CROSSING BORDERS/ CROSSING BOUNDARIES

NARRATIVES OF INTERCULTURAL EXPERIENCES

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Crossing Borders/ Crossing Boundaries:

Narratives of intercultural experiences

2019 CEDER Yearbook

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Contents

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Foreword

Lynn Hemmer
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Jana Sanders

This yearbook is a project of the Consortium for Educational Development, Evaluation and Research (CEDER), the research and development arm of the College of Education and Human Development at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi.

   With this edition of the *CEDER Yearbook*, the editors wished to explore and highlight relevant issues of experiential learning for faculty and students who have crossed boundaries and borders to teach and learn at the theory, policy, and practice levels. The inspiration comes largely from the energies, enthusiasm, conversations, planning meetings, and our own experiences building up to and extending after the use of study abroad as a tool to cultivate, prepare, and socialize pre-service and in-service teachers and educational leaders. Our Teaching and Learning Study Abroad Program is part of a larger, multi-university collaborative with broad goals of promoting acquisition of cultural knowledge and the development of cultural understanding among students and faculty, and benefitting the host community in meaningful ways. The call for proposals asked for empirical, conceptual and theoretical contributions to the area of research involving crossing real and imagined boundaries and borders to teach and learn. Rather than mere description of programs, we invited work with an emphasis on critical and explanatory evaluation that contextualizes and considers the transferability of theories and practices. We particularly welcomed contributions with an explicit focus on experiential learning, international perspectives, and the intersections between partnerships and institutions of higher education–especially those institutions serving students of color–and research methodologies undertaken by faculty and students alike to

explore different theoretical frameworks and models being utilized, as well as the benefits, gains, and challenges encountered when teaching and learning in unfamiliar environments.

In that spirit, the *CEDER Yearbook*, with 11 chapters, shines a light upon scholarship that considers crossing boundaries and borders–real and imagined–in distant lands or within our own communities as a means to provide opportunities for teaching and learning. Each chapter in the Yearbook provides ways of thinking about teaching and learning from individuals who are positioned in different institutional, disciplinary, and life world settings, to question, explore, and de/construct sociocultural and pedagogical dimensions based on engagement with landscapes full of socio/political/cultural/linguistical and historical meanings.

The intended audience for this Yearbook includes educators, decision-makers, policymakers, and leaders within faculty and student development programs as well as international student departments.

We would like to thank our colleagues: David Scott, dean of the College Education and Human Development, for his support and entrusting the *CEDER Yearbook* to us; Alissa Mejia, our associate editor, for her patience, continued encouragement, eye for detail, and guidance; our editorial advisory board; the thoughtful comments and recommendations offered by our peer reviewers, which are essential to the quality of the *CEDER Yearbook*; and to all wonderful contributors for their persistence, effort, and extraordinary ability to write. Without your experiences and research, this yearbook would not exist.

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Designing international experiential learning across multiple university disciplines: Texas A&M System Clavellinas Collaborative

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Abstract

Historically, the Mexican education system has been characterized by an absence of equal access to K–12 education for students in poverty. This article examines research-based best practices associated with international experiential learning and describes an authentic model of an effective international experiential learning program. Research is based on The Clavellinas, Mexico Education Collaborative, a private study and research center in central Mexico establishing partnerships between Texas A&M University System colleges of education and Mexican local, regional, and national government officials and entities; private citizens; and commercial enterprise, to support teacher education internationally and equip educator preparation students nationally. Student perspectives are considered, implications for educator preparation programs are outlined, and recommendations for future faculty developing international experiential learning programs are offered.

Through the 1990s, Mexico's education system was characterized by inequality. Education beyond primary school was chronically underfunded, rarely completed, and often effectively unavailable in many rural or impoverished areas (Campos Alanís, 2003). The Mexican government had, since the end of the Mexican Revolution, mandated compulsory secular education, but often struggled to fund or effectively pursue these guarantees with quality outcomes. Particularly difficult for rural and impoverished Mexican citizens were the costs associated with the K–12 education system, which would typically push students out of school in favor of wage labor beginning at around 11 years of age (Handa et al., 2001). During this period, the Mexican education system did not have a particularly clear or well-developed pedagogical focus, instead emphasizing the nationalizing mission of the Mexican government following the Revolution (Zhizhko, 2015).

The 1990s saw a number of significant political and social changes in Mexico - the Peso crisis, the collapse of 70 years of a single party rule, and the passage of the North American Free Trade Act (NAFTA) in 1994, all of which spurred the Mexican government into action on many social and economic fronts. Seeking to address the inadequacies of its education system, Mexico adopted a number of crucial reforms that radically altered its approach to K–12 education. These reforms centralized the Mexican education system and amended the current constitution to mandate secondary education (Zhizhko, 2015), culminating in its most ambitious educational undertaking - the PROGRESA program (Programa de Educación, Salud y Alimentación), which translates to the Program for Education, Health, and Nutrition. Among its most radical initiatives were heavy subsidies in the form of cash payments for poorer families that would effectively drop the cost of K–12 education to zero (Attanasio, Meghir, & Santiago, 2012).

The reforms of the 1990s resulted in significant changes to Mexico's education system, especially in regard to access and attendance, though these changes did not equally impact all areas of the country. School continuation rates, or the rate at which students continued to attend past age 11, rose by more than 7% in areas where subsidies were offered, relative to those that did not receive such benefits (Handa et al., 2001;

Schultz, 2004; Attanasio et al., 2012). Similar positive effects were found for inequality, nutrition, and other indicators of poverty, with particularly acute benefits for female students. Mexico's education system varied greatly in quality, with certain regions, urban areas, and areas more deeply integrated into the global economy excelling well beyond their rural and traditionally impoverished counterparts (Handa et al., 2001; Coady & Parker, 2004).

Mexico's education system remains one of inequality, and despite recent positive reforms, its emphasis on access and poverty reduction has left pedagogy, curriculum, and teacher training largely absent as priorities. The government of former president Enrique Peña Nieto attempted to address this issue with a 2012 reform that included mandatory evaluations for all teachers in Mexico (Levinson, 2014), but this reform faced serious opposition from teachers, and was immediately repealed by his successor. Rural areas in particular continue to suffer a lack of funding and attention from authorities, with teachers serving these regions with limited resources, and typically only on a temporary basis. Ultimately, one's experience in the Mexican education system varies significantly by region, with some areas experiencing rapid reform and growth, and others mired in poverty and lacking the resources necessary to provide for their students.

Education context

One immense challenge for Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) in the United States, in particular within the state of Texas, is how to prepare clinical and veteran educators to provide academic, socioemotional and wellness services to students from diverse cultures. The Texas Panhandle is home to more refugees per capita than any single city in Texas (Michaels, 2016), resulting in more than 40 languages being spoken in the Amarillo area alone (Cravin, 2015). Language diversity is present statewide. U.S. Census Bureau (2013) data indicated that the Hispanic and Latino population is the largest ethnic minority group in the United States. Of 23.7 million people five years of age or older, more than a third spoke a language other than English at home, and a large majority of those spoke Spanish (Ura & McCullough, 2015). This shift in

population has increased the demand for teachers who are competent in unfamiliar environments, diverse world settings, and multicultural responsive student engagement. In an effort to provide opportunities for authentic experiences outside a student's native culture and language and provide support to the historical need for education equality in Mexico, an international experiential learning program was established. Initially, the EPP at West Texas A&M University established an educational framework rooted in experiential learning designed specifically to prepare undergraduate and graduate students to teach beyond borders. The initial experiential learning experience rapidly scaled and expanded into a formalized partnership among other colleges of education and social sciences within the Texas A&M University System (TAMUS) colleges, currently identified as, "The Collaborative."

The TAMUS Colleges of Education Clavellinas, Mexico Education Collaborative (the "Collaborative") represents a partnership between public institutions of higher education; a private study and research center in central Mexico; local, regional, and national government officials and entities; private citizens; and commercial enterprise. The Collaborative provides opportunities for TAMUS faculty members and students to participate in service leadership, discipline-specific clinical field experience, and meaningful scholarly research in a rural community, Clavellinas, situated in central Mexico near the city of San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato. Upon initiation of the expanded partnership, all relevant stakeholders (i.e. institutions of higher education, research center, Mexican government officials and entities, private citizens, faculty members, and undergraduate and graduate students) entered into a five-year agreement to deliver academic, socioemotional and wellness services to students and their families in Clavellinas, Mexico. The following articulates research-based best practices associated with international experiential learning and describes an authentic model of an effective international experiential learning program in Mexico. Although the Collaborative represents a partnership among TAMUS Colleges of Education and Social Sciences colleges, the model reported is representative of the experiences and data collected by faculty members, and undergraduate and graduate students from discipline-specific programs

in the Departments of Education, Psychology and Criminal Justice at West Texas A&M University.

International experiential learning across multiple university disciplines: An exemplary model

Theory alone does not replicate the opportunity for students to explore different disciplinary and sociocultural settings. Much of the research that exists regarding cultural competency and self-efficacy in one's career field are missing complex descriptions of discipline-specific outcomes that are connected to self-report measures of attitudes and beliefs (Curtin, Martins, & Schwartz-Barcott, 2015). The purpose of information provided in this chapter is to outline in detail the multi-faceted components of designing a university-based international experiential learning program. The guiding purpose of the international experiential learning program was twofold: 1) determine the effective-ness and impact of a multi-disciplinary university learning experience, and 2) evaluate university student learning objectives of undergraduate and graduate students before and after participation in the Collabora-tive. Professional university student disciplines from West Texas A&M University included general and special teacher education, counselor education, school psychology, educational diagnosticians, and political science undergraduate students. In this chapter, we describe the elements of design that allowed us to see a growth in participants' cultural compe-tency and professional skills.

Planning
Designing a 10-week international experiential learning program that is valuable to the host community, faculty members, and university student participants takes an immense amount of planning and multiple approaches. During the initial phases of the Collaborative's formation, the group set a goal to deliver 10 weeks of consecutive programming, from the end of May through the end of July. This timeline was cho-sen to allow time for a measurable impact with the rural community in Clavellinas and the students attending the primary school located in that community. The selected timeframe allowed up to 10 Texas A&M

System colleges to participate and provided evidence for all interested stakeholders of the Collaborative's mutual benefit. To ensure consistency in the delivery of programming, strategic scheduling was required by all participating faculty members. Additionally, faculty members communicated their schedules and any changes to their pre-determined travel times with each other.

Through this ongoing, reiterative collaboration between members, it became apparent that a foundational curriculum and itinerary for delivery of services in the host community was essential. Each participating program followed a method of delivery determined during an annual faculty planning meeting. This model consisted of a rotation system (see Figure 1) in which a group of students from the primary school in Clavellinas would visit a station led by university students. Lessons at these stations lasted between 20 and 30 minutes, after which the primary students would rotate to a new station.

A complete listing of the curriculum and itinerary is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, a common understanding and agreement regarding curriculum delivery helped Collaborative members provide a more consistent program throughout the summer. Table 1 outlines the summer travel schedule by university and program. Timelines were established to maximize lessons with the primary students in Clavellinas while avoiding interruption of the school day. Each participating university member was given authority to build upon this foundation, but expectations for delivery were set before implementation. The curriculum and details regarding itinerary and implementation were derived from the overall goals and objectives for the Collaborative.

Program objectives

Members of the Texas A&M University System collaborated with multiple stakeholders, including elected officials, site coordinators, host community members, families, and educators across several years before planning the initial phase of implementation of the Collaborative. Prior to the delivery of the first year of programming, multiple meetings with stakeholders were held, which resulted in a continuously evolving set of goals. During and after the first year of program delivery, the

Figure 1
Curriculum descriptions for 2018 stations

Station name	Description
Word work	Students experiment with spelling patterns, memorize high-frequency words, and develop a genuine curiosity and interest in new and unique words.
Read aloud	Interactive read-aloud provides students with the opportunity to engage in the text through teacher-led discussion.
Scientific inquiry	Students are provided with opportunities to investigate a problem, determine possible solutions, make observations, experiment with ideas, ask questions, and exercise creative, intuitive thinking.
Art	Students communicate their thoughts, feelings, and ideas about themselves and their world through art.
Guided reading	Teacher selects a topic based on the specific needs of students in the group, such as a reading comprehension strategy. Then, the teacher selects a text on the students' instructional level that offers the opportunity to apply that strategy.
Shared writing	Through shared writing, students create ideas while teacher transcribes. This is a helpful method to introduce students to different types of writing.
Independent writing	Students produce their own written text by building upon prerequisite knowledge and skills.

goals and objectives were refined according to feedback from participating faculty and students, primary school teachers at Clavellinas, parents whose children attended the primary school, Clavellinas city officials, and Mexican education government representatives. Collaboration among all involved stakeholders resulted in the development of guiding objectives for the Collaborative.

Table 1
Collaborative program schedule by university and program

University	Program	Dates
West Texas A&M University	Teacher Education Political Science	Week 1 & 2
Texas A&M-Texarkana	Adult Education	Week 1
West Texas A&M University	Special Education	Week 3
Texas A&M-College Station	Teacher Education	Week 5
Texas A&M-Commerce	Teacher Education	Week 6
Texas A&M-Corpus Christi	Teacher Education	Week 7
Tarleton State University	Kinesiology	Week 8
West Texas A&M University	School Psychology	Week 9

The objectives of the Collaborative are as follows:

1. To promote the acquisition of cultural knowledge, the development of cultural understanding and the acquisition of discipline-specific knowledge and skills through an innovative and multi faceted academic delivery system.
2. To facilitate qualitative and quantitative international research opportunities for faculty and students.
3. To benefit the host community in meaningful ways, including but not limited to: needs assessment, educational enrichment, and technology.

Many of these objectives have logical components to guide delivery of services.

Student objectives

Once the primary objectives for the overall Collaborative were established, each WTAMU participating program aligned discipline-specific

learning outcomes with student experiential learning objectives. Identified objectives emphasized course or discipline-specific knowledge and skills and were directly derived from WTAMU discipline-specific program learning outcomes. A review of the WTAMU participating, discipline-specific objectives (see Table 2) reveals many learning outcomes that are common across university disciplines, indicating the benefits of university student participation in the Collaborative. Objectives that are most recurring across multiple disciplines are characterized by the understanding of culture, diversity, and systems.

Designing a study

The guiding purpose of the international experiential learning program was twofold: 1) determine the effectiveness and impact of a multidisciplinary university learning experience, and 2) evaluate university student learning objectives of undergraduate and graduate students before and after participation in the Collaborative. A mixed methods research design was used to evaluate the program's purposes and answer the following research questions:

1. How do multidisciplinary university students describe the Collaborative's impact on their cultural perspective?
2. How do multidisciplinary university students describe the impact experiential service learning has on high-impact professional skills?

This mixed methods study included undergraduate and graduate student pre-trip and post-trip written reflections from the following WTAMU university participating programs: Teacher Education, Political Science, Counseling, Special Education and Psychology. As shown in Table 3, 28 undergraduate and graduate students initially registered to participate in the Collaborative, and 24 of those students consented to participate in the study and completed initial demographic questionnaires. Of the 24 students who initially registered to participate and gave consent, 20 participated in the pre-trip and post-trip written reflections, and four did not travel to Clavellinas and were dropped from the study. Of the 20 who completed pre-trip and post-trip reflections, eight of those students were from the WTAMU Teacher Education program, five were from

Table 2
WTAMU discipline-specific program outcomes

Educator Preparation Program objectives	Counselor Education Program objectives	Political Science Program objectives	School Psychology Program objectives	Educational Diagnostics Program objectives
Students will promote ethical and professional standards in teaching, learning, and research.	Students will endorse collaborative and inter-disciplinary partnerships to promote social justice, equity, and access to modalities of education and care.	Students will comprehend major political philoso-phies and theories by explaining and assess-ing these theories in written and oral presen-tations and examina-tions.	Students will demonstrate skills in ethi-cal and legal decision making in professional practice.	Students will understand and apply knowledge of ethical and professional practices, roles, and responsibili-ties.
Students will use verbal, nonverbal, electronic, and print modes of communi-cation to establish a positive school or work en-vironment and promote thinking and learning.	Students will demonstrate effective oral and written communica-tion pratices that enhance a critically reflective learning en-vironment.	Students will com-municate profession-ally, both in person and in writing.	Students will learn about the influence of culture on behavior and aca-demic per-formance, and the ethical and professional issues affect-ing school psycholo-gists working with diverse students.	Students will demonstrate effective oral and written com-munication practices that ensure high levels of learning, social-emo-tional devel-opment, and achievement outcomes for all students.

(continued)

Table 2, continued

Educator Preparation Program objectives	Counselor Education Program objectives	Political Science Program objectives	School Psychology Program objectives	Educational Diagnostics Program objectives
Students will work with peers, clinical instructors, cooperating teachers, university field supervisors, and relevant stakeholders to advance learning.	Students will collaborate with peers and professionals to advance the quality of learning and delivery of services for all across the lifespan.	Students will collaborate with peers and professionals about politics and political ideas.	Students will understand the collaborative role of school psychologists when working with others in planning and decision-making processes.	Students will develop collaborative relationships with families, educators, the community, outside agencies, and related service personnel.

the WTAMU Political Science program, three were from the WTAMU Counseling program, one was from the WTAMU Special Education program, and three were from the WTAMU Psychology program.

During the Collaborative, student study participants engaged in daily reflective writing, reflective discussion, and critical self-evaluation, while faculty members completed observations, making anecdotal notes of poignant concepts. Upon return, submitting authors analyzed reflective journals for salient attributes that correlated with university discipline-specific program learning outcomes and highly desirable employment skills. Data were analyzed manually by conducting three levels of coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Codes were reviewed within each theme to identify the presence of subthemes. While coding, data was analyzed by each author to discuss internal thoughts, explore emerging ideas, and ensure accuracy among the data (Saldaña, 2009). Data analysis revealed three student self-identified themes: self-efficacy, student assumptions, and cultural perspectives. Each theme is presented, along with excerpts from students.

