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Connecting Transnationalism to the Classroom and to Theories of Immigrant Student Adaptation

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Note

This essay describes the importance of transnationalism in the lives of U.S. immigrant students and their families and how public school educators and researchers have neither adequately recognized nor situated this lifestyle. The authors discuss globalization and what propels transnational movement and argue that existing immigrant adaptation research from the fields of sociology and anthropology focuses on immigration processes extensively without making connections to the classroom. The authors maintain that transnationalism remains largely under-theorized in educational research. Drawing on their experiences as researchers and teachers, the authors provide a glimpse into the lives of these 'overlooked' transnational students through a series of vignettes. The essay concludes by addressing the teaching and learning implications of working with transnational students.

Often, under the terms and conditions of globalization, immigrant workers and their children make tremendous sacrifices to enter the arena of transnational migration—experiencing major losses and marked transformations. Yet, they do so without any recognition of their valiant efforts to achieve new and noticeably different lives. In 2010 alone, the number of transnational migrants around the globe was estimated to be 214 million (International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2010). These are individuals and families who, for example, are born in China and move to Spain, or born in Haiti and move to the U.S. The emergence of transnational migration has been propelled by advancements in communication technologies and transportation. The IOM described such migration as one where "geographic space" and "migration space" have shrunk—so much so that nation-states see membership as no longer territory-based. Instead, a new kind of "people-state" relationship is taking root, likely to influence the future course of human mobility significantly.

But even while transnational actors transform migration as we know it, many countries—particularly developed ones—have mismanaged migration for the last quarter century, due to the absence of any well-defined and articulated migration policy (IOM, 2010). The U.S. does not escape such critique. In the last half decade, the U.S. has seen

mounting anti-immigrant sentiment where transnational migrants' heroic feats for survival are often criminalized, the survivors dehumanized, and their children perceived as deficient in U.S. schools. Furthermore, the incredible knowledge bases these families bring with them from the countries they leave, along with the lessons learned in navigating U.S. society, go unnoticed and are generally minimized.

In this essay, we take on the challenge of pushing back the mainstream's fear and misguided views of immigrants. Instead, we draw into focus the unbordered practices of U.S. transnational migrants and their families in what we consider to be a necessary shift beyond the limits of existing analyses, which have often been bounded by uni-national perspectives in research (Khagram & Levitt, 2008). In contrast, a theory of transnationalism:

> [E]mbodies various systems or relationships that span two or more nations, including sustained and meaningful flows of people, money, labor, goods, information, advice, care, and love; in addition, systems of power (i.e. patriarchy, Westernism) can be created, reinforced [or disrupted] in this process. (Sánchez, 2007b, p. 493)

In this essay, we highlight the practices of transnational families with whom we have researched, including their engagement with family members in several countries and the exchange of goods, ideas, and accumulated knowledge shared between countries. Transnational migrants' lives are complicated and rich and are often accompanied by narratives of courage, survival, and determination. The transnational social space in which these children and youth are raised is often filled with deep understandings of geopolitical contexts that span multiple national perspectives, personal navigation of physical borders (both with and without authorized documentation), and complex social networks in more than one country sustained through ever-changing media applications.

For instance, Nicolás Delgado[2] spent his last high school summer in the city in which he was born, Guadalajara, Mexico, with his extended family with whom he had maintained contact through phone conversations and online video chats. In the fall, in his Northern Virginia senior English class, he was asked about what he had done during summer vacation. Recalling the moment in class, he remembered all the things he did not share. He had helped his grandfather, who was battling cancer, navigate the Mexican government's national hospital system for rehabilitation services, and he talked with his uncle, a Mexican high school history teacher, about the differences between U.S. and Mexican versions of the history surrounding the loss of Mexican territory to the U.S. Yet his response of, "I visited Mexico," elicited nothing more than an, "Oh, interesting," from his teacher, who promptly moved on to the next student and showed far more interest in her summer beach trip. Despite Nicolás's new knowledge of another country's medical system, his use of linguistic skills, and his expanding sense of what official history does or does not teach, these knowledges were left unexamined by his teacher, who, in this case, unwittingly minimized Nicolás's transnational experiences.

In this essay, we describe the importance of transnationalism in the lives of U.S. immigrant students and their families and how public school educators and researchers

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[2] All transnational students and families in this essay have been given pseudonyms.

have neither adequately recognized nor situated this lifestyle in their work. We draw from our own experiences as K-12 teachers, education consultants, university instructors, community activists, and scholars in educational research, immigration, and cultural studies[3] to answer the following three interrelated questions: (1) What propels transnational movement?; (2) Why do immigrants of color maintain ties to their countries of origin and how does such a lifestyle influence their U.S. adaptation process?; and (3) What are the teaching and learning implications of this immigrant and cultural maintenance across borders for educators working with transnational students? To help answer our questions, we first address the literature on globalization, transnationalism, and U.S. immigrant adaptation, both in larger society and in schools. The second half of our essay provides educators with suggestions for acknowledging, harnessing, and utilizing the experiences and knowledge of transnational students in U.S. classrooms.

