their fingertips, of their local domains fused with an equally intimate, thoughtful receptivity to new outlooks and ideas. In their shared aspiration to get at the meaning of education and to perform the work well, these teachers stand in distinctive ways between the universal and the particular, between the global and the neighborhood. They stand between the naïve and the cynical, between the local and the parochial. They stand in a cosmopolitan space.

Faist (2009) appears to have a similar perspective that the diversity perspective of transnationalism “takes the already existing skills and experiences of migrants as the starting point and interprets them as competencies to be used by organizations” (p. 175).

Teachers who prioritize inquiry and research and engage in sustained collaborative, authentic, and continuous professional development (Cochran & Smith, 2003; Rios, Montecinos, and Olphen, 2007) appear to be more successful (Morrell and Noguerra, 2011; Murray, 2012; Toom et al., 2008). These results showed up in Toom et al’s study of Finland’s teacher preparation and yet in the U.S., we continue on the path of counter-productive standardized teacher assessment and evaluation (Akiba et al., 2010; Darling-Hammond et al., 2011).

**Recasting teacher education**

Teachers are already cosmopolitan in disposition as earlier suggested. Building on this identity would be important. Elevated in the literature and work of minority educators and black feminists are culturally sensitive pedagogy, alternative pedagogies, empathy, caring, nurturing, and a deep lived experience and understanding of diversities. Studies and evaluations of teacher preparation programs continue to point to same issues of insufficient preparation in working with diversity (Akiba et al., 2010; Rochkind et al., 2008; Sleeter and Owuor, 2011). Sleeter and Owuor (2011) show that successful teachers are “more likely to engage in constructivist or culturally responsive teaching approaches and challenge those policies they view as hindrance to students’ learning.” (p. 532). Indeed novice teachers reported this challenge as well with even a more interesting notation for us educators that diversity has widened and flattened. In Rochkind et al. (2008), even of the 76% of respondent novice teachers who indicated they had diversity covered in course work, less than half (39%) reported that the preparation was helpful. Of more significance, those who felt less prepared for diversity were the teachers in low need, upscale schools (47%) compared to those in high need schools (32%) [high need constituted in their study of 50% or more students on free and reduced lunch]. Diversity means a whole lot more than cultural, ethnic, SES but now needs to be expanded to include transnationalism.

**Towards transnational understandings in teacher professional development and employing identity as a pedagogical tool**

We come full circle back to “weak” “less powerful” less positivist positions of effective teaching and ultimately, distributive leadership. Katzenmoyer and Moller’s (2009) framework for effective teacher leadership is based on these strategies: collaborative practices, peer work and review, conversations, identity work –practices that are more aligned with black women’s pedagogical stances. Relationship building is prioritized too. Palmer (1998) elevates identity, self-knowledge and reflection above methods. In essence, he supports relationship building and teachers who work off of deep relationships, indicting academia for losing heart and soul” the pain of people who thought they were joining a community of scholars but find themselves in distant, competitive and uncaring relationships with colleagues and students” (p. 20).

**Conclusion**

An attempt has been made in this essay to reposition transnationalism in education primarily by attending to the voices of embodied transnational students and educators. In presenting their counterstories from existing studies, we hear students’ voices that challenge the norm about their identity, achievement, and citizenship. Similarly, transnational educators demonstrate pedagogical strategies and global orientation that also position them to teach and lead well. Their voices are of embedded leadership and the main barrier to hearing and empowering them lies in normalized lens of Whiteness and even race theories. Especially because they constitute a flattened and globalized population that cuts across race and national narratives and because of the increasing numbers of transnational identities in the U.S. , the call is to encourage and surface their knowledge and lived experiences through research, discourse, and praxis in order to improve education in the U.S. and trans global understandings in a flat world.

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Notes:

[1] Awokoya and Clark’s analysis of immigrant experiences using 3 lenses -- cultural ecological theory (CET) Ogbu, voluntary and involuntary immigrants ;culture centered theory –culturally responsive teaching and CRT. I highlight limitations the authors raise about all three but especially that of CRT in that it doesn’t capture all Black /race experiences; the divide between black populations in the U.S. is also raised in Ifedi (2008) as “double discrimination.”