Study findings

Theme 1: Self-efficacy

During and after program participation, university students reported development of high-impact professional skills: impromptu problem-solving, critical thinking in new situations, discipline-specific peer collaboration, and multi-disciplinary peer collaboration, with a direct correlation to increased self-efficacy and professional confidence. The collaborative provided an immersive experience ripe with novel situations for students to practice their problem-solving and critical thinking skills. The unfamiliar environment required recurring university student critical thinking abilities. Student participants' daily reflections and faculty observations indicated growth in addressing unique challenges and increased self-efficacy. With respect to self-confidence, one student wrote,

> In our [university students] station we had no behavioral issues for our first group. The students took very well to the organizational level. The students took really well to the activity and seemed to

Table 3
WTAMU study respondents

Characteristic	n
Program Participants	
Registered	28
Consented	24
Participated	20
Discipline-Specific Program	
Teacher Education	8
Political Science	5
Counseling	3
Special Education	1
Psychology	3

enjoy it a lot. In the second group, however, the students were able to grasp the concept faster and the teachers did not expect that. However, they [university students] were prepared and we just continued on with the lesson. In the second group, we [university students] did have a lot of students who figured out that some of the teachers did not speak very good Spanish and attempted to make rude comments and just try to be a class clown. We were able to shut that behavior down with the phrases we all went home and practiced. Today went a lot smoother than yesterday and the students took a lot better to our authority and listened to us more than they did yesterday.

Theme 2: Student assumptions

The student journal reflections revealed cultural excursions challenged the assumptions participating students held about the Mexican culture, rural Mexico, and poverty in Mexico. After visiting the primary school in Clavellinas for the first time and touring the community, one student stated:

Clavellinas was actually pretty close to what I expected, site-wise. But the culture and people and style of living was different than what I expected. The excitement from the children shocked me. I had tons of students high fiving me and saying hello like I was some movie star or something. It was good to know they were happy for us to be there. It was interesting that they were all in uniforms; I figured because of their poorer conditions this would not be a requirement for the school. When we were walking around town, it was shocking for me to see such young children walking (what seemed to be far) home. Or how they were walking around the town with no supervision. It made sense when I learned that in their culture every child is seen as everyone's; everyone looks out for everyone.

Participants were given information regarding Mexican history, economy, and education prior to travel; however, the international learning experience provided new revelations about everyday life in 16th-century and modern-day Mexico, accoding to another student:

> Even when I knew Clavelinas had a low social-economic status, the lack of resources is evident; it affected my perception about poverty. In this case it is not poverty, but something I cannot define yet.

Theme 3: Cultural perspectives

Although the programs for the five different university groups took place over a short period of time, 12–14 days, students' journal reflections evidenced an increased awareness of Mexican culture. This aligned with previous research indicating that cultural immersion in a foreign country provides a "powerful impression and lasting lessons," (Ryan, 2017, p. 32) and "a rich and engaging opportunity for students to learn first-hand" (Black-Campbell, 2014, p. 62). University students were observed attempting to modify their use of multiple languages, connecting their own cultural knowledge to the relative experiences and perspectives of Mexican culture. One approach used was peer-collaboration with Spanish-speaking university student participants. One student describes her reliance on a Spanish-speaking university student participant:

> [Clavellinas Primary School students] were talking and not writing. To help this out we [university students] were walking around the classroom. Also students who had no writing skills were hard to help them in my situation because I have no idea how to spell or create sentences in Spanish, so one of the Spanish-speaking students mostly helped in that sense and me and the other partner interacted and helped as much as we could. I found myself drawing pictures to create a story with students who were not on a high writing level yet, such as the 1st graders.

Participants shifted from attitudes of anxiety and fear using the native Spanish language to a posture of confidence and comfort. University students expressed an increased ability and willingness to approach Spanish-speaking locals. These experiences with language acquisition achieved anticipated student learning outcomes and equipped university students with a recognition of the feelings and attitudes associated with learning another language.

Benefits and challenges associated with designing international experiential learning

Authentic learning

As the demographics of classrooms in the United States continue to shift, educator preparation candidates need to be prepared and equipped to teach diverse populations. Thus, teacher preparation program organizers understand it is their responsibility to provide meaningful experiences for candidates to meet the educational needs of the diverse cultures and languages they will one day teach (Landa, Odona-Holm, & Shi, 2017). Although traditional teaching methods of course readings and in-class exercises can transfer knowledge, this is not as effective as real-world application and engagement (American Council on Education, 2006). Furthermore, when students are provided the opportunity to work in unfamiliar contexts and engage languages that extend beyond their first language, they are able to apply pedagogy and content knowledge to "real-world" situations. International experiential learning provides students the opportunity to analyze their own beliefs and biases, considering how culture affects teaching and learning.

Reflective practice

International experiential learning can often fall into the trap of focusing on fun or improving the host community without much emphasis on the work necessary to transform both the university participants and the members of the host community into more socially-just practitioners and citizens (Breunig, 2005). To avoid this trap as much as possible, faculty found themselves constantly re-focusing themselves and students. "Praxis," as defined by Paulo Freire (1970), is "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it," (p. 51). First, the programs had to accomplish at least some of the university student objectives described in the preceding paragraphs, so university students would complete the international learning experience as more effective educators and/or citizens. Second, collaboration and work in the host community had to center around the long-term goal of improving education at the primary school, so the students there would have more opportunities

available to increase literacy, language acquisition, and communication abilities, equipping them with skills necessary to gain employment in higher-paying jobs (Volkswagen Tour Guide, personal communication May 31, 2018), ultimately interrupting the cycle of poverty.

Faculty and university student participants constantly had to employ reflective praxis, answering questions like, "Why? Why are we here in the first place? What changes are we trying to invoke, so positive change will continue to occur long after our summer programs are completed? What effects do our actions have on the host community? On ourselves as educators? As American citizens?" With sleep-deprivation, homesickness, and general irritability threatening to invade the goals of the program daily, faculty prioritized daily reflection each evening, to connect each day's events to the identified program and student objectives. The same cycle of divergent focus occurred among faculty planning annually, as well. This, again, reflects the need for close examination and agreement upon learning objectives by all stakeholders involved, including university and non-university participants.

Group dynamics
The success of an international experiential learning program depends on university student participation and group dynamics of the students. Group dynamics include individuals who are working together to achieve a common goal. Groups are developed by creating a set of norms and roles that everyone in the group abides by and follows (Dugas, 2016). Healthy group dynamics can provide students with a sense of belonging, shared goals, stress reduction, and a cohesive environment. This international experiential learning program developed positive group dynamics and connectedness among university students across multiple university disciplines. Additionally, experiential learning promotes faculty interactions and collaboration between faculty and students.

In this international experiential learning program, students from diverse backgrounds were united to achieve a specific goal of supporting teachers and students at the primary school in Clavellinas. Peer influence during this experience enhanced each student's commitment to the

experience and reliance on each other as motivators to reach the common goal. Faculty members determined that international experiential learning emphasized the shared reflections among university students. Once again, this established a group dynamic that reduced student anxiety and encouraged individual growth, resulting in stronger cross-discipline relationships.

Planning and schedules

Even with a significant amount of preparation and planning, challenges arose throughout the program, as is expected with experiential learning. One of the primary challenges identified was faculty scheduling. During the development of the Collaborative, participating faculty members learned that faculty schedules often conflicted, and determining when each discipline-specific program would travel was often problematic. Additionally, all of the faculty members participating in the collaborative typically teach one to three summer courses, with some faculty members teaching throughout the entire summer. In addition to their summer course loads, faculty members had to maneuver around family obligations and other professional commitments. This indicates the significant time and commitment required by both faculty and university student participants to ensure a successful and effective international learning experience. However, the ongoing, long-term nature of the Collaborative summer program allows for more authentic professional development and meaningful, measurable outcomes.

Recommendations for future multi-discipline international service-learning experiences

International experiential learning provides opportunities to students that they would not otherwise have access to in their home countries. For example, language immersion and proficiency, cultural stimulation, foreign policy and currency expression, cross-cultural personal awareness, and navigation in a multinational world (Alonso-Marks, 2013). Leaders in higher education recognize the potential for international experiential learning transformational processes, such as intercultural sensitivity and personal growth. Faculty members believe international experiential im-

mersion develop the attitudes, knowledge, and skills for university students to succeed in a competitive global market (Maharaja, 2018). When planning a multi-discipline, international experiential learning program for educators, experienced faculty have made two notable conclusions:
1) International experiential learning must be built on the foundation of discipline-specific program objectives and give primary consideration to the needs and learning outcomes of university students
2) International experiential learning must be characterized by strategic, ongoing plans that manage expectations of university students.

Incorporating university student objectives
With the rise of students traveling internationally and the need to endorse structure for the experience, institutions have established learning objectives; and though they may differ across institutions, the common theme across programs seeks to understand whether career development, personal growth, and cultural understanding are met (Rowan-Kenyon & Niehaus, 2011). Embedded in the preparation across the five discipline-specific programs areas in Table 2, and throughout training, faculty and sponsors emphasize the importance of program planning. Identified university student objectives must be central to the planning and decision-making process involved in the international learning experience. Short-term experiences, especially without repeated exposure and thoughtful planning, will likely not lead to advanced cultural competence and may actually increase negative stereotypes (Wilkinson, 1998; Rowan-Kenyon & Niehaus, 2011). Instead, setting reasonable expectations and goals for both sponsors and students toward discipline-specific learning objectives and appreciating diversity is important to achieve long-term success (Kitsantas, 2004).

Managing student expectations
Essential to the accomplishment of student learning outcomes, faculty expectations, and positive impact in the host community is managing the university participant and host community expectations associated with the experience. Prior to student and faculty member arrival, the host community at-large must be fully informed as to the objectives of the proposed experience. The host community must agree to participate in

the experience. Additionally, the host community must be fully informed concerning the daily schedule for participant presence and interaction in the community, the responsibility for supervision of student participants in the host community, what is expected of the host community, and means of conflict resolution in the event conflicts arise. Prior to departure, student and faculty participants must complete a comprehensive orientation program designed to prepare them for the international experience and thereby reduce anxiety and maximize effectiveness. Experienced faculty suggest the inclusion of specific topics during pre-travel orientation (see Table 4) contribute to more successful travel.

Destination-specific provided in advance, plus comprehensive preparation on these topics, will manage the expectations of all participants and advance the accomplishment of program outcomes while reducing risk associated with the international experience. To this end, thorough and ongoing pre-travel preparation for both academic and nonacademic objectives is of utmost importance (Allen & Herron, 2003). Pre- and post-evaluation of cultural competency is likely not enough to gauge development of these skills in short-term experiences.

The demands placed on current educators are ever increasing. Teachers are expected to be competent in unfamiliar environments, diverse settings, and multicultural responsive student engagement. This means EPPs must provide learning opportunities that encourage cultural responsiveness, problem-solving in unfamiliar scenarios, and the development of high impact professional skills. Current literature indicates participation in international experiential learning programs provide education students the opportunity to engage in authentic, diverse experiences rich with immersion in an unfamiliar environment (Black-Campbell, 2014; Ryan, 2017). Due to the benefits and positive university student impact, faculty who have participated in international experiential learning recommend increasing these unique opportunities for university students across all disciplines.

Table 4
International experiential learning orientation agenda topics

Pre-travel orientation agenda topics	
Passport and visa requirements	International air travel details including itinerary
Airport security and baggage allowances	Immigration and customs procedures on arrival and departure
In-depth review of daily itinerary	Development of daily budget for each participant
Personal budget management	Budget resources: cash, credit/debit cards, ATM withdrawals
Clothing and associated personal requirements	Health and safety management including food safety and personal safety
Emergency management plan and response	Intercultural communication: Language of host community
Instructions for "home" correspondence	Phone and social media connectivity
Course-specific requirements	General requirements of the experience, e.g. reflective writing
Behavioral expectations	Consequences of violating behavioral expectations

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2

The intercultural context of today's classrooms: Curricular and instructional considerations

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Abstract

This article addresses how the shifting demographics in classrooms across the country call for a similar shift in teaching practices. The authors explore the role of mandated curriculum and how such practices may fail to account for the cultural and language diversity, as well as the broad range of identities, in today's students. Through an analysis of the research on how students learn, paired with one teacher's (the first author's) reflection and consideration of possible modifications that could be made in instruction, the authors illustrate the need to reevaluate current classroom practices to allow for the recognition and honoring of differences.

Instruction and classrooms are currently undergoing a state of change. This change should reflect the shifting demographics of our country, where students representing a wide range of cultural backgrounds, languages, ethnicities, and experiences increasingly account for the student population. As a result of this shift, teachers have a responsibility to examine, rethink, and adjust pedagogical practices due to this increasing diversity. Simply stated, instruction should be adjusting because the students who receive it are changing.

This chapter will reflect on one teacher's (the first author's) experiences working primarily in Title I schools in Texas. With an increasing knowledge of language acquisition juxtaposed against district-, state-, and federally-mandated requirements, the writers explore whether the current curriculum, resources, and instructional practices used in classrooms not only adequately recognize, but also support the linguistic and cultural diversity represented within.

Demographics of American classrooms

The National Center for Education Statistics (2015) predicted that in fall 2018, a total of 56.6 million students would be enrolled in elementary and secondary schools. Projections predicted that the total number of students would increase by 2% between 2014 and 2026 to a total of 56.8 million students. Significantly, the white student population is expected to drop by 6%, with increases in black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and students of two or more races. A further analysis of these numbers indicates a 17% increase of Hispanic students and an 18% increase of Asian/Pacific Islander students (Hussar & Bailey, 2018).

These changing demographics in classrooms reflect a parallel transformation in communities, towns, and cities across the country. Students from a wide range of cultures are entering classrooms with a broad band of experiences, which will require educators to be prepared to not only recognize and build upon their strengths, but also to purposefully incorporate diversity into lessons, content, and resources. If the number of students of color are increasing and school communities are changing, a subsequent and aligned modification should be occurring in our classrooms.

Part of responding to this growing diversity is to acknowledge that each student comes to school with their own unique background and to honor that uniqueness (Moll, 1994). Students bring with them not only cultural diversity, but a varied history of language experiences as well (Hart & Risley, 1995; Pan, Rowe, Singer, & Snow, 2005). With this understanding, a natural consequence is to wonder if our curriculum and instructional practices not only recognize but also support this linguistic diversity? Unfortunately, Genishi and Dyson (2009) argued that "institutions like schools work to suppress the inherent variability of language by authorizing uniformity" (p. 13). They asked, "Given that the majority of children in our urban public schools are not white or middle-class in background, is it sensible to base curricula on a vision of the normative child?" (p. 13).

The role of required curriculum

It is important to juxtapose this increasing diversity with our current federal educational policy. State and Federal governments have historically mandated both curricula and testing with the hope of increasing student achievement, especially for students designated as "at risk." Currently, 45 states, as well as the District of Columbia, utilize the Common Core State Standards that were initiated in 2008. These standards have roots in President Bush's No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, which, in turn, was enacted as a replacement for the Bilingual Education Act, otherwise known as Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Dane Linn (as cited in Bidwell, 2014) from the Business Roundtable states, "the entire purpose of the standards was to determine what students need to know and demonstrate the ability to do in order to be prepared for an entry-level college course" (para. 11). However, with increasing diversity and language experiences, these "demonstrations of ability" may lean toward a mainstream perspective in which differences indicate a lack of assimilation versus a range of knowledge.

Often, "at risk" students are students of color who do not have foundational skills needed for academic success. The State of Texas Code §E0919 provides several indicators for students "at risk," including factors such as enrollment in prekindergarten, kindergarten, or

Grade 1, 2, or 3 and not performing satisfactorily on a readiness test or assessment; being retained from advancing grade levels; expulsion; and/or being labeled as Limited English Proficient (Texas Education Agency, 2010). These indicators could easily be construed as an evaluation of a student's ability to speak or write English, according to a mainstream set of criteria. An examination of readiness tests or assessments could, as Dyson and Smitherman (2009) argued, place emphasis on "the basics," which draws attention to "how the proper written voice should look and sound" (p. 978).

The question is, who decides what is "proper"? If diversity is the new norm, why is it seldom reflected in teaching practices throughout our schools? Dyson and Smitherman (2009) see the "potential tension between the diverse sociocultural and linguistic resources of our school population and an official emphasis on a 'better way' with words" (p. 975). This concept of a "better way" may find itself at odds with the realities of the classroom, potentially allowing the promising knowledge and contributions of students to be devalued and misused.

To help understand and possibly rectify this "tension," it may be useful to return to the research on language and how children learn. Decades of research may provide educators with a blueprint for instruction – a blueprint that not only honors a student's native language, but increases learning of other dialects and languages through social interactions and flexibility.

Research and language

When examining the research, it is important to account for the interplay between the wide range of language experiences students bring to school and how humans learn language. Chomsky's (1966) Universal Grammar continues to provide a framework for understanding linguistics. He argued that language is innate, and that children, with little to no instruction, learn the grammar of language. This continues to be widely accepted. Chomsky believes that human brains are hardwired, specifically in an area he referred to as the Language Acquisition Device, with all the knowledge of how language works already present. For children,

the work then is to learn the specifics of a particular language or languages (Freeman & Freeman, 2014).

As children acquire language, Chomsky (1981) claimed they did so through a process of *parameter setting*. During parameter setting, children rely on their already embedded knowledge of language and adjust for the particulars of the language of their community. Chomsky (1980) asserted that "learning is actually better understood as the growth of cognitive structures along an internally directed course under the triggering and potentially shaping effect of the environment" (p. 33).

A natural result is to recognize that students have already engaged in the process of learning a language through continuous adjustments and "parameter setting." Possibly, instead of defining a student's language, whether through speech or writing, as wrong or improper and in need of intensive interventions, schools should recognize that students, through ongoing exposure, will continue to adjust and build flexibility with registers across situations. By validating a student's first language and allowing for these opportunities, schools not only increase student learning outcomes, but also honor individual cultures.

Pair this concept with Vygotsky's Social Interaction Theory (1978) that states, "young children are likely to fuse action and speech when responding to both objects and social beings" (p. 29). This theory focuses on the role the environment plays in learning a language. It purports that the environment is a two-way street, where a learner's involvement creates changes in the environment in correspondence to the learner's own alterations as a result of this same environment. Similarly, Vgotsky understood the "dominant role of the social experience in human development" (p. 22). Marginson and Dang (2017) explained that a "child's early speech was designed to make contact with others and join the social conversation" (p. 118). Fundamentally, the earliest role of speech is to allow for communication, with connection and dialogue serving as the main purpose.