Globalization and Transnationalism

Researchers have theorized at length both the causes and effects of globalization (DeMartino, 2000; Krugman, 2009; Spring, 2009). While some have celebrated the "flattening" of the world and the attendant increase in both flows in communications (Inda & Rosaldo, 2008) and access to labor across borders (Friedman, 2005), we are most compelled and concerned by the increases in inequality both within and across borders that have accompanied globalization (Kristof, 2010; Milanovic, 2006, 2007; Moellendorf, 2009). Faux and Mishel's (2000) critique of globalization affirmed the presence of both "losers" and "winners" and illustrated the enormous wealth disparity across the globe. Indeed, the gains of globalization have flowed disproportionately to the rich and super-rich (Tomkins, 2006), and the growing number of new losers continue to be working-class workers with persistently stagnant wages (Boswell & Stevis, 1997; Hutton & Giddens, 2000; Went, 2000), subsistence farmers who cannot compete with corporate agribusiness (Madoff, Foster, & Buttel, 2000; Relinger, 2010), and families of color from developing nations whose household survival strategies disperse family members to difficult and precarious employment across continents (Dreby, 2010; Parreñas, 2001, 2005). In our view, globalization is a process often dominated by vested power interests that overcome the voices and interests of the masses most affected by the changes (Stiglitz, 2002). Like others, we are not convinced that such a process is inevitable.

The Disparate Economics of Globalization

Who are these actors benefiting from globalization? While we do not suggest a conspiracy of players to create a new world order, we do recognize the self-interests of those who exploit labor and resources because they are positioned, and indeed encouraged, to do so. Seeking to maximize profits and undercut their production costs relative to other companies, manufacturers move production facilities to countries with the lowest wages and the least restrictive environmental controls. In the meantime,

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[3] Because Mexican immigrants comprise nearly 31% of the total U.S. foreign-born population (Jiménez, 2010)—and because we the authors have conducted the majority of our research and teaching with this population, our essay necessarily depicts more examples and data from this immigrant community.

governments desperate to improve their employment rates often decrease environmental regulations, loosen worker safety standards, and ban collective bargaining practices, effectively creating a race to the bottom. Capital investments are even more capricious. When an emerging financial market is extremely profitable, investors with little sense of the country's conditions invest in their financial instruments, driving up currency values and thus inflation for the people who live there, making the cost of living less and less tenable (Krugman & Obstfeld, 2009). This often occurs until the emerging country's market no longer appears attractive and results in events such as the "Asian financial flu" of the late 1990s (Kin, 2000).

Other scenarios include the stress laid on "micro-enterprises" by public and private agencies. In most poor nations, small businesses or micro-enterprises already exist in the form of subsistence farmers and local artisans. However, free trade agreements have decimated these local businesses by flooding domestic markets with low-cost imports from the U.S., Canada, or other Western countries by creating favorable terms for certain industries in their home countries (such as the maintenance of certain agricultural subsidies) while creating unfavorable terms in the countries to which they export (Relinger, 2010; Sreenivasan & Grinspun, 2002). This practice dovetails with local and national governments' removal of price and land protections for small farmers in such markets (Faux & Mishel, 2000). Not surprisingly, these compounded practices increase the concentration of land in corporate hands.

A small tier of investors, upper-level managers, representatives of large businesses (increasingly multinational in nature), and their families stand to gain from these economic practices. Ong (1996) referred to these individuals as the actors in a new form of global citizenship, one that has "whitened" them through their successful participation in the market system and adherence to white cultural norms. In some ways, by trading their previous cultural practices for the privileges of whiteness, the wealthy Asian immigrants in Ong's research were able to participate in an economic system where whiteness was privileged and at times even commodified. Their capital allowed them new kinds of access across national borders. Emboldened by the means and the wherewithal to do so, these individuals often lobbied national governments to maintain the privileges and benefits they enjoyed. Meanwhile, the people who labored for these individuals often fell victim to the movement and fluctuation of global capital. One multinational company's shift in country of production displaced thousands of workers in a matter of weeks. Many of these workers were left with skills that were often non-transferable.

We have moved very quickly in human history from laboring with and for the family and community, to practicing a trade for a lifetime, to needing to demonstrate "agility" in an increasingly global market, lest we join the ranks of what Ong (1996) described as those living "bare life," or those who labor at a subsistence standard of living. With the increase of income inequality (Milanovic, 2006, 2007), even laboring for "bare life" is now out of reach for many, driving people toward life-and-death choices to migrate to where wages are higher or to stay and risk the lives of one's family where labor conditions and life chances are bleak. For instance, in East Asia, despite drops in overall poverty rates with the rise of the service sector and industrial production, inequality has risen, and a greater divide has grown between those working in the agricultural sector and

those who work in urban areas (Manohar Sharma & Feng, 2011). Those in rural areas now face widening gaps in health care and infrastructure compared to their urban counterparts. Most troubling, rural residents struggle with a widening gap in education, which is precisely what they need to compete and edge their way out of poverty (Manohar Sharma & Feng, 2011).