If we accept both theories as true, teachers can and must arrange their classrooms to allow for the continuous development of children's already innate language. Rogoff (2003) stated, "humans develop through their changing participation in the sociocultural activities of their com-

munities, which also change" (p. 11); however, these activities should not be encouraged in only one single acceptable format. As with reading instruction, where students are encouraged to "flex" sounds within words, a strategy where students may switch from short to long vowel sounds to decode words for accuracy and meaning, students should also develop what Hymes (1972) referred to as, "communicative competence" (p. 63). This type of flexibility encourages children to develop an understanding of how language works across a wide range of social interactions. Opportunities to interact should be as diverse as the students who engage in them. As Genishi and Dyson (2009) asked, "Why aren't we accepting the normalcy of difference and teaching accordingly?" (p. 13). In diverse classrooms, the resources, tasks, conversations, and outcomes should be as varied as the students who participate in them.

Empowered by the research, the author began to examine her own classroom practices. With a growing understanding that flexibility, increased exposure, and multiple opportunities for social interaction were necessary components of creating a language-rich classroom, she began to assess how she honored the diversity of her students while incorporating research-based practices.

A teacher's reflection

As a teacher in primarily Title I schools, the first author, Alexa, often reflects on her own teaching experiences and the students with whom she has had the honor to work. In these schools, 99% of students qualified for free or reduced lunch and most were students of color. She also had the opportunity to spend three years abroad at an elite private school. In both instances, most of the students were Emerging Bilinguals (formerly referred to as English Learners or English Language Learners) who brought with them a wide range of language and social experiences.

Through honest and introspective reflection, it is fair to say Alexa discovered that she fell into the trap of the "right way" to say or write. Alexa found herself recasting her students' statements with an ear for right or wrong. When editing student writing during writer's workshop, proper conventions were the guiding force, with little regard to the student's voice or audience. Genishi and Dyson (2009) discussed how

"aspects of their speech" quickly become "indicators of social differences and academic risk," and Alexa often felt propelled to not only identify but to correct these "indicators" (p. 16).

Fortunately, as her career continued, her knowledge of research grew, and her teaching experiences both domestically and abroad expanded, she began to question her previous beliefs. Alexa asked both herself and other educators to recast these differing "aspects of speech." Instead of identifying students' use of language as an area calling for additional instruction, might it be possible to see students' use of language for what it is – language that reflects their identities and cultures?

Through continued learning, Alexa eventually came to an important realization. If she truly believed that all languages, cultures, and identities should be valued equally, then it became apparent that her attempts to change or edit her students' oral and written voices could no longer continue. Instead, the word "right" was devalued, and interactions with students became focused on the message the students aimed to deliver versus the way it was conveyed.

Can a similar shift of mindset set the path for a more inclusive way of teaching for other educators? By reframing how we evaluate our students' speech, educators may be left with additional space to concentrate on content. With this understanding, the authors wonder if teachers could design lessons and choose resources that address increasing understanding and learning. Simply stated, students may make increased academic gains due to the fact that educators are teaching content versus focusing on how that content is presented.

In addition, based on the research presented earlier, the authors encourage rethinking how educators develop and provide students with opportunities for play, social interaction, and dialogue across grade levels, as well as how they plan for greater integration of content across the school day. Allowing students these opportunities with language in a variety of social contexts has great potential to impact learning. Teaching in a more purposeful way with a clearer understanding of how the brain functions, along with the role of social interactions at the center of what educators plan and do, moves education in the direction of

creating the "communicative competence" necessary for future classrooms (Hymes, 1972, p. 63).

Addressing how the school day is organized in regard to compartmentalized content may be a good starting point. Alexa began her teaching career as a pre-kindergarten teacher, where she had direct experiences with integrated themes, content, and resources throughout the school day, a concept early childhood classroom teachers have long understood. Unfortunately, soon after a student completes this initial school year, this integration often quickly fades. The organization of the school day should have embedded recurring events to give students more opportunities to grasp and encounter not only content, but language.

Additionally, an important idea is the need for modeling and creating opportunities for dialogue. Modeling is a fairly universal instructional practice considered beneficial for all students, where teachers incorporate explicit instruction (Gambrell, 1996, p. 20). However, educators also must consider the need to provide and plan for students to participate in conversations across social contexts and contents.

Carrión (2012) asserted that children need interaction with a variety of people, including caregivers, community members, and other children. For educators, this requires allowing space and time for dialogue that is not solely teacher directed or led. Carrión went on to state:

> The knowledge is created in situations of interaction between diverse individuals that may bring other knowledge, experiences, and feelings. Therefore, the learning resulting of these processes makes possible a deeper understanding of the world given that transforms the prior knowledge of the individuals before participating in the dialogue (p. 55).

Considerations moving forward

The role of language

Language is complex and multi-faceted. Empowering educators with this knowledge through professional learning opportunities can alter how they honor, teach, and support their students on their educational journeys. With a new understanding of the theories of how students

learn language, educators may be better able to recognize the natural progression of language acquisition. Pairing these theories with research regarding how the brain stores, accesses, and uses language is significant.

Larsen-Freeman (1997) described the development of language as a "complex non-linear system" where "the behavior of the whole emerges out of the interaction of its parts" (p. 157). For teachers, these parts can include opportunities for socialization, dialogue, experiences, and exposure to language across the day. Students may benefit when the "understanding of language learning shift[s] from a focus on the dichotomous comparison of ELL [English Language Learners] with non-ELL (i.e., largely monolingual) students to conceptualizing an array of language experiences and performances with and across K-12 students" (Bailey & Heritage, 2014, p. 483).

A similar case could be made for students who speak a dialect that reflects their culture and experiences. Instead of comparing students' use of language to the standard way to speak grounded in a perspective of a "right" way, educators may instead want to devote time to determining where each student is in their own language development. Bailey and Heritage (2014) asserted that learning is not always linear, and classrooms should account for this. Finding space for differences may be at the heart of teaching a diverse population. Allowing for varying rates, alternative paths, and differences of quantity across contents may ultimately increase student engagement and learning.

The role of syntax, semantics, morphology, and pragmatics
Furthermore, in an attempt to be more purposeful, teachers may continuously want to return to these categories of language: syntax, semantics, morphology, phonology, and pragmatics (Freeman & Freeman, 2014) as they plan and teach. As educators evaluate pedagogy as it relates to a diverse student body, it may be beneficial to consider these areas while pondering how they manifest in instruction. Regarding syntax, educators may pose the question, "Does this lesson focus on how to provide opportunities for students to examine how words create sentences?" Semantics allows opportunities for students to not only examine

meaning but to create meaning. Students should have the opportunity to explore our system of language and thus examine the parts of words that express meaning (morphology), as well as phonology, or sounds of speech. Finally, through dialogue and social interactions, students can examine the role they play in communication and learning across a variety of situations, consequently exploring the role of pragmatics. By framing this learning in a series of questions and exploration, educators allow students to create their own meaning in a variety of educational contexts with little emphasis on the "proper" voice.

By engaging in this process, educators may find it easier to not only comprehend these four components of language acquisition, but to also see the role they might play both personally and professionally for themselves and their students. While education may always have a place for explicit, direct instruction on various aspects of language (i.e., the formation or vocalization of sounds, the construction of a sentence, or the ability to ask and answer questions with a purpose), providing ongoing professional development based on a linguist's view for educators may allow them to feel more equipped to place these concepts within a larger social context and to understand and identify why students struggle.

The role of flexibility
A final concept to consider is the amount and degree of flexibility in education. As a bilingual teacher, Alexa understood that the route of acquisition for emerging bilingual students follows a similar path no matter the native language; however, the rate may vary greatly. Unfortunately, this understanding did not always translate into being flexible with curriculum or time dedicated to activities and tasks.

Flexibility should be closely related to the growing belief and increased importance placed on providing more opportunities for dialogue in the classroom. Genishi and Dyson (2009) stated that "regardless of children's culture, ethnicity, gender, language, or social class, learning is profoundly social" (p. 8). Instructional practices gain an additional layer when what educators are charged with teaching is firmly attached to the role language plays in acquiring potential knowledge.

Flexibility could easily be extended to incorporate learning space and its arrangement, ownership of the classroom environment, and decision making. All these factors have been shown to increase student learning and engagement. In one study in a low socioeconomic area in Australia conducted by Prain (2015), it was shown that certain conditions, including professional learning and assistance in adaptations, encourage success with academics, which suggests that high-quality learning and a student's well-being are supported by individualized learning experiences.

With the emphasis on standardized testing, uniformity between classrooms, and expectations for pacing through standards, where has flexibility been accounted for in a diverse classroom? Taking into account the current research and knowledge available to educators on how to best support the changing demographics of our classrooms, educators should expect to see and promote a shift in pedagogy. In addition, this shift might be framed by Genishi and Dyson's "normalcy of difference" (2009, p. 13). If difference is the new mainstream, and an expectation of continuous change is assumed, then a natural consequence should be an equal expectation of flexibility within teaching.

Conclusion

Through a reflection of current practices paired with the ongoing and continuous changes in communities across the nation, educators are experiencing a comparable shift in their classrooms. Every student deserves not only to learn content, but also to be recognized, heard, and honored for the strengths they each bring from their individual experiences and cultures. Considering the research on learning and language, opportunities for dialogue, social interaction, and professional development may set the groundwork for creating a more inclusive way of teaching. This recognition of diversity should move beyond holiday celebrations and international food events and instead ensure that every culture is equally valued, all students' voices are heard, and individual academic needs are met.

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Using narrative therapy's Tree of Life to promote exploration and insight for unaccompanied refugee children

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Abstract

Over 100,000 immigrant children have crossed the U.S./Mexico border (Brown, 2016). Most minors apprehended illegally entering the country have been placed in shelters under the custody of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). In 2018, the U.S. government instituted a zero-tolerance immigration policy in order to deter Central American families from illegal crossings that allow for the separation of minors from their accompanying adults. Some statistics indicate that more than 10,000 minors, some separated from adults claiming to be their parents and some crossing the borders alone, were in the custody of the federal shelter system in September 2018 (Dickerson, 2018a). Many of these children present with the devastating effects of anxiety, trauma, and PTSD after enduring the hardship of their journey and the placement in government-sponsored shelters. We present here an adaptation of Narrative Therapy's Tree of Life, created by Denborough and Ncube, as a practice especially helpful to clinicians working with undocumented minor refugees and other vulnerable populations.

Using narrative therapy's Tree of Life to promote exploration and insight for unaccompanied refugee children

In the past few years, tens of thousands of unaccompanied immigrant children crossed the United States (U.S.)/Mexico border, usually originating from Central American countries (Brown, 2016). Between October 2018 and August 2019 a total of 72,8762 unaccompanied immigrant minors were apprehended crossing the border. This number does not include minors who crossed as part of a family unit and were later separated from their parents. Statistics from the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol (CBP; 2019) indicate that over 450,000 additional individuals were apprehended during that time who were classified as family units; the classification system does not differentiate between adults and minors. Recently, the U.S. government instituted a zero-tolerance immigration policy order to deter Central American families from illegal crossings. Part of the policy stipulates that children illegally crossing the border with their parents are separated and placed into separate custody (Jordan, 2018). Some statistics indicate that around 12,800 minors were in the custody of the federal shelter system in September 2018 (Dickerson, 2018a). Immigrant children now under the custody of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) are mostly in their preteen and teen years, but could be as young as months-old babies. By May 2018, the number of undocumented minors under the custody of the DHHS included more than 100 children younger than 4 years old (Dickerson, 2018b). That number is steadily increasing.

Many of these children show the devastating effects of trauma and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) after enduring hardship, often having witnessed or been victims of abuse, assault, extreme poverty, or gang intimidation in their home countries or on their journeys to the United States (Fessler, 2014). Hardship does not end once in the care of the American government. These children are in involuntary detention and face uncertain futures while separated from their parents and family members.

Once unaccompanied minors are apprehended by immigration authorities, they are transferred to the custody of the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). The ORR is required to provide shelter, medical care, and food to children until they are released to a family member or foster care in the US, or deported back to their countries of origin

(Administration for Children and Families [ACF], 2016). Once they reach 18 years of age, they are transferred to adult holding facilities or deported. The ORR partners with different social service agencies, such as children's shelters or other government-sponsored facilities, to provide care until children are placed. Most of these organizations are also required to provide counseling services to their residents (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2012).

Research shows these counseling services are sorely needed. The results of studies indicate that refugee children are highly vulnerable to experience mental distress as a result of acculturative stress, extensive trauma histories, and the migration process itself (Betancourt et al., 2012; Katsiaficas, Suárez-Orozco, Sirin, & Gupta, 2013). Unaccompanied refugee children show higher levels of PTSD, depression, and anxiety symptoms when compared to accompanied refugee minors and the general population (Huemer et al., 2009). Unaccompanied refugee children experience higher levels of anxiety and depression than those still with their parents. The effects of separation decrease within five years of reunification, but reunification is not common and, in many cases, not even possible (Suárez-Orozco, Hee Jin, & Ha Yeon, 2011). There is a lack of research about interventions aimed to assist unaccompanied refugee minors (Huemer et al., 2009) as well as limited conceptual literature about best practices for working with those who evidence mental health concerns.

Most of the treatment efforts have been focused on mitigating the effects of trauma. There are studies showing empirical support for the use of several treatment modalities, but only a few have been conducted with unaccompanied refugee children (Descilo, Greenwald, Schmitt, & Reslan, 2010). Collier (2015) noted that before work can yield positive results, clinicians must build trust.

Clinicians must recognize that the issues presented by this population are not limited to individual or personal problems and circumstances. To understand refugee children's responses to migration, family separations, and being in the care of the ORR, clinicians must take into account the complexity of their personal experiences, the circumstances accompanying the migration process, and the variability in manifesta-

tions of psychological sequelae across country of origin or developmental levels (Suarez-Orozco, Todorova, Louie, 2001). Clinicians must also consider that now this group of children shares a common reality from which meaning is being constructed, by them and others (Freedman & Combs, 1996). Narrative therapy offers a framework from which clinicians can explore issues of individual and social identity from a theoretical underpinning concerned with power and the social construction of reality (White & Epston, 1990; Combs & Freedman, 2012). From the stance of a narrative clinician, it is not possible to separate the individual knower from the world they know. The social, relational, and contextual aspects of their lives are crucial elements in defining a person's reality. This reality is constructed through the use of stories or narratives (Madigan, 2011).

The narrative metaphor suggests that people experience life through stories (Combs & Freedman, 2012). As in a novel, individuals focus on chosen characters or themes, leaving aside or diminishing details, facts, or situations that don't contribute to the enrichment of that main narrative line. These stories are socially constructed; co-created with others; and informed by culture, society, and relationships. In the process of constructing realities, individuals accept as true and adopt social norms and constructs about what constitutes mental health, disorder, or what is right or wrong. These social constructs are usually defined by those in power or, as it is called in narrative therapy, those with story-naming rights (Madigan, 2011; White & Epston, 1990) Part of the role of the narrative clinician is to collaboratively help clients enrich the narratives of their lives; develop thick descriptions or alternate, healthier story lines; and discover themselves as authors with story-naming rights to their own lives (Combs & Freedman, 2012; Madigan, 2011; White & Epston, 1990).

Narrative therapy should be considered first and foremost a philosophical approach to the interaction between clinician and client (Oliver & Dyurich, 2018). Still, narrative practitioners have developed methodologies that could support a clinician's work with unaccompanied refugee children. On one hand, narrative practices are useful to promote understanding and exploration, helping clients and clinicians recognize

their stories and the meaning they attribute to it (Morgan, 2002). On the other hand, narrative practices, the preferred term for interventions, can facilitate clients re-authoring the narratives being constructed around their current situations. Once able to recognize and describe the narratives they have accepted, clients can decide if their stories reflect the meaning of their choices and can work to thicken healthier stories already present in their lives (McQueen & Hobbs, 2014). While these children may have little control over the events that brought them to their placement with ORR or their families in the U.S., they can choose how to talk about the events and what meaning they give to their experience (White & Epston, 1990).

Narrative therapy is widely used in Australia, New Zealand, countries in Africa, and other places around the world to address issues of social justice, genocide, HIV/AIDS, and other instances of community trauma (Dulwich Centre, n.d.). Narrative practices and methodologies can assist clinicians to overcome barriers related to language, cultural differences, and power differentials. Narrative clinicians intentionally use the terms "practices" or "methodologies" rather than "interventions" and "techniques" to demonstrate respect for the client's role as an equal, avoid objectifying people, and discourage mechanistic approaches (Combs & Freedman, 2012). A narrative clinician would consider relational politics at play in the therapy context. We must be careful in recognizing ourselves as part of the culture, knowing that we can unintentionally reproduce dominant discourses that are exclusive and marginalizing of our clients (Combs & Freedman, 2012).

With this chapter, we propose the use of narrative therapy as an appropriate theoretical framework for working with unaccompanied, undocumented refugee children, and we specifically explore the use of the Tree of Life as an effective practice for working with this population to assist both clinicians and clients in exploring and understanding client experiences. We present a fictional case that illustrates the use of this practice in individual and group settings when working with children and adolescents, recognizing that the use of narrative practices in a way that is consistent with narrative understanding, rather than simply using narrative techniques in a manner that may be inconsistent with overall

treatment philosophy, can be challenging (Oliver & Dyurich, 2016). To use narrative practices in congruence with narrative therapy theory, the clinician must assume the narrative therapy stance. The role of the clinician is not to offer judgment, advice, or solutions, or even to have the intent to correct or eliminate problemá-centered stories (White, 2007). The clinician acts from a collaborator stance, joining with clients and using therapeutic conversations to help them construct a preferred alternative story about their own lives (Combs & Freedman, 2012; Walther & Carey, 2009).

Tree of Life

The origins of the Tree of Life exercise are not clear. Neazelo Ncube, with the support of David Denborough, developed the exercise in 2006 while working with children in southern Africa, and it is now used in countries around the world (Denborough, 2014). It can be used to help children understand the importance of their own multiple contexts, their own authority with regard to their stories, and the broader contexts of their class or group. The Tree of Life is an experiential exercise in which the clinician is de-centered and engages participants in exploration of their own contexts with the intention of achieving a deeper understanding of their rich personal narratives (Oliver & Dyurich, 2016).

The clinician provides blank paper and colored pencils, and invites the child to draw a tree. The child can use drawing, words, or symbols to make the drawing rich in detail and promote exploration. The clinician guides the activity, asking clients to create a tree using the following directions:

- Roots: For the roots draw where you come from – people who had an influence in who you are, your culture, your country, your family, what you liked to do.
- Ground and bushes: On the ground draw what you chose to do on a weekly basis, not the things you were required to do – how you spent your time when you could do what you wanted.
- Rocks and holes: Draw on the ground the things you had to do on a weekly basis – for example, chores, school, or other requirements.
- Trunk: On the trunk draw your skills and values. Think about what you are good at, what is important to you, and what you believe in. You may also write words.

- Branches: Here you can draw your dreams, hopes, and wishes.
- Leaves: Among the leaves, draw people who are important to you in a positive way.
- Flowers and seeds: Draw here the legacies that have been passed on to you and things you have learned that help you keep going.
- Fruits: Draw the legacies you wish to leave others and what you would like to teach others.
- Compost or trash pile: Things that you would like to leave in the past, or you no longer want to be defined by.
- For the Ground and Bushes or the Rocks and Holes in the ground, the use of information about the life they led in their home country may be helpful as children find ways to tell their stories. However, depending on the needs of the client, it may be appropriate to ask for drawings about the present – what the client currently chooses to do or is required to do. The clinician may also ask for both, asking the client to in some way visually represent what was then and what is now.

Adapted with permission from *Retelling the stories of our lives: Everyday narrative therapy to draw inspiration and transform experience* (Denborough, 2014, Locations 110–111).

Case illustration

Emilia's case

Emilia was 16 years old when she crossed the United States-Mexico border on a cold December night. She had been traveling for weeks from her home country in Central America, following the directions of a coyote (a person who smuggles inmigrants across the United States-Mexico border for a fee). For almost a year, she had heard stories of a place where she could work and make enough money to send back home and help her family. She also knew this place was the cradle of things she had come to love and admire: her most coveted toys, her favorite singers, fashionable clothes, and beautiful women appearing in magazines, movies, and on television.

She was supposed to meet her uncle, now living in the United States, who would provide shelter, food, and a job as a house cleaner. Instead, Emilia was apprehended by immigration authorities and trans-

ported to a residential facility housing over 100 unaccompanied undocumented minors. She was informed of the facility's rules, placed in English classes, and required to meet with a clinician for individual and group sessions at least once a week.

Consultation process

The consultant, or clinician, would listen carefully to what Emilia said about herself, her family, and her home country, understanding that the stories she told had many possible meanings. The clinician would listen for gaps and ambiguities in her narrative and ask people to fill in details (Freedman & Combs, 1996). In Emilia's case, these people could be her resident assistants, her case managers, and, with Emilia's permission, other residents in the facility. A narrative clinician might summarize periodically to check whether the clinician's understanding of the meaning is the same as what Emilia intended. The clinician would also be listening for new meanings as they emerge. The clinician would have externalizing conversations to first explore the problem story and then to separate the problem from Emilia. In other words, the problem would not be viewed as resident within Emilia. The influence of the problem would be explored; including the impact that problem might be having on others.

The first phase of the narrative therapy process is exploration. In working with unaccompanied undocumented minors, a narrative clinician would explore the meaning the child has constructed from their journey and their current living situation. The clinician would continue the exploration of thick and thin narratives that relate to it. During their first few meetings, Emilia expressed her belief that she was a huge failure and that everyone was disappointed on her. She felt guilty for all of her missteps and thought she deserved to be in the facility as a punishment. Her family had hoped that she would be able to help them, while making a good life for herself. She believed she had let her family down.

Exploration using the Tree of Life

From a narrative perspective, exploration has begun, and Emilia has shared some of her current story and the meaning she has made of it –

that she is a failure who has let her family down. The clinician would continue to explore thick and thin narratives related to Emilia's journey and current situation, joining-in (White, 2007) with Emilia. In this case, the Tree of Life was initially used as an exploratory tool and a means to start discovering thin story lines that could be thickened. The clinician, presenting Emilia with paper and colored pencils, broadly explained the exercise and confirmed that Emilia consented to the process. She agreed, seemed eager to color, and proceeded to choose a couple of paper sheets and a few colored pencils to begin her drawing. The clinician offered the instructions delineated above (see Tree of Life) , guiding the activity and allowing enough time between each step for Emilia to think, remember, and record on the paper her memories, thoughts, and impressions, telling her colorful story in the form of words, flowers, or branches.

Once the clinician allowed enough time for Emilia to complete her drawing, she asked her to tell the stories behind the picture drawn. The clinician listened to her narrative with honest curiosity, asking questions to discover thick and thin narratives and how they have contributed to develop her identity.

Roots. For the roots Emilia had drawn her grandmother. She described her as a strong woman who was always the center of family life. Emilia, her siblings, and her cousins called their grandmother "maita", a Spanish slang word more closely related to the word "mom" than to "grandma." Maita's house was everyone's home. She was in charge of cooking and raising the children while their mothers were working, often times in a different town.

Ground and bushes. On the ground, Emilia drew herself braiding the hair of her new friends in the facility. Although touching and hugging was strictly prohibited and enforced by resident assistants, braiding hair was allowed. Emilia explained this practice not only made her feel closer to other residents, it reminded her of her family taking care of each other and the important role she played in looking after the younger

ones. She also drew a bush for her job, because she knew she wanted to work, but she didn't know what she really wanted as a trade of profession.

Rocks and holes. Emilia chose to draw herself doing laundry. She used to go in a group and wash clothes by hand. She found it boring and tiring, but now she reminisced about the conversations she had with her cousins, and how peaceful it felt to be outside listening to birds. Emilia quickly compared the chore with her experience of doing laundry here, noticing how easy it was to be able to use machines, but hoping she could do it while being "free" outside.

Trunk. This step was the hardest for Emilia. Emilia had been taught to be humble and never talk about herself. After some thinking and talking with the clinician she recognized humility as a value and good quality. She expressed how important her family was, and her willingness to put the good of the whole over herself. She was also good at this, and that's why she was "chosen" and "allowed" to cross the border and seek a new life.

Branches. Emilia's first dream was to send her mother and grandmother some money. She had been spending the nights before her trip imagining what they would do with the money from her first paycheck. But that was not all for Emilia, she had dreams for herself too. She wanted to get a haircut styled after her favorite celebrity. She wanted to ride the subway, but the thought of doing it alone frightened her a little bit. Her uncle had also told her most people in the United States speak a different language, the language of the songs she so often listened too. She was determined to learn it.

Leaves. Among the leaves, Emilia drew each and every member of her family. She also drew her best friend back home, whom she had promised she would help cross the border once she was established here. Emilia drew her uncle, whom she barely remembered but who had also given her so much hope when he offered to take her in. She drew

some of her teachers, and she drew "that beautiful young lady" who had come once to her town on a medical mission. She was the first person to explain to Emilia there were other countries, other places to see far away from her town. Lastly, Emilia drew her case manager. She was the first person Emilia felt she could trust, and she took the time to explain to her what was happening. After talking to her case manager, Emilia thought for the first time the situation might not be all bad after all.

Flowers and seeds. When drawing this step Emilia felt emotional and conflicted. She had learned that family sticks together and that was the best way to survive. Nevertheless, it had seemed like moving away was the right thing to do, but now she was seriously regretful.

Fruits. Emilia drew some fruits and wrote some words on them: strength, perseverance, faith, and caring for others.

Compost or trash pile. Emilia chose to draw things from her past and her present. She drew a hole in the ground where she wrote the word childhood. Emilia felt she had left that behind. She drew a couple of rocks with people she didn't like, both here and back in her country. Emilia didn't hesitate to draw the "coyote" who helped her cross the border. She thought of the man in charge of her trip as dark and dangerous. She described how intimidated and unsafe she felt every step of the way. She also drew the immigration officers who found her, because she believes they think she is a criminal, adding, "but I have never stolen anything my whole life!"

In listening to her story while talking about her drawing, the clinician helped Emilia identify important values and meanings in her life. For example, being the oldest daughter, Emilia is expected to be protective and helpful, had always helped to take care of her siblings, and now was supposed to be working to send money home. Instead, she feels like a failure being "trapped" in the facility. One of the most worrisome things for her is disappointing her mother and letting down her siblings. Without a deep exploration process, a clinician might have concentrated on the difficulties of the travel or the trauma of separation,

missing the fact that she was willing to go forth, knowing it would mean being better able to help and support her family. The exploration process could also assist in discovering that Emilia has felt like a failure before. From here, a narrative clinician would explore unique outcomes, facts that would support different narratives that tell a preferred story about Emilia. Using the Tree of Life, Emilia could also recognize the people, examples or situations that taught her lessons she values and could be applied today. They would explore alternative stories, facts and details that would thicken a healthier narrative and offer a preferred identity for Emilia. The clinician could also, with the approval of the client, invite outside witnesses that could attest to the client being a helpful member of her new community.

Group setting: The Forest of Life

Working in groups is a common practice for narrative clinicians. Sharing with others that find themselves in similar situations can help clients to externalize the problem and discover shared meaning constructed around an issue. The Tree of Life metaphor can be used in groups to allow participants to safely share stories about their lives while fortifying their connections with their own stories, their cultures, and meaningful people in their lives (Denborough, 2008).

This version of the forest of life was adapted from the exercise proposed by Georgia Iliopoulos (2009) when working with populations affected by HIV. For this stage, once Emilia and other clients in the residential facility had developed and processed their individual trees, they were invited to create a forest of life. Each group member displayed their Tree of Life on the wall. Participants were encouraged to choose two or three trees belonging to a different people to find differences and similarities. They were also instructed to write or draw words of encouragement or understanding on each other's trees.

Once this stage of the exercise ended, the participants were instructed to return to their own trees and spend some time reading the comments made by others about their personal stories. They were given time to reflect on their experiences and then share them with the group. Emilia found comments written or drawn on her tree that she described

as "fun and heart warming." Emilia laughed when she saw "I also like the washing machines!" written on her tree and was determined to find out who wrote it. However, the most moving comment she saw that day was one with a drawing of a girl dressed just like Emilia. Next to her there was a group of girls holding a sign spelling "welcome" in Spanish. Underneath the group of girls someone wrote "our new family."

Discussion

The case of Emilia demonstrates one way in which narrative practices can be used individually and collectively with undocumented unaccompanied immigrant minors, specifically those who are housed in facilities such as the ones operated by the ORR. The use of practices that contribute to the exploration of personal and collective identities and narratives, such as the Tree of Life and the forest of life illustrated here, could facilitate participants' understandings of their own stories and preferred narratives. These exercises might help these clients recognize similarities and differences in stories of their peers, thereby supporting a sense of identity that is self-defined. Similar practices could be utilized with minimal adaptation in places where undocumented immigrant families are situated while awaiting disposition of their immigration cases. With families, use of such practices could help participants clarify their family's identity and meanings for individual members and as a family system. Practices that rely on the use of expressive arts, such as drawing and painting, could also serve as a medium to break language and cultural barriers that could play a role in the therapeutic relationship. By offering the opportunity to narrate their own story, these exercises also become an important tool for exploration that can help guide goals and objectives for therapy (Lock, 2016).

Some cautions should also be kept in mind. Using the Tree of Life exercise might not be appropriate in times of crisis, when other interventations are needed. Unaccompanied minors who are in shelter care would likely not have the opportunity to explore their family history with their parents, family members, or important adults other than the counselor who could help provide a different prespective. The practice of inviting "witnesses" to help create healthier narratives is not required

for the Tree of Life, but could be an important part of the narrative therapy process. However, witnesses must be able to provide the kind of feedback that is helpful to each participant; thus, the counselor will need to assess the ability of the group to function effectively for each other before including that process. It is also important to consider the Tree of Life as a tool to explore, develop, and integrate healthier narratives about self that might require further interventions.

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The influence of short-term study abroad programs on pre-service and in-service educators' perspectives and sense of preparedness to work with diverse students

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Abstract

The education workforce in the United States is mainly white, while the majority of students in U.S. schools are children of color. Research demonstrates that schools struggle to meet the diverse needs of students of color as a result of culturally unrelated educational experiences provided in U.S. classrooms. This chapter examines the efforts of a School of Education at a regional university in Texas in using short-term study abroad experiences to develop pre-service and in-service teachers' global awareness and social responsibility, with the goal to close the gap between teachers' and students' diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This phenomenological qualitative study aimed to determine the influence of a short-term study abroad trip on educators' efficacy and preparedness to address the needs of diverse students. Results suggest that the study abroad experiences influenced the Texas educators' perspectives of the world. Three major themes were identified across participants' responses: appreciation, respect, and desire to do more in communities. Stepping outside the cultural comfort of the U.S. creates a greater understanding of cultural differences, and it provides the foundation for personal growth.

The influence of short-term study abroad programs on pre-service and in-service educators' perspectives and sense of preparedness to work with diverse students

Students in the United States often have limited experience with other cultures. This is especially true for students within the geographic range of the university that sponsored the short-term study abroad program studied in this chapter. One of the authors, in recalling an experience with high school students on a biology trip, illustrated the students' lack of experience. He asked the students how many had been out of the country. One student raised his hand and said, "I went to Maryland once." In actuality, going out of state seems like out of the country for many rural East Texas students. This anecdote is potentially problematic, not only due to poor geographic understanding but because travel has strong academic benefits (NAFSA: Association of International Educators, n.d.) beyond simply seeing other cultures and sights. Travel forces individuals to get outside their comfort zone, and when people are uncomfortable, they grow (Sachau, Brasher & Fee, 2010).

The ability to effectively address discomfort required for growth is often associated with unique personality traits. We all have inherited areas of comfort, and we strive to maintain this equilibrium during a typical day. Travel often requires times of quiet contemplation, gregarious activity, and everything in between. As one of the authors often tells in-service teachers enrolled in his graduate courses, "We all have inner demons to battle, and some of these may come out when we travel." The college students are assured that there is nothing that cannot be handled during a trip, and difficulties are times of reflections and contemplation.

Study abroad trips have many benefits, including the opportunity for college students to face and address some of these personal demons while providing lessons in self-sufficiency and resiliency. Research shows that unique activities, such as travel opportunities, experience by children from more affluent families are often the cornerstone of later academic success (Burger, 2017). Authentic learning experiences are relevant to real life, provide multiple perspectives, involve collaboration and reflection, and often require creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving (Pearce, 2016). The traits of authentic learning that equip college students with the life skills needed to solve problems they will face in life are traits naturally embedded into study abroad travel opportunities (Santoro, Sosu, & Fassetta, 2016). Education, at its best, creates

experiences that lead to a more mature understanding of the world. Study abroad experiences provide the lessons similar to great teachers.

Highly effective teachers use components of creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving on a continual basis. These characteristics become even more important in addressing students that come from a different background than the teacher (Chin-yin, Indiatsi, & Wong, 2016). The majority of students in the United States are of color (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.) while the teacher and school principal workforce is mainly white (United States Department of Education, 2016), middle-class, and English speaking (Marx & Moss, 2011). Research studies and student achievement data demonstrate that schools struggle to meet the needs of students of color (Lee, 2002) due to the "culturally incongruent educational experiences" provided to students in many US schools (Janerette & Fifield, as cited in Marx & Moss, 2011, p. 36). Teacher and principal preparation programs need to find ways bridge this cultural gap in their college students. One way this may be accomplished is through developing pre-service and in-service teachers' global citizenship, including social responsibility and global awareness (Morais & Ogden, 2011; Schattle, 2009; Tarrant, Rubin & Stoner, 2014), in an effort to address the gap between the teachers' and their students' diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The thesis of this chapter is that these characteristics can be improved through short-term study abroad programs.

Literature review

The short-term study abroad program in this study is a 10-day trip to southern Belize to conduct educational research and visit different remote villages and their schools. It does not fit neatly within any of three traditional short-term study abroad models described by Sachau, Brasher & Fee (2010), which include the following:

1. A summer semester abroad where students spend 6 to 12 weeks
2. A 7 to 28-day study tour visiting different sites; and
3. A service-learning trip which lasts anywhere from 2 to 6 weeks with a focus on community service.

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The study-abroad program presented in this chapter has features of all three models. The pre-service and in-service teachers are immersed in the culture by spending time with community leaders and teachers to increase their interest and understanding of the people of Belize. The college students also are provided with selected pieces of literature to help prepare for the visit. These are both features of the summer semester abroad model (Sachau, Brasher & Fee, 2010). By spending two days in each village, the college students have the opportunity to visit multiple communities in a short period of time while also taking time to tour different sites, which is common in the study tour model (Sachau, Brasher & Fee, 2010). Although some college students engage in community service and volunteer to help teachers during the school day, which is a main feature of service-learning trips (Sachau, Brasher & Fee, 2010), the focus of the Belize trip is multidimensional. While in Belize, the participating college students are immersed in the community by visiting multiple villages and volunteering at the schools. The faculty members aim to shape East Texas educators' attitudes and build their confidence when working with children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds while providing college students, who might otherwise not have the opportunity, experience traveling outside the United States.

The literature related to study abroad programs generally focuses on the benefits of semester or year-long programs and the impact of those programs on college students' language acquisition and cross-cultural skills development (Lewis & Niesenbaum, 2005). However, Lewis & Niesenbaum (2005) found that short-term study abroad programs provide a cost-effective alternative for college students pursuing degrees where there is little flexibility within the course of study. They also found that short-term study abroad programs are effective in altering the participants' views and assumptions about the world and other cultures. However, researchers have found that college students participating in short-term study abroad programs report a difference in their cultural awareness before and after the trip, but the differences are not significant (Rourke & Kanuka, 2012). Rourke & Kanuka found that study abroad experiences have potential for impacting the participants' perspectives and engage in complex real-life experiences. However, they discovered

that college students lessen the impact of the study abroad experiences by avoiding grappling with complex intercultural issues while abroad, limiting their interactions with the locals, staying with their fellow travelers, and being in contact with friends and family through social media (Rourke & Kanuka, 2012). They propose designing study-abroad experiences that require students to immerse themselves in rich learning opportunities in authentic settings and circumstances (Rourke & Kanuka, 2012).