The Ties of Transnationalism

While globalization has allowed corporations and investors to move capital to take advantage of emerging opportunities worldwide, it has not allowed the same movement of individuals. Despite the inflexibility of national borders, the economic, social, and political dislocations caused by globalization have driven people to consider border crossing as an option for their and their families' survival. For the one person who enjoys flexible citizenship (Ong, 1999) there are countless who do not enjoy the flexibility to cross borders at will, though they are increasingly likely to consider the need to cross borders to subsist. This consideration—the expanded imagination of life possibilities (Appadurai, 2008)—is one of the transnational byproducts of globalization and one point of origin for transnational theory.

We emphasize that such border crossing is not to be misunderstood as a dalliance or adventure; rather, these crossings are made at great peril (Urrieta, 2003). Many transnational individuals risk dehydration, extreme weather, threat of rape, robbery, and death to gain access to new opportunities. In one study, 78% of undocumented migrants who crossed the U.S. border reported experiencing at least one such "dangerous problem" (Hagan, 2008, p. 68). Desperation and grit drive people to take these risks. As individuals resettle into their new host society, transnational practices take root.

As previously mentioned, we define transnationalism to be "sustained and meaningful flows of people, money, labor, goods, information, advice, care, and love" (Sánchez, 2007b, p. 493). However, for the purposes of this essay, we refine this description of transnationalism to better describe the homes of children and youth in our forthcoming vignettes. For them, transnationalism embodies social practices by people who engage more than one national context with some depth of familiarity, through activities that include maintaining family ties in multiple countries, possible visits to the sending country (and sometimes decisions for part or all of the family to return to the sending country), and the exchange of goods, information, and accumulated local knowledges between countries.

Inda and Rosaldo (2008) argued that culture is no longer situated in one territory, but rather it is transferred across terrains and re-situated as individuals move across territories. This notion supports the transnationalism construct of simultaneity, the simultaneous living of experiences in a host country and transnationally (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004), as well as the transnational construct of deterritorialization, wherein people identify themselves as part of a group despite not inhabiting the same proscribed historic geographic space (Glick Schiller, Basch, & Blanc-Szanton, 1992). Under the very real conditions of simultaneity and deterritorialization, the global migrant does not have to necessarily assimilate, as Blauner (1994) argued. In fact, as a result of globalization, migrants can now practice what Rouse (2002) referred to as "cultural

bifocality." By living across more than one national boundary and communicating with a community that is transnational and situated in an imagined space transcending borders, members live between two (or more) national territories (Rouse, 1992, 2002). It is now possible for the transnational person to live her or his life across borders, maintaining a sense of national identity. Simultaneously, this person forms a new identity or identities, constructed from the individual's new experiences and increasingly hybrid senses of social participation across borders. These relatively new phenomena are what bring about the rise of transnational theory.

Transnationalism complicates the assumptions and discourses surrounding immigration by shifting the lenses of analysis away from one-way, or segmented, assimilation toward a richer understanding of people's life trajectories and social practices. Transnationalism recognizes that people maintain cultural values and practices from sending countries, and in fact, these values and practices are essential for many people's survival, particularly if they participate in circular migration. Scholars in the field of migration studies have attempted to capture this movement and how migrants' social and political worlds reflect transnational maintenance. Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004) illustrated this concern with their request to researchers examining transnational phenomena:

> Our analytical lens must necessarily broaden and deepen because migrants are often embedded in multi-layered, multi-sited transnational social fields, encompassing those who move and those who stay behind. As a result, basic assumptions about social institutions such as the family, citizenship, and nation-states need to be revisited. (p. 1003)

Although many studies on transnationalism incorporate various regions of the world, the vast majority focus on the U.S. and a sending country. This is partly due to our country's obsession with assimilation and its long and enduring history of immigration. In the U.S. today, there are 40 million immigrants (Walters & Trevelyan, 2011), and their children equal 15 million (Urban Institute Press, 2006). In other words, 20% of children in the U.S. come from immigrant households. By 2040, this figure is projected to increase to one in three or 33% (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995; Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008). With such an overwhelming number of U.S. schoolchildren who potentially fall into the category of being part of transnational families, educators would gain from more research into the transnational ways these students live and learn.

Existing scholarship on U.S. transnationals has also largely emphasized immigrant elites (Ong, 1996, 1999) as well as those who engage with their home countries in a political and entrepreneurial manner (Guarnizo, 1998; Miller, 2011; Smith, 2006). Domestic workers have been studied as well (Parreñas, 2001; Romero, 2002), as have gender issues (Mahler & Pessar, 2006; Sánchez, 2008), religion (Levitt, 2007, 2008; Stepick, Rey, & Mahler, 2009), and digital media and literacy (Lam, 2009; McGinnis, 2007). U.S. schooling and transnational contexts have been studied to some extent (Brittain, 2002; Macías, 1990; Rodríguez, 2009; Sánchez, 2009) and, of course, issues related to identity and culture (Glick Schiller & Fouron, 2001; Nagel & Staeheli, 2003; Sánchez, 2001). This by no means is an exhaustive list, but it gives the reader a sense of

the fueled importance of transnationalism in research related to U.S. immigration and its attendant processes.