The literature related to the benefits of study abroad experiences are often related to aspects of personal growth and safety. Research related to professional benefits is lacking, although connections between intrinsic growth and extrinsic performance are not difficult to find. There is a romanticism associated with travel, but it often requires college students to address uncomfortable situations. A study abroad participant's life often has mostly scripted and "canned" activities, whereas having to problem-solve while traveling can create some discomfort.

This discomfort, according to the literature, has benefits. Trower and Lehmann (2017) found that study abroad provides a mechanism for separating out applicants from the piles of others with similar credentials. This benefit appeared to be even more important for college students from homes with limited resources. College students who come from economically poor backgrounds usually do not have the opportunity to explore the world in this manner and may have not traveled outside of the tight geographic area that is the local community. Travel abroad provides insight into the world that may not be attainable otherwise.

Context of Belize short-term travel abroad study

The Belize short-term study abroad provides pre-service teachers and educational leadership graduate students the opportunity to visit schools in southern Belize (Toledo District) in an effort to obtain experiences to expand college student perspectives of education and gain insight into the lives of diverse P-12 students. While in the Belize schools, the graduate students observe Belizean teachers and principals, interact with P-12 students, and interview teachers and principals with the goal of gaining an understanding of their culture, education system, and chal-

lenges. The primary purpose of this trip is to provide college students the opportunity to develop their cultural sensitivity and tolerance (Kelleher, 2013) while gaining a global perspective and broad understanding of English language learners and diverse students. Nearly 100% of students in Belize are English learners, as they come from homes where Mopan, Ketchi, Garifuna or Creole (Belize Ministry of Education, 2008) is the primary, and often times, only language spoken. Furthermore, nearly all of the students in the schools in remote villages come from homes with no income, where the parents are dedicated to subsistence farming (Belize Ministry of Education, 2008). Southern Belize is a cultural melting pot, and relating to the differences provides a good foundation for addressing similar circumstances in the United States. This melting pot provides for wide-ranging and unique experiences for students.

A look at the census provides insight into the uniqueness of Belize, including the Toledo District, where the short-term study abroad trip is held. According to the 2010 Census, the population can be categorized into the following: Mestizo, Creole, Maya, Garifuna and Mennonite. These ethnicities and cultures make up the bulk of Belize's 322,453 residents (Statistical Institute of Belize, 2010).

Mestizo. In 2010, the Mestizo people were the largest group in Belize, with 52.9% of the population (Statistical Institute of Belize, 2010). The Mestizo culture is a mixture of Mayan and Spanish settlers. Mestizo worked as farmers, contributing to Belize's economy by growing large crops of rice, corn, vegetables, and sugar. Sugar cane and sugar was a profitable crop. Currently, Mestizo live in the northern and western areas of Belize, blending Spanish and Mayan cultures. The percentage of Mestizo in the Toledo District is 19.9%.

Creoles. According to the 2010 census data for Belize, Creoles accounted for 25.9% of the population. Creoles live in the central regions of Belize. Creoles can trace their heritage to African slaves brought to Belize. Over time, these Africans married British settlers, creating the Creole people. Creoles work in many jobs and careers in

Belize, but predominately work in civil service. The Creole population in the Toledo District is five percent (Statistical Institute of Belize, 2010).

Garifuna. The Garifuna originated with African immigrants who escaped slavery in the 17th century and married Caribs from the Caribbean Islands in South America. They ultimately migrated to southern Belize and other Bay Islands off the Honduras coast after being forced off of St. Vincent and Dominica in 1796. Garifuna live in the southern regions of Belize near the coastlines. Based on their heritage of survival, the Garifuna farmed, fished, hunted and trapped. Upon arrival in Belize, Garifuna were a source of expanding the colonial economy by helping with logging. The Garifuna are a mixture of many influences and bloodlines, including African, Caribbean, and European. Over time, other peoples were integrated, including Creole, Mayan, and indigenous Caribbean cultures, resulting in rich and complex cultural nuances. The Garifuna people have been a vital link in how Belize is identified. There are several villages in Belize with a population that is predominately Garifuna, making up just over six percent of the Belize and Toledo District population (Statistical Institute of Belize, 2010). The Garifuna culture is cohesive, with its own identity, language, culture and history (Belize Ministry of Education, 2008).

Mayan cultures. The Mayans are generally considered to be the most conservative and isolated of the cultures in southern Belize (Belize Ministry of Education, 2008). They make up 11.3% of the population, based on the 2010 census data, and most of them live in the rural villages located in the southern interior regions of Belize. The Mayans are the most undereducated of cultures in Belize (Mwakikagile, 2014). A 2010 census report stated that just over 10% of the Mayan population within Belize have a university education (Statistical Institute of Belize, 2010). Opportunities for tertiary education in the Toledo District are fewer, so this number is lower in this region. The Mayans have the highest poverty rate and participate the least in political and socioeconomic arenas.

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Methodology

The study used a phenomenological methodology to determine the influence of a short-term study abroad trip on pre-service and in-service teachers. It is designed to explore and describe the experiences of the participants regarding a phenomenon, in this case study abroad experiences, as perceived and described by the participants (Creswell, 2014). Phenomenological studies focus on providing insight into a particular activity or event (Vagle, 2018). In this case, the researchers wanted to determine the efficacy of a short-term study abroad on factors associated with addressing the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse student groups.

The short-term study abroad program in this study is one component of an overall research/service/travel initiative within the department of a university in the southern United States. Along with student study abroad trips, the department has hosted principals from the region during visits to the United States, provided professional development to educators in the country, and completed research projects related to the schools of the area. The multifaceted approach to working with these schools in Belize has provided the study abroad students with an open, inviting environment within the education system of the Toledo District of Belize on the trips. Access to schools are often predicated on relationships, and the department has developed these connections over more than 10 years.

Through a qualitative survey, college students' perspectives were explored to understand how the aspiring administrators' perspectives about education, beliefs about culturally and linguistically diverse students, and their sense of preparedness to work with diverse P–12 students changed as a result of their experiences in Belize. In 2018, after the last group had returned from Belize, a survey including five open-ended questions was distributed to five educators who traveled to Belize from 2015 through 2018. The five individuals surveyed were chosen through convenience sampling. These individuals, which included two pre-service teachers and three educational leadership graduate students, were chosen because of their experience with the study abroad trip, as well as their availability. The survey questions focused on the partici-

pant's cultural sensitivity and appreciation, global citizenship, confidence, preparedness when working with diverse student populations, and understanding of global educational issues. Open-ended questions were analyzed and coded to identify common themes. The themes were cross-analyzed to draw conclusions regarding all the participants' answers. The survey included the following questions:

1. How did the Belize study abroad influence your understanding of culturally and linguistically diverse students' needs?
2. How did the study abroad impact your ability to work with culturally and linguistically diverse students?
    a. How was your awareness of the instructional materials' relevance to students' background impacted by the study abroad experiences?
3. How has your perspective about education in the United States changed since going to Belize?
4. What understanding of global educational issues did you gain while in Belize?
    a. How has your understanding of these global issue impacted your instructional practices? Your perceptions of diverse students? Your appreciation for diversity?
5. Since going to Belize, do you feel more comfortable interacting with culturally and linguistically diverse families? Please explain how your actions/behaviors have changed as a result of your experiences in Belize.

These questions aligned with the research problem to determine how the experiences within the short-term study abroad trip impacted education college students' sense of preparedness, perspectives about education, global citizenship, confidence, and understanding and beliefs about culturally and linguistically diverse students.

Limitations
There were three limitations to this study. First, the amount of time elapsed since the short-term abroad trip took place ranged from from one to four years. This time gap means that certain components of the trip that were valuable at the time may have been forgotten. In addition, small changes to the trip were made each year in response to former participant surveys. The basic trip stayed the same, but some

internal characteristics changed slightly. The second limitation is the size of the sample, which was impacted by the first limitation, the time elapsed since the trip took place. The third limitation is that the findings reported in this chapter were the results of a self-analysis survey. Research shows that individuals are often poor evaluators of their talent and often misremember events. Regardless, this research is reporting on the participants' perceptions of the value of the trip in increasing cultural understanding.

Results

The respondents answered five qualitative research questions designed to ascertain the impact of the short-term study abroad trip on college students' sense of preparedness, perspectives about education, global citizenship, confidence, understanding, and beliefs about culturally and linguistically diverse students. The responses suggested that the trip continued to influence their perspectives of the world. Three major themes were identified across the participants' responses: appreciation, respect, and desire to do more in the communities.

Appreciation

The educators that participated in the short-term study abroad trip to Belize indicated they had a new appreciation for the amount of and accessibility to resources in P-12 schools in the United States. They repeatedly reported feeling fortunate and noticed the care with which Belizean students and teachers worked with limited resources. A participant said, "Pencils were not wasted" while another one wrote, "Belize schools, especially the rural ones, are careful with their resources so that they will last."

Respect

The participants also expressed a newly acquired respect for children and families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The participants wrote about the challenges faced by diverse students, and this has made them more patient and respectful of the differences within their school communities. One respondent shared about her experi-

ences in Belize when she encountered a fruit she did not know, and her surprise when Belizean students were not aware of hand sanitizer. She explained how these experiences had changed her: "When working with students from different cultures, I have a new respect and understanding and less fear of the unknown."

Desire to do more in the community.
The last theme that emerged from the responses was the respondents' desire to do more for the diverse students within their schools. A participant shared, "This program ignited a newly found passion in me to serve others at every available opportunity." Another participant stated, "I walked away from Belize as a more connected educator in tune with the importance of how individuals impact a community." She further elaborated by writing, "Being able to personally see how people work together despite the living conditions speaks deeply to my heart and evokes a change in my perspective about community and the unique opportunity for every educator."

The themes of appreciation, respect, and desire to do more in the community were embedded within the questions overall, but were individually clear within each question response. These themes are discussed further in the sections below.

How did the Belize study abroad influence your understanding of culturally and linguistically diverse students' needs? One major theme emerged from this question. College students reported a deeper understanding of the needs of diverse students and the importance of differentiated instructional strategies. An experienced teacher who was in the educational leadership graduate program wrote:

> I did not feel like I had a good grasp on students from different cultures even after many years in the classroom, thus causing professional inadequacy. The Belize study abroad gave me a hands-on opportunity to work with students from a very diverse culture. When returning to the states I was able to put into practice some of the pedagogical skills and knowledge I gained while in Belize.

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Another participant also referred to the need for different practices when working with students from linguistically diverse backgrounds. She explained: "When reflecting back to my experiences with the students in Belize, the first things that come to mind would be the necessity for visuals and repetition in a variety of forms." When thinking about the experiences in Belize and how those have influenced her, she elaborated and said, "These strategies are applied within my current classroom environment today. Although the primary language may differ, the methods for understanding and communicating with English Language Learners (ELL) who meet those same needs does not change."

How did the study abroad impact your ability to work with culturally and linguistically diverse students? Participants reported an increased awareness of the importance of valuing students' culture and language while being patient and understanding of their differences. A participating teacher indicated, "Because their culture is so important, I look for ways to infuse their culture in the lessons." Another participant explained how the experience in Belize helped her better understand the students' backgrounds and how those have influenced her behavior. She said,

> The Belize experience has given me the opportunity to understand where they are coming from, how their education system works, and how it varies from ours. Because of the Belize experience, I feel I am more forgiving and patient with the students that are trying to learn the language while trying to adapt to American (United States) schools.

Another participant wrote, "The study abroad helped me realized that regardless of language and culture differences, the most natural approach to communication is to create visuals between yourself and the subject."

How has your perspective about education in the United States changed since going to Belize? The teachers' appreciation for the resources and the technology available in the United States emerged as a theme across the survey, particularly in the participants' responses to

this question. A participant reflected on her experiences and perspectives, saying:

> I knew before the Belize trip that American students were very fortunate and spoiled when it came to their education. The Belize trip solidified exactly how fortunate American students are. I share with my students constantly how lucky they are to have running buses, a cafeteria to eat in, warm and cool air in the classrooms. It has allowed me to also reflect on how fortunate I am as an educator to have the supplies and items needed to prepare my students.

Another participant expressed her envy of the simplicity of life and education in the rural schools in Belize. Her candor was evident in her response:

> In some ways, I am envious of their lack of technology. Due to this I saw primary students do over twice the amount writing that would be done in the average American classroom. Without access to copy machines, students were drawing maps and writing worksheets of their own…I saw students using manipulatives like rocks and sticks to count and draw in the dirt. These kinesthetic gross motor skills are so beneficial and free…I enjoyed seeing students learn class outside, grow their own fruits and vegetables, and labor in the school garden that was used to eat. They respected their school and cleaned it themselves, even the toilets (that is if they had toilets!). I suppose what I am trying to say is, it was humbling to see the students working and performing with the resources around them. They did so with such joy. After my trip, I view my own system of education and the students within it very spoiled and disenchanted though we have so much more.

The participants repeatedly expressed how fortunate they felt to work in the United States while at the same time expressing their desire to find ways to help their P–12 students appreciate their good fortune.

What understanding of global educational issues did you gain while in Belize? The responses to this question repetitively expanded on the participants' responses to the third question. The participants expressed their appreciation for all the resources and services they have

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access to in the United States while articulating their admiration for Be-
lizean educators and the work they do with limited resources. Further-
more, they were surprised to learn that educators across the world face
some of the same challenges that teachers in the United States face, such
as preparing students for standardized testing. The participants indicated
their astonishment at the unimaginable challenges and stress Belizean
educators face when preparing students for standardized tests in schools
with no electricity, insufficient resources, and no services for students
with learning disabilities.

One of the participants shared about her experiences while in Belize
and how those experiences have shaped her understanding of global
educational issues. She wrote:

> The stress to achieve high standardized test scores was just as
> evident in the heart of the Belizean jungle as it is here on STAAR
> (State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness) testing day.
> Another difficulty shared between countries is the lack of proper
> accommodations for students with special needs or disabilities. I
> helped a student who was blind take his standardized exam.

Another participant summarized her newly acquired understanding of
global educational issues, saying, "The main global educational issue is
the understanding that not all education systems are created equal. How-
ever, learning can take place with minimal financial support. I witnessed
learning happening all around me with little to no supplies."

**Since going to Belize, do you feel more comfortable interacting
with culturally and linguistically diverse families? Please explain
how your actions/behaviors have changed as a result of your experi-
ences in Belize.** The responses to the last question of the survey evoked
an immense sense of pride and satisfaction in the authors who have had
the opportunity to take their graduate students to Belize. The partici-
pants reported an increased patience and empathy toward English learn-
ers in their classrooms, as well as an increased sense of preparedness to
work with diverse students and their parents. A participant indicated, "I
believe my empathy for our Spanish-speaking students has grown. Many
of them may have come from remote areas such as Belize. Expecting

them to be knowledgeable in the American way was unrealistic. I'm more patient with these students." Another participant stated, "Since the Belize trip, my awareness of diversity has been enlightened. I do feel more comfortable reaching out to parents that have a different cultural background than mine."

Conclusion

Education is about pushing students to be better than they thought they were capable of being, and about expanding their minds to consider opportunities that would otherwise not be within their purview. Although classrooms may push educator preparation students intellectually, this limits growth, because so many aspects of teaching and understanding the world are left untapped. Short-term study abroad experiences can help provide this extra push, but it is imperative that the experiences are not "canned" activities of traditional travel tours. For college students to develop an appreciation and respect for diversity, they need to interact directly and deeply with the culture, which means that relationships are critical in facilitating authentic interactions. The Belize short-term study abroad trips were successful, in part, because the connections developed with college students were one part of a bigger project that included assisting with professional development and international hosting. Relationships are important.

The importance of relationships was clear in the responses of the college students who participated in the short-term study abroad. They mentioned not only the connections in Belize but asserted that these experiences led to increased respect and more understanding of relationships back home. Understanding the challenges of culturally and linguistically diverse students provides a foundation for greater academic and emotional support.

The trip also brought about appreciation and reflection regarding facilities and supplies that are taken for granted in the United States. The college students on the short-term study abroad were made aware of the significant impact that could occur without copiers, computers, books, and other supplies. The working conditions witnessed in Belize

reinforced the value of teachers' commitment and dedication to overcome these obstacles.

Short-term study abroad participants are often looking for a broader perspective. It is one of the reasons they pursue the experience. The responses on this survey suggest the impact is perspective-changing. Stepping outside the cultural comfort of the United States creates a greater understanding of cultural differences, and it provides the foundation for personal growth.

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5

English learner education policy, programs, and practice: A social space defined by imagined and real borders

Marilyn B. Keller-Nicol

Abstract

This theory-oriented paper investigated educational policy labels for students through the critical lens of post-colonial theories of binary oppositional Otherness. Using the critical theories of Edward Said, Mary Louise Pratt, and Gary Olsen, the author presented an analysis of the schoolhouse as a linguistic and cultural contact zone in which policy labels create a hegemonic social space in which student identity is developed. These post-colonial theories of Otherness are applied to theories of social paradigms and socially constructed identity to propose the ways in which a pejorative rhetoric develops among practitioners of English Learner (EL) education; which in turn produces a mutually exclusive relationship between practitioner-held assumptions of EL deficiency and EL student identity development.

English learner education policy, programs, and practice: A social space defined by imagined and real borders

With more than 1 million English Learners (ELs) being served in Texas public schools (Texas Education Agency, 2017), Texas is a culturally and linguistically unique setting that contributes to policy and practice conversations surrounding ELs, bilingual education, and special language programs in the United States. Even given Texas' close proximity to Mexico, its metropolitan cities and rural townships are home to heterogenous populations of diverse languages and nationalities. There are large numbers of Vietnamese, Arabic, Chinese, and Urdu speakers (Ghosh, Hokom, Hunt, Magdaleno, & Su, 2008); however, Spanish predominates, with 90.5 percent of ELs speaking Spanish as their native language. Challenging for culturally and linguistically diverse school districts (e.g. Houston Independent School District [ISD] and Fort Bend ISD) is how to best serve ELs when more than 100 languages may be represented. Rural Texas school districts may not share the same level of hetrogeny in linguistic backgrounds as metropolitan cities, but they do share the challenge of educating large numbers of ELs with limited resources.