The above scholarship, however, could be strengthened by extending its insights to the multi-straddled lives that transnational immigrants and their children live today. It is critical to not only consider the traditional ways that newcomers incorporate or assimilate but also the ways in which they maintain ties to their homelands and how this shapes their understanding of belonging to two places simultaneously. As much of the literature on transnationalism has demonstrated, in an increasingly globalized world, many migrants have the ability, desire, and need to preserve attachments to their countries of origin in economic, political, religious, or familial terms while still becoming members of another nation-state. In the following section, we examine how transnationalism converges with theories related to immigrant children and the U.S. adaptation process; we consider work from both sociological and anthropological perspectives, from historical and contemporary lenses, to shed light on this phenomenon.

Immigrant Children and the U.S. Adaptation Process

Within the body of literature on immigrant children and their adaptation to a receiving or host country, two major disciplinary schools of thought overlap: the sociology of migration and anthropology's cultural-ecological theory. Overall, they take a macro view of immigrant groups, often focusing on adults and large processes of integration. It also should be noted that sociology has long had U.S. immigration as one of its central academic themes, whereas anthropology has historically promoted the study of non-industrial societies outside of the U.S. (Foner, 2003). However, because the focus of our essay is transnationalism—a practice imbricated with assimilation—we necessarily look at the antecedents and corollaries of this theory, which includes research from both disciplines. While research on immigration has been useful for educators to better understand the children and families with whom they work, we argue that transnationalism allows educators to grasp the greater complexity of many immigrant students' lives, particularly as that complexity expands due to the influences of globalization.

A Brief Review of the Sociological Perspective on Immigration

In the U.S., the sociology of migration has spanned nearly a century. Efforts to document and describe the settlement process of newcomers have often coincided with the different waves of immigration. In the earlier part of the 20th century, Thomas and Znaniecki (1920) and Park and Miller (1921)—three of whom were from the Chicago School of Sociology—helped define classic assimilation, wherein immigrants, in theory, take on characteristics and values of the host country and discard the sending countries' traditions and ideas. Others continued to refine this model with different levels or cycles of assimilation (Gordon, 1964), adding the term "straight-line" assimilation (Glazer & Moynihan, 1963; Warner & Srole, 1945) to describe the orderly progression whereby successive generations of immigrants incorporated into mainstream society. While much of this work has been criticized as "Anglo-conformist," depicting immigrant groups as

conforming to unchanging, middle-class, white, Protestant values, "new assimilation theory" persists with such proponents as Alba and Nee (1998, 2003).

In contrast, some sociologists have departed, somewhat, from a uni-linear path of immigrant integration, coining the term "segmented assimilation" (Portes & Rumbaut, 1996; Portes & Zhou, 1993). Under segmented assimilation, immigrants may (a) integrate into the white middle class; (b) become a part of the underclass (described by many sociologists as poor, urban African-American communities); or (c) achieve some measure of upward mobility while retaining features of their ethnic immigrant community. Within this model, other terms have also arisen, such as "dissonant or consonant acculturation" (Portes & Rumbaut, 1996, 2001), which describes the rate of acculturation between immigrant parents and their children. Under dissonant acculturation, immigrant children outpace their parents in adopting a U.S. lifestyle and learning English; consonant acculturation describes the Americanization process for both immigrant parents and children at a similar, shared pace. Finally, within the model of segmented assimilation, "selective acculturation" (Portes, 1996; Portes & Rumbaut, 1996) describes the third path mentioned above where immigrants are part of a strong immigrant ethnic enclave and "selectively" acculturate, or take on, certain characteristics of the white middle class but preserve aspects of their origin-country's culture. Selective acculturation is similar to what educational anthropologists have termed "accommodation without assimilation." We next turn to this disciplinary lens.

A Brief Review of the Anthropological Perspective on Immigration

Immigrant adaptation studies by anthropologists are largely informed by cultural ecological theory and include such models as the immigrant/involuntary minority typology (Gibson, 1997; Ogbu, 1978, 1991) and accommodation and acculturation without assimilation (Gibson, 1988; Mehan, Hubbard, & Villanueva, 1994). Ogbu's work (1978, 1991) proposed that immigrants are "voluntary" minorities in their receiving countries because they have chosen to leave their home countries voluntarily and seek a better life in a new locale. This status gives them an adaptive advantage over "involuntary" minorities, who have a history of marginalization, discrimination, enslavement, genocide, and conquest by the (white) dominant group in power. Gibson (1997) argued that this typology is limited because it does not consider various types of immigrants, including those who enter a new country without legal permanent residence, or as economic migrants, asylum seekers, refugees, and guest workers. Thus, the sending and receiving contexts of each immigrant group plays a unique role in the adaptation process. Ogbu's typology also weakens when applied to European nations who have considerable numbers of migrants from former colonies (Eldering, 1997; Gibson, 1997; Gillborn, 1997; van Zanten, 1997). Immigrants' adaptive experiences in these "old" nations are shaped and complicated by a shared colonial history.

In her ethnography of the Sikh community in northern California, Gibson (1988) described a process of integration into the U.S. that she terms "accommodation and acculturation without assimilation," a concept similar to what Portes and colleagues termed "selective acculturation" a few years later in the field of sociology. The Punjabi immigrant community encouraged its children to cultivate their roots within their native community, retaining their distinctiveness, as they accommodated to U.S. schools and

adopted only the "good" ways of "Americans." This combined approach to integration gave way to upward mobility.