Federal law, state statues, and administrative codes influence the practice of educating ELs. The Texas Education Agency has the arduous task of creating protocols to operationalize such regulations, which are set forth in Texas Administrative Codes to be implemented by school boards and districts in local policy (Walsh, Kremerer and Maniotis, 2016, p. 3). The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires districts to report "the number and percentage of ELs in the programs and activities attaining English language proficiency based on State English language proficiency standards" (p. 201, section 3121). These federal accountability measures create the framework for state policy, which determines the planning and implementation of EL education programs at the district level. From my practitioner's perspective as a pre-kindergarten teacher, it is hoped that initiatives are designed by state and local agencies to provide access to not only educational opportunities; but more importantly, to ensure equitable education to students with a variety of linguistic backgrounds.

Wording in the Texas Education Codes reflects a recognition that English-only instruction is inadequate for educating ELs (TEC 29.051).

This is a far departure from other states such as California, Arizona, and Massachusetts, which not only aggressively pursued English-only instruction by instituting a Structured English Immersion policy for educating ELs, but also blamed bilingual education for high dropout rates and school failure among ELs (Lopez, 2010, p. 6). Although policy for educating ELs in Texas seems progressive when compared to other states, I suggest that it is purely a theoretical framework for program provision; meaning that once theory is put into practice, it becomes protean in nature, influenced by both the context in which it takes shape and the actors charged with enacting the policy itself and its related programs.

Educational practitioners, particularly teachers, play a starring role in how they exercise agency when interpreting and implementing policy in their schools. The notion that educators exercise discretion when implementing policies is not new (e.g. Lipsky, 1980; Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002), nor is the idea that ELs are treated as instruments of school reform and initiatives. I offer a practitioner's perspective through which to explore how EL policy definition becomes a pejorative rhetoric in practice, packaged with assumptions regarding the identities of students who are labeled as ELs. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is not so much to offer a policy analysis or brief, but to consider ways in which I, as a teacher, have come to understand the subtleties of EL policy in my practice.

The chapter is presented in four sections. First, I draw from Blanton's work to present a brief overview of bilingual education in Texas coupled with three legal cases (two in Texas and one in California) perpetuated by district policy and practice. The history of bilingual education in Texas is integral to understanding the subsequent outcome of policy as it crosses borders into educational programs and practice. Second, I apply Said's (1978) critical theoretical frame of Orientalism to discuss the construction of social identity amidst policy pejorative rhetoric. This particular frame illustrates the way in which interaction and dominance play out when two groups cross boundaries, geographically or imagined, and form distinctions between the familiar (us) and unfamiliar (them). Third, I will present the context wherein the language

used in policy becomes a pejorative rhetoric. Fourth, I begin to examine the schoolhouse as a linguistic contact zone (Pratt, 1991). When students enter the schoolhouse contact zone they cross a border (both real and imagined) wherein they become the object of a policy label and their identity is shaped and constructed. Finally, I will present my conclusions regarding policy and practice within the borders of the schoolhouse contact zone.

Crossing the border from policy to practice (historical context)

Bilingual education has a rich history in Texas. Its early supporters in the mid to late 1800s saw EL education as a way of facilitating the assimilation of large numbers of immigrants to the nation's dominant culture of the United States in the spirit of "Americanism" (Blanton, 2004, p. 40). Americanism was the perspective of our nation as a culturally plural society in which different ethnicities would assimilate into one American identity. The concept of Americanism presents itself throughout the history of EL education in the United States as a belief that our nation should seek one national identity rather than embracing our cultural diversity (Beyer and Johnson, 2014). The 19th century tradition of EL education policy in Texas was legally obscure and informal. The interpretation by many practitioners at that time was that EL education was a necessity for creating an American identity within this young country.

Beginning in 1890, the perspective of EL education in Texas was changing with Progressivism influencing the interpretation of educational practice. This political and ideological shift was characterized by the view of linguistic and ethnic diversity as a threat to the national identity of the United States. Implementation of English-only laws in this era marked a distinctive change in the climate of educational policy. This mistrust and fear of immigrant groups was heightened by World War I. In 1918, Texas passed the first English-only bill for the purpose of preserving the American heritage of our forefathers (Blanton, 2004). A legally obscure landscape of EL education was becoming more linguistically prescriptive as perceptions of immigrants changed. In addition to fear and mistrust of linguistic diversity, a pedagogical perspec-

tive emerged wherein bilingualism was viewed as counterproductive to teaching English to ELs (Blanton, 2004). During this time, as with much of the country, a long-standing trend of ethnic and culturally discriminatory pedagogical practice took a strong foothold in Texas.

In 1957 the case of *Hernandez v. Driscoll Consolidated Independent School District* marked the beginning of the end of the discriminatory practice of holding Mexican-American students in the first two grades for four years. Judge James V. Allred of the United States District Court for the Southern District of Texas ruled that this practice was not in good faith, but rather was racial discrimination. The arduous battle for equal rights sprang into action, and the model for modern EL education began to take shape in Texas. On the federal stage, the case of *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) set a precedent that education agencies must take appropriate action to provide educational programming that will help students overcome language barriers in order to grant equal access to instruction (Stewart-Manzanares, 1988). In 1981, the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit Supreme Court overturned the District Court's ruling from Castañeda v. Pickard, handing down the Castañeda standard, which enforced the ruling from Lau v. Nichols. The standards were provided to ensure that schools adhere to a set of fundamental guidelines for fulfilling their obligations to ELs (Crawford, 2004). The outcome of the Castañeda case was historically important because it marked a federally sponsored accountability measure for educating ELs. Despite a move to hold EL education programs responsible for equitable education, the socially constructed notion still exists that EL programs are a tool for socialization and assimilation of immigrants.

The history of bilingual education in Texas is integral to understanding the subsequent outcome of policy as it is translated into practice. Bilingual education in Texas has historically been a tool used in either adding to or subtracting from American identity. For example, bilingual education was viewed as a way of facilitating assimilation of immigrants to the greater culture of the United States; but later a more conservative view emerged in which bilingual education negatively impacted the assimilation and education of ELs. The identity of the individual student gets lost behind the EL label as political and ideological shifts affect

policy and practice. According to TEC 29.052, the identity of the EL is defined for us as "limited English proficiency" which means "a student whose primary language is other than English and whose English language skills are such that the student has difficulty performing ordinary classwork in English." When we place a label on a group of individuals, regardless of how genuine our intentions, we open the door for generalizations to forever become associated with that group. In history we have seen generalizations of mistrust, fear, and incompetence associated with EL students in Texas. In current times, group labels created in policy perpetuate generalizations and assumptions associated with ELs as a group identity.

Group identity formed across boundaries

Anytime we assign a label to a group of individuals, a definition packaged with assumptions becomes associated with that group's identity. When ELs enter the U.S. school system in Texas, they enter a social space not only defined by physical walls of brick and mortar; but also by the imagined identities that exist within subgroup labels that define the individuals in the context of educational policy. The best way to begin understanding how group labels shape group identities is to refer to Edward Said's (1978) critical theory of "Orientalism." Said discusses the political and academic conceptualization of the Orient by Westerners as an identity of "free-floating mythology… derive(d)… from contemporary attitudes and popular prejudices" (p. 166). The identity of the Orient implies an interesting relationship between constructed knowledge to a geographical area, and by extension, the people who inhabit a geographical area. Colonial studies of Eastern Asia found the Orient to be an exotic word. An academic field of study titled "Orientalism" emerged, embodying western-designated "truths" regarding the identity of Eastern Asia. Said describes, somewhat sarcastically, the position of the "Academic Orientalist:"

> When a learned Orientalist traveled in the country of his specialization it was always with abstract unshakeable maxims about the "civilization" in which he had studied; rarely were Orientalists interested in anything except proving the validity of these musty

"truths" by applying them without great success to uncomprehend-
ing, hence degenerate, Natives (Said, 1978, p. 165).
Identity construction of the Orient illustrates the way in which interac-
tion and dominance play out when two groups cross boundaries, geo-
graphically or imagined, and form distinctions between the familiar (us)
and unfamiliar (them).

The construction of identities across boundaries is accompanied by a
perception of cultural and ethnic difference that is often defined by a bi-
nary opposition of positive vs. negative. Said describes the positive and
negative relationship in terms of the fifth century Athenian who nega-
tively defined himself as a non-barbarian, while also defining himself
positively as an Athenian (Said, 1978). In this sense, negative represents
the cultural perception with which the individual or group does not iden-
tify. Said goes on to describe this positive vs. negative binary in very ba-
sic terms of foreign vs. not foreign, in which "All kinds of suppositions,
associations, and fictions appear to crowd the unfamiliar and strange
space outside of one's place" (p. 168). In essence, Said describes man's
inherent desire to define himself in terms of difference, and categorically
construct social hegemony among identities.

Much like the field of Orientalism, rhetoric in EL educational policy
is marked with definitions of competence vs. deficiency. In the Texas
Administrative Codes, EL is defined as synonomously with the term
"Limited English Proficient" (LEP) which is used in the Texas Educa-
tion Codes (TAC 89.1203). Even upon testing proficient in English and
scoring an acceptable mark on the state exam; the EL does not achieve a
label of "proficient," but receives the negative orientation of "non-LEP."
I would like to explore the associations and suppositions about ELs, and
their non-EL classmates, that come packaged with this term. For the EL,
the assumption is that there is no language proficiency in English, which
is characteristic of deficiency. Despite classification as an EL, students
might very well possess basic interpersonal communication skills in
English, along with fluency in their native language. For the non-EL
classmates, it is assumed that English is the native language and that
they must possess proficiency, and in my experience, this is not always
true. For example, even native English speaking students who possess

basic personal communication skills are not necessarily proficient in reading and writing.

Policy labels become pejorative rhetoric

How does the policy designation of EL become a pejorative rhetoric associated with negative assumptions? A rhetoric implies a choice in the label we assign to a group of individuals. The rhetoric in a label or designation can be pejorative in one context, while totally harmless in another. A rhetoric becomes pejorative when it is associated with disapproval or disparaging assumptions. The language of the policy itself in TAC 89.1203 is not particularly discriminatory or pejorative. The policy definition of EL on paper sits in a vacuum, absent from freefloating mythology deposited by interpretation into its meaning, but in a particular context or social paradigm, the term becomes pejorative, as it is associated with mistrust or misinformed cultural assumptions.

The socializing and homogenizing nature of education creates a context in which the label of EL becomes a pejorative rhetoric. It is not necessarily the disposition of practitioners to disapprove of linguistic minorities, but in the case of accountability and progress measures, ELs present a particular challenge. Some researchers trace this educational context back to our colonial legacy of imperialism and quest for social hegemony. Bartolome and Leistyna (2006) examine the legacy of ethnocentrism in today's language policy:

> The U.S. is no stranger to this colonizing philosophy and practice of cultural invasion. When we examine language policy in regards to domestic linguistic minority groups such as Native Americans, Native Hawaiians, Mexican Americans in the Southwest and decedents of enslaved Africans, we find that the sanctioned practice of linguistic suppression and cultural domestication has been the historical norm (p. 3).

This is not to say that policy makers and practitioners are inherently racist or classist, but the legacy of colonialism is deeply rooted in much of today's context of structural-functional social paradigms. It is difficult to remove such deeply rooted motivation for social organization.

Said discusses man's inherent desire to define himself in terms of cultural counterparts. This same desire leads man to organize collective society to position himself. Just as humans desire to organize their closets or desks, they are inclined to organize their intangible identities, and this is precisely why structural-functional social paradigms are difficult to remove from the context of society. Within the context of the structural-functional social paradigm, "society… is an organism with specific, identifiable functions, an organism, moreover, that by nature seeks to reduce differences that lead to functional inefficiencies" (Paquette, 1989, p.408). Society becomes organized in such a way that differences in abilities force certain groups and individuals into particular determined spaces where they will not disrupt efficiency (of progress). Educational policy and practice have a way of perpetuating structural-functional social paradigms that force certain students into marginalized spaces due to their inability to contribute to our model of efficiency.

Within the boundaries of the schoolhouse contact zone, low expectations for academic performance are part and parcel to the assumptions and associations connected to EL students. Diaz, Cochran and Karlin (2016) reported that little is expected of ELs, and the students are commonly made to believe that they should expect and accept low achievement in school until they learn English. ELs enter the schoolhouse contact zone with a perceived linguistic disadvantage, allowing teachers to place them into a category in which the teacher is willing to accept school failure. I would like to posit that this willingness to accept student failure goes against the fiber of most teachers' values in their profession; and this is where negative assumptions about students' cultural and linguistic identity come into play. Negative assumptions about students' competence and families help ease the pain of accepting failure, and they function somewhat like a scapegoat. This could very well be the origin of an epistemological pattern of thought that leads to the practice of deficit thinking. According to Guerra and Nelson (2008), deficit thinking is characterized by viewing diverse students and families for what they lack. This line of thinking is flawed, but often is used as to excuse the existence of inequity in school programs and practice.

Perceptions of student deficit and deficiency contribute to the pejorative rhetoric that surrounds the abilities of EL students.

Students enter the schoolhouse contact zone

To better understand social construction of ELs' identities, we must begin to examine the schoolhouse as a linguistic contact zone, in which national identity is shaped and constructed. The schoolhouse may be the first contact zone encountered by the EL pupil as a linguistic and social homogenizing institution. The contact zone is defined by Mary Louise Pratt (1991) as a social interaction space where cultures and languages "meet, clash and grapple with each other often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power" (p. 34).

The identity of the EL pupil will begin to undergo construction in the schoolhouse contact zone. Pratt (1991) describes linguistic interaction in the contact zone as orderly games in which legitimate moves are defined by figures of authority. The contact zone in the schoolhouse represents a physical space where identities are first imagined, then made real through practice. The absolute thought that surrounds the capabilities of EL students is not so evident in policy, but it is brought to life by the underlying biases that drive the pedagogical practices of teachers.

The following scenario represents an example of how linguistic and cultural biases become practice within the schoolhouse contact zone. Pseudonyms are used in place of the students' names to protect their anonymity. Recently, I joined a group of teachers conducting an intense tutoring program. The purpose of the program was to provide specific interventions to a group of 16 third graders classified as "non-readers." After a few tutoring sessions, I met with a fellow tutor who happened to be the 1st grade teacher of the four students I was tutoring. I explained to her the serious difficulties the students had in reading, and her response to me was "well, there is a language barrier there." Unbeknownst to me, three of the four students I was working with were ELs. Their EL status was unknown to me for two main reasons: they spoke impeccable English, and I didn't know their parents' linguistic background.

Upon hearing about this "language barrier," I remembered a detailed account from Isabel, an EL student, in a previous tutoring session. She

told a vivid story of how she and Maria used to be best friends. Isabel described a falling out with Maria that occurred over an incident on the trampoline. Now, they were working to rebuild their friendship. Isabel had no difficulty retrieving words to describe chronology and emotions, making her story rich and well stated. So many questions circled in my mind. Are we really blaming a language barrier for this child's illiteracy? What happened between 1st and 3rd grade that these students have made no progress in literacy? Pratt (1991) poses an interesting explanation of this perception of deficiency in language and literacy within the contact zone by describing the schoolhouse as a "social world unified and homogenized with respect to the teacher, whatever students do other than what the teacher specifies is invisible…to analysis" (p. 38). Postcolonial theory such as Pratt's contact zone places the teacher as the colonizer within the schoolhouse setting. The colonizer in this scenario is the authority whose policy is the homogenizing force that puts theory into practice. Other than the prescribed and tested competencies of language and literacy, talents such as the skill of story-telling in Isabel's case are devalued by the pedagogical practice of the teacher.

In terms of identity construction, EL policy cuts deeper than a superficial power play for social homogeny. Gary Olson (1998) provides a deeper analysis of the schoolhouse contact zone by asserting that despite efforts by marginalized student groups to become empowered, social constructs continue to identify and reinforce their position of Other. Olson is describing the way in which individuals and groups assigned to the margins learn to navigate within their positions as Other. Rather than providing support to groups and individuals that will enable them to escape the margins and overcome Otherness, the support we provide through education policy is marked with the trappings of policy generated label designations.

So just how exactly does the type of exchange described by Olson occur in the schoolhouse contact zone? Sandra Stein (2001) explained the critical effect of policy rhetoric, and the ways in which programs designed to provide support materially reinforce positions of Otherness for already marginalized students. For schools to receive the appropriated funding to support particular student sub-groups, certain policy-

generated labels must be appropriated to define students within a sub-group. Stein (2001) explored the many assumptions that practitioners hold about the students who fall into the policy-generated sub-group of Title I. These assumptions "range from family conditions to language barriers to behavior issues," but the main association with Title I is poverty (p. 144). Practitioners' commonly held associations regarding EL students go far beyond that of their academic capabilities, extending to family priorities and cultural values.

Earlier I spoke about my experience tutoring EL students whose "language barrier" was the perceived cause for their illiteracy. In this experience, I spoke to teachers who shared their belief that parents of EL students neither hold education as a high priority in their household nor care to learn to be proficient in English. At my husband's company Christmas party, I had a conversation with a Spanish-speaking mother of three. Her English was good enough to hold a conversation with me, but she expressed dissatisfaction that she could not help her children with their homework because she cannot read or write in English. She explained her desire to go to classes to learn English, which are provided by the school district in the evenings. In the evenings her children are home from school, and her husband often has to work, so the classes are difficult for her to attend. Her reasons for not attending evening classes are quite common for any parent, however, in the case of the EL student, this scenario leads to negative suppositions about family values and household priorities.

Conclusions

Educational policy passes through an imaginary border as it is transformed into practice and put into action by teachers and administrators. From the historical context, we can see that language policy is created out of educational necessity, but it is interpreted and enacted through political ideology and prejudice. Language education policy is intended to provide a framework for fair educational programs, but once policy crosses the border into the schoolhouse contact zone, it takes on a different meaning. We can see through the frame of Said's interpretation of Orientalism that even when implemented through terms of political

correctness, labels become the gateway for generalizations and assumptions about group identity. Said describes the way man interacts with different cultures and uses his experiences to define his position and power. This frame provides an almost empirical phenomenon for the creation of cultural and ethnic labels and the assumptions that are packaged with those identities.