Anthropologists also posit that an immigrant parent's "dual frame of reference" is helpful in adjusting to the U.S. because s/he compares the difficulties in the host land to those in the origin country, noting how much worse it could be had s/he remained back home (Ogbu & Simons, 1998; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995). In other words, first-generation immigrants will compare how well they are doing in their new context with how poorly others are doing back in their homeland. Under this framework, second-generation immigrants do not have the benefit of such a dual frame of reference because they compare themselves to others already in the U.S., often their white native peers. This can result in second-generation (or third-generation) immigrant students internalizing a sense of inferiority because their English skills may not be as strong as, or their parents' educational levels may not be as advanced as, those of their white peers.

Lastly, Lukose (2007) noted that recent work on immigrant student adaptation and anthropology focuses more on identity formation processes and important intra- and intergroup differences among immigrant students (Lee, 1996, 2005; Olsen, 1997, as cited in Lukose, 2007). In her review of the anthropology of immigrant education, Lukose (2007) made a call for a greater dialogue between it and diaspora studies because "studies of immigrant education and youth do not always interrogate complex transnational processes" (p. 408). She also believed that the anthropology of immigrant education could yield more critical understandings of complex concepts and categories such as nationalism, immigrant, and multiculturalism if it were to take up diaspora studies within its research framework and set aside its uni-linear focus on national assimilation. In a similar vein, we propose what Lukose eloquently articulated, but we do so keeping both sociological and anthropological perspectives in mind, and offer a discussion of how the study of immigrant adaptation would benefit from a closer examination of transnational practices.

Beckoning the Lens of Transnationalism

Few educational researchers have used the lens of transnationalism. Much of the educational research that looks at transnationalism has leaned toward studying the experiences of those families who have the financial capital to cross borders. For instance, Huang and Yeoh (2005) showed how middle-class Chinese mothers adapted in order for their children to become bilingual and arguably more marketable in a globalizing world by moving without their partners to Singapore to afford these advantages to their children. Waters (2005, 2006) also examined middle-class families from East Asia and how they were able to develop additional forms of capital for their children through transnational schooling. Mitchell (2001) investigated what happened when Hong Kong immigrant families in Canada used democratic processes to advocate for public schools that more closely resembled their own perspectives and values. Mitchell (2001) found that the suburban school district did not take up the multicultural perspectives of Hong Kong families because they contradicted white Canadian views of schooling, leading readers to recognize that there are limits to the liberal rhetoric surrounding democracy and the nation-state. Similarly, Ong (2004) was critical of

multicultural trends in education and recognized the shift from nationalist discourses about multiculturalism and Western political liberalism toward a discourse of "neoliberalism and diversity of global subjects abroad" (p. 50). In a more recent trend, a small number of educational researchers have focused on the ways working-class students and families engage their transnational identities to make decisions regarding education (Brittain, 2002; Ek, 2009; Hornberger, 2007; Machado-Casas, 2009; Sánchez, 2007b; Zúñiga & Hamann, 2009).

Most of the research related to transnational children and education has been under the larger framework of assimilation. The unfortunate result, we argue, is that the focus on how immigrants assimilate misses the opportunity to interpret (and perhaps misinterprets) a larger set of accompanying phenomena alongside the immigration act itself. For example, if we only look at how immigrant communities practice segmented assimilation, then we overlook the dynamicity of transnational practices. Under segmented assimilation, an immigrant family can potentially assimilate into the white middle class, achieve some measure of U.S. mobility while maintaining aspects of their home language and culture, or spiral into downward assimilation and become a part of the urban underclass. Interestingly enough, transnationalism can be imbricated in any of these three scenarios—playing a minute or significant role in each pathway. Furthermore, we would argue that children and families *most* engaged in transnational practices enter the segmented assimilation pathway and achieve some measure of mobility but maintain part of their home culture and language. Thus, transnationalism and assimilation can co-exist, but the former offers a lens with which to "see" the dynamicity of students who recognize and conceptualize their lives in simultaneous places or in a strong transnational social field.

It is clear to us that many sociologists will not soon retire the framework of segmented assimilation. Even as recent empirical work showed the results of a DAI or Downward Assimilation Index (Haller, Portes, & Lynch, 2011), we believe it is important for those of us who study and work with immigrant populations to recognize transnational practices and their significance. Segmented assimilation, and its accompanying DAI, often obscures this.

With the lens of transnationalism, researchers can explore a host of important questions, including how transnational people adjust, shift their sense of identity, and employ agency. Miller (2011), who closely examined the transnational activism of the Salvadoran American National Association (SANA) in Los Angeles, offered the following olive branch to scholars studying immigrant adaptation:

> One broader lesson that can be drawn from [the SANA] case is that it may behoove us to step back from the study of either transnationalism or assimilation and turn instead to a more holistic examination of the post-migration process. One method of studying these processes has been to pit them against one another in search of a winner. Findings that transnationalism is engaged only by 'the few' and the elite, or evidence that cross-border ties do not last into the second and third generations, have been touted as proof that transnationalism is not as important a phenomenon as scholars make it out to be. Another way to approach this terrain, however, is to explore how the two processes are bound up and

implicated in one another, each being a potential mechanism of the other under given circumstances. In this sense, it does not matter whether the phenomenon endures generations or even which process 'wins.' (p. 57)

Miller's perspective resonates with us because we, too, have grown tired of the battle among migration scholars and their waning and waxing concern with transnationalism's value. Because the study of transnational phenomena mainly began as a response to the novel concept that first-generation immigrants could maintain loyalty or attachments to more than one nation-state, a heavy emphasis was placed on scholars to demonstrate how, or if, transnationalism was carried out by immigrants beyond the first-generation.

Sánchez's (2007b, 2008, 2009) longitudinal study of three transnational Latina youth over 10 years described these second-generation immigrant teens, who are now 23 to 25 years old, as highly engaged transnationals who grew up in a densely-knit immigrant ethnic enclave in northern California with close ties to their parents' origin communities in western Mexico. They enjoyed the many return trips across the border and often described how glad they were to be able to walk and know the places where their immigrant parents grew up. This reduced their dissonant acculturation and contradicts the dual frame of reference described by other scholars. The second-generation children enjoyed tangible experiences that dovetailed with those from their first-generation parents. Today, while the three women are not as engaged in the transnational experiences of their childhood and adolescence, the adult work they do professionally and personally reflects a foundational transnational Latina experience. All are bilingual, two work with Latino immigrant communities as a social worker and policy-maker, respectively, and one is married to a newly-arrived Mexican immigrant.

From this example, we glean an important crux to our argument: While transnationalism may not be carried out with as much ardor in adulthood, it can play a significant role in the coming of age and adjustment of immigrant children to a new country setting. Transnational experiences can help students develop a sense of identity, which will help them achieve in non-U.S. settings as well as in U.S. school settings. Immigrant students are always potentially engaged transnationals during their settlement process in the U.S.—the possibility always exists that they will remain actively connected to their home countries. We believe there would be deeper transnational participation of students *if* their teachers were able to recognize their transnationalism; instead, as it stands today, transnational students hide their transnational participation. The assimilation project in the U.S. is so heavy-handed in our schools that we miss the opportunity to recognize the possibilities and promise of engaged transnational students. We cannot continue to ignore this reality. Educators must move beyond the frameworks of understanding immigrant children through one-way or segmented assimilation to understanding the transitive transnational nature of their experiences in order to best educate these students and enrich their more monocultural peers who do not have the same skills—skills they may need—in an increasingly globalized world.

Teaching and Learning Implications:
The Possibilities and Promise of Engaged Transnationals

Based on our own experiences as U.S. educators in three disparate regions of the country—California, Texas, and the greater Washington, D.C. area, including Maryland and Virginia—we have witnessed a strong tendency in teachers to try to assimilate immigrant students by subtracting the non-U.S. parts of their identity (Lee, 2005; Valenzuela, 1999). For instance, students study immigration units without being asked about their own continuing participation with their sending countries. They also face insurmountable pressure to speak only English and consequently lose their heritage languages. In other instances, they receive messages that they should give up their non-white cultural practices. In addition, most professional development for educators omits the possibilities of recognizing the transnational lives of students. For example, assimilation is so durable that in Kasun's training and professional development as an ESOL teacher, school and district leaders frequently invoked the term as a positive goal to which teachers should help their students aspire. She seldom heard school or district leaders discuss families' rich social networks (Orellana, Thorne, Chee, & Lam, 2001; Yosso, 2005) or hybrid identity formation (Wolf, 2002)—key elements experienced within a transnational social field. In the subsections that follow, we share with educators the possibilities and promise of recognizing and harnessing the experiences of transnational students and families.

Enduring, if not Countering, the Racialization Process

As educators in public schools, many of us have seen firsthand how immigrants of color are "Americanized." They are often socialized into a particular racial category, and through this (or because of this), they experience a marginalized existence in both their schooling and incorporation into the local community (Lee, 2005; Olsen, 1997; Valenzuela, 1999). However, if certain groups of immigrants have close ties to their home countries, these transnational practices may be a way to buffer the negative aspects of becoming a "U.S.'er" or an American (Sánchez, 2007a, 2007b). One father in Sánchez's study of the three transnational Latinas often stated, "I need my trips to Mexico to survive here [the U.S.]." The toll of working at a construction site where his English was scrutinized and his hard work and seniority dismissed, while non-immigrant workers (i.e., white peers) received promotions, was often unbearable for Mr. Topete. To manage his situation, he returned to Jalisco, Mexico, with his family almost every year for two to three weeks.

During his return trips, Mr. Topete was able to recognize his appreciated status in Mexico as someone accomplished with steady U.S. employment and the maintenance of his family homes in both Jalisco and northern California. He experienced no language barrier, no question about his character, and did not face ethnic discrimination. In Mexico, he was known as more than someone who does blue collar work. His fuller self was revealed in his origin community where honor stemmed from the sacrifices he had made to immigrate to the U.S., his reputation as a hard worker, the support he had given to others seeking a new life *en el norte* (in the north)*,* and from the material goods he had acquired for his family. He was a success story in Jalisco.