Teachers also cross an imaginary border when they cross the threshold of the schoolhouse contact zone and become interpreters and practitioners of policy. My first journey into the social space within the borders of the schoolhouse contact zone happened during my student teaching. The world within this social space was shocking. As an agent of the schoolhouse contact zone, I became an instrument of policy implementation. In addition, I became a party to conversations with frustrated teachers who spoke about their students in terms of deficit/ deficiency. The teachers I worked with were talented practitioners, which only made this social space more puzzling. Learning how policy and subgroup labels influence accountability helped me make sense out of this strange space where honest professionals resort to blaming and scapegoating students and their families for school failure.

ELs cross an imaginary border as they enter the Texas public school system and become the object of policy labels and subgroup designations. The schoolhouse as a contact zone is a way of viewing the educational setting as a social paradigm where power is unevenly distributed and students are shuffled into spaces according to their abilities. Policy labels for subgroups come to be the spaces in which student placement is determined in the social paradigm of the schoolhouse contact zone. EL students become the unwitting victims of a pejorative rhetoric and assumed identity of deficiency and ability deficit. Teachers play crucial roles in perpetuating the negative assumptions connected to EL identity in the schoolhouse contact zone.

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6

Creating intercultural experiences: Case studies of course-based study abroad in Germany, the Caribbean, and India

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Abstract

One of the most important challenges faced by higher education today is the need to foster global awareness and understanding. Intercultural tolerance and understanding have become key job skills in today's global economy, so developing those attributes has become the focus of many institutions. One way many universities have chosen to meet this challenge is by providing students the opportunity to travel and study internationally. This chapter puts forth a model for the development of intercultural tolerance using course-based study abroad and provides three case studies, Germany, the Caribbean, and India, representing varying applications of the model as evidence.

Concepts and theoretical framework

Clearly, one of the objectives of higher education is to provide students with a variety of intellectual and practical skills that will develop competitive and employment advantages (Hunter, 2004). These skills respond to the new demands of successful corporations in a world with increasing complexity in social and cultural trends and emerging technologies. Today's global economy is such that corporations must be prepared to operate in a variety of different social, political and cultural settings. Accordingly, employees who are prepared to adapt and thrive in a variety of global contexts are necessary. Thus, transferable skills and confidence to live and work in a multi-cultural world are essential to the future success of college graduates (Jones, 2013).

As the development of awareness and understanding of different cultures, histories, religions, and traditions becomes a priority for employers, there has been a corresponding movement toward internationalizing the college experience and adding international understanding to the desired learning outcomes for undergraduates. One important means of developing global or intercultural understanding is through exposure to different people, places and ideas, and many universities have chosen to do this by emphasizing study abroad. Study abroad enables students to expand their intellectual horizons through international academic pursuits, but perhaps more importantly, it provides practical experience of working and interacting with others in a foreign culture (and in many cases, a foreign language), plus teaches them to be adaptable, open and compassionate (Ducate, 2009). In this respect, study abroad experiences provide invaluable opportunities for growth (Selby, 2008).

The literature on study abroad and internationalization of higher education details a variety of benefits as outcomes from international experiences, which are directly linked to the intellectual and practical skills highlighted above. One of the most important outcomes is the development of intercultural competencies (Barrett, Huber & Reynolds 2014; Hunter, White & Godbey, 2006) and global awareness (De Wit, 2012; Hunter, 2004; Deardorff, 2016; Deardorff, 2012; Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009). Salisbury (2011) writes that "Intercultural competence applies the notion of competence to describe the successful engagement or col-

laboration toward a single or shared set of goals between individuals or groups who do not share the same cultural origins or background" (p. 26). It is through international experience that students develop global awareness (or become global citizens) and intercultural sensibility (Engle & Engle, 2004; Barrett, et al., 2014).

The traits of intercultural competency and global awareness were outlined by Oxfam International (2015) in *A curriculum for global citizenship: A guide for teachers and education workers.* Oxfam states that a global citizen is someone who:

- Is aware of the wider world and has a sense of their own role as a world citizen
- Respects and values diversity
- Has an understanding of how the world works
- Is passionately committed to social injustice
- Participates in the community at a range of levels, from the local to the global
- Works with others to make the world a more equitable and sustainable place
- Takes responsibility for their actions (p. 4).

Another learning objective of an international experience is the desire for students to acquire the necessary skills to work effectively as members of international and multicultural teams, meaning that they will be able to function effectively with different working styles and methods (Olson, Green & Hill, 2005). Study abroad experiences are designed to give students real-world experiences in other parts of the world than their home country, and as such, international study requires students to get outside their own culture and to see another from the inside, rather than simply studying from the outside. Most importantly, it fosters the ability of students to recognize the different cultural perspectives (Deardorff, 2012).

Given the potential benefits, if an institution seeks to offer study abroad as a means to develop intercultural competencies, its commitment should be to offer the types of programs that will help students to understand the value of cultural diversity through developing empathy and understanding of different worldviews and ways of thinking. This means that students will be able to speak respectfully about different

customs, values, and traditions of at least two other countries, discuss issues from different cultural perspectives, and interact with others displaying interest in diverse global topics (Hunter, 2004).

When students participate in a study abroad exchange program, however, there are indications that for some, the experience may be less than optimal. Students may become isolated or mainly interact with other "international" students and miss some of the benefits of study abroad (Bell, 2016; Hanson, 2010; McDowell, 2015; Wu, Garza, & Guzman, 2015). Studying abroad alone may not actually create intercultural tolerance; it is necessary to go beyond tourism and get to know the people and culture of the destination country. Students often see new cultures and people through the lens of their own experience. But if these experiences are somewhat limited, the students can be left with few tools with which to build their knowledge base (Lewin, 2009; Lutterman-Aguilar & Gingerich, 2002).

Thus, to ensure that students optimize their international experience it is best to support the experience with academic training or course-based study abroad. Course-based study abroad, for this purpose, means there is academic preparation (specific to the travel) before or during the travel to support learning experiences. Academic preparation for international experiences can provide the framework for student interpretation and understanding (Selby, 2008). Research suggests that students' understanding, compassion for others and engagement in global issues is increased by both course-based study abroad and international/intercultural service learning (Langstraat & Bowdon, 2011; Plante, Lackey & Hwang, 2009; Pless, Maak & Stahl, 2011). Service learning is defined as a "credit-bearing educational experience in which students (a) participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and (b) reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility" (Bringle & Hatcher, 2000, p. 112).

Unfortunately, international service learning projects are not always possible, given logistics and necessary approval requirements for sites and activities. However, we suggest there are other experiences that may

help students develop the desired attributes of intercultural tolerance. Specifically, intentional and interactive cultural experiences may build intercultural tolerance. These experiences can be defined as opportunities to participate in and examine aspects of a culture beyond those entailed in tourism and linked to a specific learning objective.

From theory to practice

Germany

Our first case study involves a six-week trip to Germany and classes in European politics, history, the Holocaust, global human rights, and political rhetoric and leadership. Students in all three classes lived and traveled together to course-relevant locations throughout France and Germany. The purpose of this study abroad experience was to introduce students to the history, politics, and culture of Germany and modern Europe through the lens of Nazism and the Second World War, as well as expand students' understanding of their role in the global community.

The curriculum. The curriculum in the three classes exposed students to the political and historical concepts and events necessary to understand modern global politics and human rights while stimulating an international world view. Time constraints demanded that students could only take two of the three classes offered, and to ensure the appropriate thematic academic preparation for all, certain required content was shared across all classes. Common readings, such as *A concise history of the Third Reich* (Benz & Dunlap, 2007) and *The complete Maus* (Spiegelman, 1996) were used along with various other supplemental materials. When it became apparent that the academic materials provided an intellectual understanding of concentration camps and the Nuremberg trials but did not necessarily create emotional engagement for the students, the films *Schindler's list* (Spielberg, 2004) and *Judgment at Nuremberg* (Kramer, 1961) were shown to the entire group, prior to traveling to Dachau and Nuremberg. Additionally, the syllabi for the classes were coordinated such that each class covered the same

concepts or historical events at the same time, although through the differing course lenses, and all were timed to coordinate with the travel.

The classes incorporated travel to historically relevant sites that highlighted the ideas, concepts, and events discussed in the course materials. These included the Natzweiler and Dachau concentration camps, Berlin, the SS Museum (which contains significant examples of Nazi propaganda), the Nuremberg Court House (where the courtroom in which the Nuremberg trials occurred has been largely preserved and turned into a library and museum), the European Court of Justice, the European Parliament, and many others.

Classes were conducted in a traditional classroom setting for only one or two days a week. The remainder of the week was spent traveling as a group, and class discussions were conducted on location. Weekends were left unscheduled to foster independent student travel throughout Europe. Mandatory pre-departure meetings were used to prepare students for the logistics of traveling and living abroad for an extended period of time, and on-ground class time was set aside during the trip to ensure students remained informed of the upcoming itinerary as well as the connections between the sites to be visited and the academic material.

The result of this curriculum went beyond the understanding of the Second World War, Nazism and modern European politics. Student papers and class discussions demonstrated the students' application of an expanded, more complex, international perspective to questions of international law, domestic politics, the US treatment of refugees and other current human rights challenges.

Exposure to other international students. Faculty and students were housed in a University-owned "chateau" that included both living and teaching space. Students from other institutions were permitted to take classes and live in the center as well. This meant that there were several students in each of our classes who were also international students (some from the United States, some from Mexico) but were not from our home campus. The facility also housed a language school that

had almost 100 German students taking a variety of language classes, which greatly facilitated students "getting to know the locals."

Shared cultural experience. The living arrangements facilitated student interaction with other international students experiencing the same challenges and delights of studying abroad, as well as with domestic students. So not only were students in a position to discuss the course materials, the sites visited, and daily life experiences with other American and international students, but also with local German students. This provided the students opportunities for sharing and reflecting on their cultural experiences with their contemporaries from a variety of international perspectives. Whether it be a discussion of the ongoing sense of responsibility for the Holocaust felt by the grandchildren of Nazi soldiers or the more mundane challenges of getting a haircut in a foreign country with limited language skills, the cultural exchanges that occurred between the students in this context were some of the most enriching aspects of the course.

The Caribbean

The next case study involves travel to the Caribbean country of St. Kitts and Nevis for participation in a Model Organization of American States (MOAS) simulation exercise. The MOAS, a program developed and organized by the Organization of American States (OAS), is a simulation exercise where, through role-playing, the students represent the diplomats and political officials of the member states of the OAS and follow parliamentary proceedings to debate and approve resolutions dealing with current issues. The purpose of this study abroad experience was to introduce students to the structure, functions, procedures, and issues associated with contemporary international organizations. This was done through preparation for and participation in an OAS simulation where students were cast as high-level OAS negotiators to engage in dialogue and diplomacy with other students from OAS member countries, to problem-solve on a regional level.

The curriculum. The coursework was designed around participation in the MOAS. During the first half of the course (which occurred prior to travel), students learned about the politics, history, and culture of the country they were selected to represent as well as how hemispheric issues could be addressed through multilateral engagement. The students also studied the structure and function of the Organization of American States and learned to use parliamentary procedure.

A significant part of the preparatory work involved students researching and preparing policy statements, position statements, and resolutions on the issues to be addressed during the simulation, as well as making presentations and practicing parliamentary procedure from the perspective of the state/country they represented.

The MOAS occurred in St. Kitts and Nevis; therefore, the pre-departure curricular emphasis was also focused on the colonial and post-colonial history, politics, economics, and culture of the island state. This helped prepare students for their travel and the stark differences they would encounter upon entering one of the smallest countries in the hemisphere, in which they would not only be outsiders but also a racial minority.

The travel and simulation occurred at about two-thirds of the way through the semester. This timing facilitated participation in the simulation, as well as reflection and analysis activities upon returning to the United States. The simulation served as an opportunity to work in a political and diplomatic environment where students demonstrated the knowledge base developed and practice strategies related to diplomacy and negotiation in search of common solutions. The activities of the simulation exposed students to cultural diversity through their interactions with other participants from across the hemisphere. Moreover, since the students were representing the country to which they had been assigned, they had to have a depth of understanding of their country sufficient to present the position of their assigned country on the issues, not their own.

The curriculum introduced international academic content related to the political, economic, and social dynamic of the assigned county, hemispheric issues and the country's position on those issues, the

structure, functions, procedures, and issues associated with international organizations (particularly the OAS), and foreign relations in the region and internationally. Additionally, the impact of global policies on economic, social, political, and security issues faced by the region, as well as the role of international organizations in solving problems related to politics, economic development, corruption, inequality, and civil society, were introduced.

The curriculum furthermore provided a vehicle for close and intensive exposure to other international students, and it afforded students the opportunity to share intercultural experiences with faculty, classmates, other international students, representatives of the OAS who oversee the simulation (and who come from several different countries), and government officials and citizens of St. Kitts and Nevis. The MOAS orientation and opening ceremonies had presentations by the St. Kitts and Nevis Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Assistant Secretary General of the OAS, as well as an appearance and formal welcome by the Governor General of St. Kitts and Nevis. The student participants also had a day-long workshop with content experts on the MOAS agenda topics to gain a thorough view of the complexity surrounding the issues and to be able to formulate resolutions to address them.

Exposure to other international students. Other than logistical issues of the simulation, the MOAS was a student-run event, and as such, students were responsible for the coordination of all aspects of the simulation from committee hearings to negotiations and debate to voting. After the orientation and opening ceremony, the working groups, committees, and General Assembly meetings began. Participants selected presiding delegates who were then responsible for directing the work on the policy issues on the agenda.

The second and third days of the MOAS consisted of committee, working groups, and General Assembly meetings, in which the preparatory work on issues, proposals, and the use of parliamentary procedure was put into practice. Students were required to present the positions of the country they were representing on the issues being discussed. Students became negotiators, engaging in dialogue and diplomacy with

other students, introducing their proposals, building coalitions to support proposals, and negotiating for changes in others' proposals to promote the interests of the country represented.

Simulation performance for each participant was judged, graded, and evaluated by student peers, OAS judges, and the faculty. Success or failure of proposals, the ability to negotiate, build alliances, and successfully advocate for a country's interests in the development of proposals, and campaigning and voting for the next MOAS's officers offered immediate evaluations for students. Formal judging of individual and team performance by OAS judges and all faculty from participating schools from around the region provided insights into how well students developed cross-cultural cooperation and negotiation skills. So, while there was competition among the delegations, ultimately the simulation facilitated dialogue with students, faculty, OAS staff, and content experts from across the hemisphere (who came to the simulation specifically to provide insight and help identify potential problems and recommend solutions).

Shared cultural experience. Beyond the formal MOAS meetings and assemblies, there were social events and breaks incorporated in each day's activities and designed to encourage attendees to meet colleagues from universities across the hemisphere and to build coalitions for legislation in committee sessions.

The welcome reception, held after the first day's activities, was held at the Government House in St. Kitts and Nevis, sponsored by the Governor General. This provided a vehicle for the students to get to know each other, and it highlighted the diplomatic importance given to the simulation by governmental leaders across the region. The next day, committee work, negotiations, and general interactions among the participants showed marked improvement as they had begun to get to know each other.

The breaks during the day served as barometers of the value of participating in the MOAS. Socializing is an important part of politics and diplomacy, helping to build coalitions in committee sessions as relationships develop. Therefore, the amount of inter-group socializing

during breaks in the formal working sessions served as a rough indicator of rapport. At the beginning of the MOAS, the participants largely migrated toward their friends/classmates during the breaks with few students mingling with anyone outside of their own university. As the simulation progressed, students broke out of their university cliques and interacted more and more with students from other universities. Simple proximity to other students, who are normally separated by international borders and hundreds, if not thousands, of miles, facilitates relationship building, leading to greater understanding and trust. The improved rapport was reflected in more productive negotiations, ultimately leading to compromise and greater consensus on issues, the primary objective of diplomacy.

Students worked with other university students from across the region, which made them consider issues from different perspectives and required them to gauge and develop the necessary trust to work on the agenda. This often, but not always, resulted in the ratification of proposals that addressed common issues of concern. Ultimately, the MOAS promoted an intercultural conscience, as it generated a deeper understanding of the problems and perspectives of others. Without the study abroad component of this course, none of this would have been possible.

India

The final case study involves a four-week trip to India, including two weeks of service-learning, which was proceeded by a semester-long preparation course directly tied to travel and supported by required courses in history and political science. This course-based study abroad opportunity included students from the University of the Incarnate Word (United States) and the University of Monterrey (Mexico) who traveled together and shared in an international experience designed to build intercultural tolerance and understanding. In the semester prior to travel, students took a History of Modern India course or an Asian Politics Course, and all were required to take a course entitled, "The Indian Experience." In India, the students were also enrolled in a "Human Devel

opment in India" course, which included an experiential component in India, where the students worked in an Indian village on the outskirts of Delhi helping at the local school.

The curriculum. The students from both countries had a full semester of preparation before traveling to India. During this time, they examined the history, politics, economy, society, and culture of India, in addition to receiving some basic training in teaching English. The students were given an opportunity to become familiar with the trip itinerary through readings, discussions, and class presentations on specific locations to be visited. The curriculum and itinerary were designed to lead students through a varied socio-cultural experience, from visiting metropolitan cities like Mumbai and Delhi, historical and cultural monuments such as the Taj Mahal, to the villages of rural India and the slums of Dharavi. Readings assigned, such as Katherine Boo's (2012) *Behind the beautiful forevers,* or R.K. Narayan's (2006) *Malgudi days*, not only provided information on the history and politics of the country but also provided insight into daily life in India and gave the students an idea of what to expect as they traveled. The class meetings and course materials provided a thorough pre-departure orientation for students so that they would have a framework through which to interpret their on-ground experiences.

Exposure to other international students. Both groups of students were exposed to the same course material. Prior to traveling, the students had the opportunity to interact several times through Skype discussions of the common reading materials. Once on-ground in India, the two groups were fully integrated so that they could share the cultural experiences together. This included everything from doing all activities as a single group to sharing hotel rooms. This was done so that students would learn about each other, their universities, and their home cultures while sharing the Indian experience.

Shared intercultural experience. The service learning project in India was developed to enable students from the two universities to

share in an experience in which they saw beyond the typical sites and locations of tourists and participated in the daily life of the country's inhabitants. The students were taken to a village outside of Delhi where they were assigned to work at the village school helping teach English.