When Sánchez lived in Houston, Texas and taught second-graders, she saw how one particular local Catholic church experienced complete parishioner changes at each Sunday Mass. The early morning service had hundreds of middle- to upper-class attendees from the River Oaks community. The evening mass was jam-packed with Mexican, Central American, and Colombian churchgoers. The Latino immigrant community had built an active network of believers, re-inscribing many rituals from their home countries into this well-to-do neighborhood church. Sánchez heard from several Latino Catholics at this church, who all worked as landscapers or domestic workers nearby, that Sunday mass each week represented an immense respite from their difficult work weeks. This place became a true sanctuary for the immigrant service workers and the racial micro-aggressions Latino members experienced each week.

Countering the racialization process, and the accompanying micro-aggressions of daily discrimination, sometimes necessitates a measure of respite within the immigrant ethnic enclave or back in the origin country. Transnational practices of returning to the sending country and of being among one's "home" community (physically or even virtually) provide this needed respite.

Being Somebody

Return visits for many transnational families involve a complex affirmation process where people who are displaced globally are able to re/center themselves in a place of origin where they exist as recognizable people. This recognition is so important to some families that they will make the journey back-and-forth despite being undocumented, risking their livelihoods and even their very lives. Recognition is often the most fundamental missing element for immigrant children and for children of color, in general, in U.S. schools (Rodríguez, 2008). Students are misread as only partial people, portrayed in broad strokes as immigrants or "ESL students," without consideration for the various other parts of their identities.

At "home," in their home countries, indeed they are someone, not just to their families and friends, but also to a larger community, where often their family histories are known and family lineages can be traced back for several generations. For example, Severino Bautista, whose family made return trips to the Philippines every two to three years, describes being regularly mistaken as a Latino at his southern California middle school. When he is able to go back with his mom to visit his grandparents in their *barangay* (a community of about 70 families), Severino says he feels important because everyone knows he is Agapito's grandson. Agapito is revered because of his leadership and courage. In this home context, the flow of existent social and symbolic capital is familiar and the social ties and networks enable people to exist as *gente* (people) and not as just another worker, "immigrant," or English Language Learner. Transnational children in these contexts learn about their family histories and their ancestral homelands often by being placed at the center of an origin myth, rather than at the margins of a society that tends to devalue who they are.

Combating the Double Standard of "Studying Abroad"

While study abroad trips are celebrated in high school or university foreign language programs for the ways they "open the world" to students who have never or seldom traveled abroad, transnational students who have lived this experience have understood that they must hide this practice that is otherwise celebrated. This tendency is so strong that students will even work at hiding their transnational practices, such as return trips to the sending country (Sánchez 2001, 2007a). Often, schools frown upon return visits because transnational students' absences will cause a school to lose funding or because teachers believe that immigrant children will lose or set back their English skill development. Parents may try to cover the true reason for the return trip and cite a death in the family, thus making it harder for transnational children to talk more openly about what they did during their international trip. This tendency is strongest, of course, among students from "poorer" developing countries because these nations lack prestige and first-world amenities. When transnational students hide parts of their experiences (i.e., identities), much valuable knowledge is lost.

This is unfortunate because these natural "study abroad" trips by transnational students often help develop a greater awareness of global political and economic issues. For instance, transnational students may gain a much more nuanced sense about the value and scarcity of water and thus have experience with local technologies related to resource conservation. Or, they may gain a greater understanding about multi-national immigration policies and their impact on local and transnational populations. One Mexican student who recently graduated from college lamented, "Why is diversity valued in college but not noted in schools before getting to college? In college, students get so excited about study abroad, and I've already lived it." Transnational students have been encouraged to hide these knowledges rather than share them, resulting in a tremendous loss for all students who could gain a deeper understanding of what globalization looks like beyond the more superficial "flows" of consumer goods and brands (Inda & Rosaldo, 2008).

Enhancing Classroom Curricula

Educators must draw upon students' transnational lives in order to prepare all students for an increasingly globalized world (Suárez-Orozco, 2007). We are not suggesting a "learning styles" approach where transnational students are considered a monolithic group in need of a repertoire of instructional strategies to meet the group's needs (see Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003). Instead, we are arguing for the need to create the space where students' transnational experiences and perceptions are allowed to be aired, understood, and built upon in schools. In education, the commonly stated goal is for the classroom to function as a "community of learners." If, in fact, we aspire to build true communities, transnational students' lives should no longer remain hidden from the view of their peers and teachers.

Teachers should ask their students about their lives outside the classroom so that they learn the aspirations and desires of their students and their families. In Kasun's research (2012), parents said they wished their children's teachers would find out about who their students are and even offered to welcome teachers into their homes. Teachers will likely be surprised to learn the transnational social contexts in which students are engaged. For

example, Konelio Tangi, a Tongan youth who often hung out at a community organization for Pacific Islander youth in Oakland, California, describes visiting family in his home country during a school break. What most shocked him about this trip was how his mom told him on the last day to take off all his clothes and trade it with his cousin. Konelio says he left every piece of clothing he owned in Tonga—even his duffle bag. His mom had seen the dire poverty in her community and persuaded her son to help, realizing he would get new replacement clothes back in the States.

For many teens, giving up all their clothing to another person without any forethought would be unheard of. Konelio's highly personalized experiences in a developing nation like Tonga are an excellent springboard for curricula addressing social and economic inequities. Drawing on the knowledge of transnational students, teachers can enrich classroom lessons and promote cross-cultural understanding among students. Additionally, enriching classroom curricula to reflect the issues encountered in visits back home can engage transnational students and deepen their understanding of their own experiences. In this manner, transnational students internalize an understanding that they bring valid knowledge and experience to U.S. schools (Rodríguez, 2008).

However, we acknowledge a crossroads in the field of U.S. education. On one hand, our country's top leaders recommend shifting the U.S.'s instructional approaches to suit the needs of a globalizing world (Dillon, 2010); on the other, state curriculum standards continue to buttress national, regional, and state narratives about belonging, at the exclusion of curricula that recognize global citizenship or local ethnic affiliations (Condon, 2010). In fact, recent nativist fears have led to a push for conservativism in the curriculum, evidenced by the recent social studies textbook debates in the state of Texas (Condon, 2010) and the passage and implementation of Arizona's HB 2281, which bans ethnic studies, targeting Latino studies in particular (Santa Cruz, 2010). These standards and conservative pendulum swings miss the opportunity to draw from the uniquely situated backgrounds and experiences of transnational students who have lived globalization. In an era of heightened xenophobia and strict adherence to accountability standards, it is little wonder teachers seldom draw upon the strengths and viewpoints of transnational students.

Take for example the experiences of Raj Venkat who emigrated from India at a young age but was able to go back and visit his grandmother three times before he started college. Raj reflectively describes the way his grandmother would gather coconuts and use every single part for a prescribed use: the milk for curry, the flesh for other food preparation, the oil for hair care, the husk for plant fertilizer, and the dried shell as a cup or bowl. While Raj himself made the connection of his grandmother's humble way of life to ecological conservation, he actually never related this insight to his peers or teachers. Instead, he described a classroom setting full of worksheets and textbook readings.

Increasing Flexibility in a Globalized World

Transnational children often develop sophisticated identities that they can adapt to various surroundings based upon the circumstances in which they find themselves. Children do not necessarily learn to choose between their parents' home country(ies) and their own, but instead can develop complex understandings of their expected

competencies to participate in multiple contexts. Thus they develop a flexible and adaptable sense of being from here and from there—*de aquí y de allá* (Favela, 2010). Rather than being a threat to nationalist discourses of belonging, we argue this skill allows children to adapt to an increasingly globalized world. It is an enhanced identity toolkit. While at times it can be difficult for children to navigate the conflicts in worldviews, it helps them learn a flexibility of understanding that can serve them in multiple contexts.

For instance, Gloria Paredes was born in the U.S. but returned to Mexico as an infant and stayed until she was in first grade. Upon returning to the U.S., she and her family made frequent return visits to Mexico where she maintained her Spanish and cultural skills. She worked as an ophthalmologist technician in a large metropolitan optometrists' shop while studying at a nearby university. She successfully related to her African-American, Pakistani, and white counterparts at work while also carefully addressing her clients. She demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of Latino families when she offered her interpreting skills to Spanish-speaking families. Gloria explained that she also understood that the clients from West Africa, Southeast Asia, and other world regions might have expectations the U.S.-born and raised doctors would not understand. I saw her at work, allaying fears of patients from other countries and encouraging them to express all their concerns with the doctors. She helped the doctors provide better services to their multinational clients and was especially helpful to the Latino families, who she said may have been more wary of the U.S.-born and raised doctors. Her cultural brokering resulted concretely in the correction of many Latino children's astigmatism, a condition that would likely have stayed with the children without regular and consistent treatment if Gloria had not facilitated those families' understandings of the condition. Upon finishing her undergraduate degree, she decided to use some of her cultural brokering skills in a more applied context to work directly with multinational students in the region where she grew up and was admitted to several graduate programs in school counseling.

The challenges of globalization are vast. Ecological, economic, political, and social impacts of globalization are numerous. In many ways, the people best equipped to face these impacts are the children who have witnessed and engaged these shifting conditions of globalization. Transnational students often already know how to navigate various governmental systems, cultural expectations, and ecological differences. They are also often most aware of the inequalities we mentioned earlier in this essay and best equipped to confront them. Like Gloria, transnational children of working-class backgrounds often decide to dedicate their life's work to helping bridge pathways for those who have limited access to the advantages they enjoyed. We urge educators to question their understandings of their immigrant students and to encourage the transnational participation these children have.

Conclusion

This essay summarizes the existing literature on immigrant student adaptation while synthesizing similar strands of immigrant incorporation research from the fields of sociology and anthropology. We argue that while these scholars have studied immigration processes extensively, fewer connections have been made to educational issues. In the same vein, transnationalism, and its accompanying lifestyle, remains largely

under-theorized in educational research pertaining to immigrant students. Seeing transnational children and families as simply immigrants, English Language Learners, or blue collar laborers blurs our ability to envision how these migrants could, in reality, be the new "winners" of globalization because their ties to their home communities (or countries of origin) possess a tremendous potential for classroom learning.

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