The village activities brought the students into the heart of rural India. This afforded them the opportunity to see and meet people they would not have otherwise if just touring the country. The students worked together to develop the material taught and problem solve, with the faculty providing guidance. For example, one of the lessons requested by the elementary school administrators involved basic hygiene and the importance of washing hands. Given the limited English spoken by many of the children, the students decided to demonstrate how to thoroughly wash their hands, taking time to highlight cleaning under fingernails and scrubbing with soap for 60+ seconds. Once in the school, it became apparent that the demonstration was going to be challenged by the fact that there was no soap and no running water. The students devised a way to act out the right way to wash hands on the first day. After that, they brought their own soap and brought in water from outside in buckets to use for the demonstration and continued use each day of the program. These unexpected developments forced the students to be creative and collaborate to complete the tasks assigned, while also driving home the hardships experienced by those living in rural areas in India.

Not only did the students work together to plan classroom activities designed to improve the school children's English, but the service-learning activity gave the students an opportunity to understand the real India, by experiencing the social, economic, and cultural life of the people. Not having soap and running water is a reality in these villages, as is poverty and hunger. The college students soon realized this, as many of the school children often came to school without washing and without any breakfast. When the students recognized this, they worked to arrange for our group to serve a mid-morning snack, and in doing so, soon saw attendance in the classes increase. The students began to see and understand that the needs of these children went far beyond English lessons. Additionally, after working in the school for only a short time, our students bonded with the school children. The children invited us

into their homes and brought the students small gifts, such as flowers picked on the way to the school. This created an intercultural experience that would not occur in an ordinary tourist visit.

Student writings, discussions, and reflections demonstrated that working in the village school was a profound experience. The service-learning aspect of the course created an understanding of global social justice and a level of intercultural tolerance that only comes from close, meaningful, and extensive interactions.

Conclusion

In each of these cases, the understanding and appreciation for other cultures went far beyond what might have been accomplished without the travel and service/simulation experience. These international experiences brought greater meaning to the course material. The coursework provided in each case prepared students theoretically, while the exposure to other international students and shared cultural experiences facilitated the development of a practical understanding of the country visited and a personal appreciation for its people and culture. Perhaps most importantly, in each case, students connected with members of the community, serving as a catalyst for the development of a sense of global responsibility based on intercultural respect and appreciation.

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7

Importance of mentoring for Latina college students pursuing STEM degrees at HSIs

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Abstract

This qualitative case study explored the role of mentoring in the persistence of 10 Latina undergraduate students in STEM disciplines at two distinct Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs). The study found that in male-dominated disciplines, Latina students' gender and ethnicity highly influenced their experiences. They showed evident preferences for mentorship from females, especially Latina faculty. When professors serve as informal mentors, they usually transfer both academic and professional knowledge. Latina college STEM students highly value the advice and recommendations provided by informal mentors, either in college or off campus. The roles of informal mentor off campus are occupied by family, relatives, colleagues, friends, or other females with similar academic backgrounds. Finally, the lack of female STEM faculty, especially in computer science and engineering, may be reflected in the very low interest among participants in pursuing graduate studies, and, consequently, possible careers in academia.

Importance of mentoring for Latina college students pursuing STEM degrees at HSIs

In the United States, Latin@s represent the largest and youngest demographic of all ethnic groups in contemporary America (Excelencia in Education, 2015; U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). However, Latin@s' enrollment, retention, and degree attainment rates at institutions of higher education continue to lag behind the rates of their white and Asian counterparts (National Research Council, 2011). Their lack of persistence in college is even more chronic in math-related fields, such as science and engineering (S&E). For example, in 2012, Latin@s earned 19,720 of the 58,000 bachelor's degrees in S&E granted by Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) (National Science Foundation [NSF], 2016b). In particular, the participation of Latinas is scant in various STEM disciplines at the undergraduate level. For example, in 2014, 1,890,941 students from all ethnicities and fields obtained a postsecondary diploma; only 41,132 Latinas attained bachelor's degrees in STEM disciplines (NSF, 2017b). The underrepresentation of Latinas in STEM has persisted over time, especially in fields such as engineering, computer science, and physics (NSF, 2017a).

Latina college students who do decide to pursue baccalaureate S&E degrees make use of different strategies to persist. Among the strategies is developing a strong sense of belonging (Garcia & Hurtado, n.d; Gonzalez & Myers, 2016), usually through being involved in campus organizations, building positive relationships with professors, and participating in activities such as mentoring and tutoring sessions. In particular, Latinas regularly experience mentorship through formal programs implemented institutionally at HSIs (Carpi, Ronan, Falconer, Boyd, & Lents, 2013). In such programs, for instance, junior and senior students are hired to work as tutors; hence, they can support mainly freshman and sophomores. In turn, Banda (2012) and Vaca (2016) found that Latinas often seek informal mentoring through the guidance of more experienced students in race/ethnicity-specific organizations in which the student population is homogeneous. In these organizations, they feel social and academic support, which helps them expand their networking as well. Even though mentorship seems to be an important factor in Latinas' persistence in college, the current literature is limited in addressing it, especially at HSIs. Thus, this study highlights: (1) the

importance of mentorship through the college pathway and (2) how fostering relationships with professors through informal mentoring may help in facing challenges and acquiring heuristic knowledge.

Purpose

The aim of this study is to gain insight about the role, if any, that mentoring plays in the persistence of Latinas who pursue STEM college degrees at HSIs.

The overarching research question addresses:

- What roles, if any, does informal mentoring play in the persistence of Latina undergraduate college students in STEM-related disciplines at HSIs?

A secondary research question addresses:

- What are the perceptions of Latina undergraduate college students concerning mentors' gender at HSIs, especially in STEM-related disciplines?

The following sections of the paper include: the theory framing the study, the method used to collect and analyze data, the findings and discussion section, and finally, the research implications.

Theoretical framework

The theory framing this study is J. B. Miller's relational-cultural theory (RCT) developed in the 1970s (Jordan & Hartling, 2008). One of the main goals of RCT lies in seeking human development through connection to achieve high-quality relationships (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007). Two aspects differentiate RCT from other relational theories (Draft, 2001; Duck, 1994; McNamee & Gergen, 1999); on one hand, it identifies relational attitudes as strengths (i.e., the ability to feel vulnerable or empathetic). That is, how one can react to other people's feelings and behaviors. On the other hand, it takes into consideration individuals' genders and cultural contexts. Since previous human development theories were created by and for masculine mindsets (Kegan, 1994; Levinson, 1978), RCT incorporates the aspects of power and social identity because all relationships are defined and shaped in a social context (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007). In effect, RCT takes into account the context across individuals' life spans and their different roles adopted as

they relate to race, culture, and society (Comstock et al., 2008). Fletcher and Ragins (2007) highlight key aspects of RCT aligned to the importance of relational mentoring:

1. *Interdependent self-in-relation* addresses the importance to achieve a positive and mutually enriching relationship where both individuals grow and fully develop their capacities "to operate effectively in a context of interdependence" (p. 380); improving one's own identity in relation to others.

2. *Criteria defining growth-fostering interactions* provides a criterion to determine whether interactions are generating effective development and learning, which essentially examines whether relationships are producing high-quality outcomes. The following elements compose such criteria:

   ▪ *The conditions to accomplish dual growth-fostering interactions.* Such interconnection should be based on minimum boundaries and efficient communication. It should trigger in mentor and protégé a sense of mutual authenticity, and consequently, empathy to finally empower each other.

   ▪ *Relational skills required to practice high-quality affiliations.* In a high-quality mentor-protégé relationship, people expect to grow and learn mutually via a two-directional model. For this to happen, individuals participating in such connection need to develop a set of skills including authenticity, expertise-learner role, empathic abilities, emotional competences, vulnerability, holistic thinking, and responsibility. An effective relationship can even show how sometimes the protégé provides knowledge to the mentor; thus, the mentor develops new resources, knowledge, or abilities (Comstock et al., 2008; Fletcher & Ragins, 2007).

   ▪ *Positive outcomes when performing exemplary dual connections.* The whole idea is that both mentor and protégé, to some extent, benefit from the relationship and mentorship experience. Individuals must experience these five aspects: strengthened enthusiasm, empowered action, enlarged sense of worth, generation of new knowledge, and yearning for continuous interaction. A lack of one of the aforementioned

elements means that an effective mentoring relationship has not been accomplished.

In addition, RCT especially focuses on women and their roles in a culture that values individualism, autonomy, and competition over collectivism, connection, and mutual empowerment (Jordan, Hartling, & Walker, 2004). In particular, women care about both their own needs and the needs of others. Furthermore, women pay special attention to the impacts they generate in others in terms of their actions and feelings, acknowledging simultaneously what happens with themselves, others, and their relationships. However, Miller (1986) noticed that women fail to develop a better connection to themselves, sometimes neglecting their own feelings and needs because they pay particular attention to others' reactions and emotions. Women of color, such as Latinas, often suffer from disconnection, even among women, in which racial differences result in disconnected relationships, especially if one considers the historically social-constructed patriarchal system which highly values power and control (Jordan, Hartling, & Walker, 2004). In addition, Latinas as a minority who might experience oppression because of race, class, or gender can find it difficult to achieve a true connection when having a mentor from a dominant group (Ruiz, 2005).

In particular, the stratification of society based on race is one of the reasons for people's inability to achieve meaningful relationships. However, RCT underlines that "healing and reconnection are active possibilities only when we make ourselves available to the experience of challenge and the complexities of conflict, as well as the opportunities for resilience and expanded empathy that multicultural connectedness can bring" (Jordan, Hartling, & Walker, 2004, p. 101). In other words, it is possible to develop a real and sincere connection even in multicultural contexts where additional skills may be needed to successfully connect with others.

Most Latina college students are born and raised in the U.S, and consequently, are immersed in mainstream American culture. At the same time, they possess a strong family, cultural, and language connection; a set of characteristics found oftentimes within the Latino community. In this sense, Ruiz (2005) noticed cultural aspects highly valued by

Latin@s as it relates to collectivism, sympathy, *personalismo* (personalism), respect, and *familismo* (family-oriented). All five aspects consistently represent what Latin@s value the most and should be considered when mentoring.

Method

This case study was developed with a qualitative approach, which contributed to a better comprehension of individuals' perceptions in a setting where a social phenomenon takes place (Merriam, 1998, 2009). In particular, this study benefited from enriching human interactions between the researcher and participants, providing rich data for the qualitative inquiry (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2010). In this study, 10 Latina undergraduate college students were purposefully selected (Merriam, 1998) and interviewed according to the following selection criteria: (a) self-identify as Latina, (b) enrolled in her senior year at an undergraduate level, (c) pursuing a STEM major, and (d) attended an HSI. Participants and the two specific HSIs, labeled MUQ University and UTL University, are identified with pseudonyms to protect confidentiality. At both HSIs, Latinas were underrepresented in seven STEM majors: chemistry, computer science, electrical engineering, geology, mathematics, mechanical engineering, and physics (MUQ University 2017; UTL University 2017). The seven majors were part of the criteria to participate in the study. To recruit participants, multiple resources were applied, including the use of flyers posted on campus announcement boards, the help of academic advisors and program coordinators to send recruitment emails to students, and the utilization of snowball sampling in which first participants recommend other students to be part of the study. IRB approval was granted before data collection ensued.

Data collection

It is important to collect data through diverse sources (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As such, the triangulation of data consisted of interviews, observations, document analysis, and the use of a reflective journal. Interviewing, according to Erlandson et al. (1993), should include the dialogical and interactive component

of a naturalistic approach commonly associated with current events and circumstances, past experiences, and even future plans (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The study included 10 open-ended individual interviews. In addition to an open-ended interview, each participant completed a demographic sheet that included but was not limited to parents' higher academic achievement, enrollment in advanced courses in high school, and academic training to pursue STEM degrees. Moreover, observations complemented the collection of data, which helped in "better under-standing the research setting, its participants, and their behavior" (Gle-sne, 2011, p. 66). As such, university facilities, including classrooms, halls, and libraries, were used to conduct observations. Finally, the use of a reflective journal helped in acquiring a sense of immersion and involvement within the context and understanding the inquiry process, perceptions, concerns, and even the logistics of the study. Documenta-tion of observations, thoughts, ideas, plans, changes, and questions composed the entries of the journal.

Data analysis

Erlandson et al. (1993) described the analysis of data in qualitative inquiry as a progressive task, continuous, and dynamic progress. Such analysis entails to consolidate, reduce, and interpret in a meaningful manner not only what the participant said, but also what the researcher saw and read (Merriam, 1998). The interview data were transcribed verbatim to be unitized. Namely, units can be composed of different lengths, from a group of words to a whole segment (Erlandson, 1993). With the use of Dedoose, the identification of units followed the process of codification. This codification follows patterns which help "create a framework of relational categories" (Glesne, 2011, p. 195), assisting the researcher in presenting the information in an organized manner. The use of constant comparative techniques, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), helps codify pieces of information and generate themes. By using Dedoose, units were identified and sorted multiple times until finding patterns, sometimes placing a unit under more than one theme.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in naturalistic inquiry addresses rigor in regard to questions of confidence in the findings, applicability in other settings, consistency to repeat the study, and researcher's findings impartiality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In particular, this study made use of the following techniques to assure trustworthiness. First, *credibility* through member checks, that is, participants received their interview transcripts to be reviewed; observations conducted at the universities' facilities; and triangulation of data which helped collect information from different sources. Second, *transferability* using demographic sheets, to collect additional information of participants and purposefully sample, to have a homogenous group of participants according to selection criteria. And third, *dependability* and *confirmability* employing a reflexive journal, a self-reflection instrument that documented all phases of the project.

Findings

The following themes emerged from data analysis: (1) Mentoring experiences as college students and (2) Professors' gender matters in informal mentorship.

Mentoring experiences as college students

The analysis of data concluded that Latinas tend to seek and have informal mentors both in and outside of college. These mentors help not only in solving academic issues, but also providing professional advice. In particular, the possible lack of prior experiences with college-related topics, and consequently, the profession, helps Latinas appreciate the advice that faculty and others with professional experience can give them for their careers. Two categories frame this theme: (1) Experiencing informal mentoring with faculty and (2) Finding informal mentors off campus.

Experiencing informal mentoring with faculty. Most participants revealed to have at least one informal faculty mentor on campus, someone with whom they talk often, ask for advice, and get recommendations regarding research, internships, and the labor market. Sina expressed:

"He's awesome. He is the type of professor who makes you rationalize for professional purposes...and he says...money is not everything; if you're not happy with what you are doing, that is something you need to consider" (INT#8, UTL, p.10). In turn, Brianna claimed: "I went to one of my professor's office hours, and I asked for some interview tips... they're my professors, but they're also my mentors...I ask them for like assistance on the outside world as well as in the classroom" (INT#9, MUQ, p. 6). In addition, Chrissy declared, "Outside of the advisors, there is a couple of other professors that I have the kind of relationship with those as well…they would talk to me about different stuff at the school, what they think I should do as well" (INT#5, UTL, p. 9). Also, Arianne commented, "One of them, (professor) he is always trying to push me and asking me questions like, 'Hey, if you need a recommendation letter, I'll give it to; If you have a question, for real, come and ask'" (INT#10, UTL, p. 5).

The aforementioned quotes suggest that the quality interactions participants have with faculty often transcend academics in the classroom. This special bond experienced by participants seems to be highly appreciated in the sense that they feel supported, guided, and motivated by their professors. In particular, participants feel that achieving a positive connection with professors is of help for their personal, academic, and professional development. The aforementioned contributes to Latinas' persistence and graduation rates.

Finding an informal mentor off campus. Participants who were not able to connect with a mentor in college usually found a relative, colleague, or friend who became their mentor. In this sense, Celina and Emily respectively revealed to have relatives as mentors. Celina expressed:

> I have an uncle who is an engineer, and I got asking for advice and things like, but he is really busy, so it's just whenever we get a chance that I send him a message…he's always like oh well in school I was doing this or that or I look here and try to apply here and things like that. So, it is my uncle like informally.
> (INT#2, MUQ, p. 7)

For Celina, having someone who is her uncle but also an engineer made them develop a special bond. Despite the reality that Celina's uncle has limited time to discuss college-related topics, she perceives him as someone who can understand what she is learning and experiencing in college. Such conversations are of utmost importance for her academic and professional progress. In addition, Emily also commented on the key role that a relative has had for her in college. She added:

> She is my aunt. She never went to college until recently because I was always talking to her about, you know, what I am doing here, asking her advice on financial stuff and things like that, not really academic wise…she would tell me stuff that she found online when she would do research. (INT#3, MUQ, p. 7)

Emily's aunt assumed a mentor role as she provided her with college and life tips. Emily appreciates her guidance and hopes to retribute her help.

Other participants such as Sina and Ariana declared a closer family member as their informal mentor, someone who they admire for what they have accomplished. On one hand, Sina added, "It is my dad…it gives us a connection that enables me to ask him for help on my homework, I can go ask my dad because he knows what I am working on, he's a journeyman electrician" (INT#8, UTL, p. 18). On the other hand, Arianna commented, " my brother…he has two degrees, and he's doing pretty good, he's getting a lot of money, he's doing what he wants…I admire him for everything like in the education, his character, and all that. He is the best" (INT#10, UTL, p. 6). According to these two participants, they developed a special connection with their family members, not only because of the family ties, but also due to the admiration they feel for their mentors' accomplishments. Thus, they will work hard to follow their mentors' examples. Consequently, they feel motivated to do their best in college and beyond.

On a different perspective, two other participants chose older colleagues to be their mentors. Crissy said, "I have a friend; he is a couple of years older than me. He helps me a lot because he does programming too, so he helps me a lot, so I would consider him like a mentor type person" (INT#5, UTL, p. 7). Karina added, "My mentor…he is

an alumni from here, actually, and so he was also electrical engineer…
he just guide me through and I asked him or giving me scenarios for
career" (INT# 7, UTL, p. 7). In this case, participants sought someone
with experience in their field, a friend, a colleague to whom they look
up to. And, more importantly, they will try to repeat their mentors' paths
because, for them, these mentors are successful people. Coincidentally,
both mentors are males and older than the participants. One could argue
that mentors have jobs related to participants' majors; thus, these
individuals provide valuable advice and help to participants.

Professors' gender matters in informal mentorship
Participants realized the lack of Latina faculty in their S&E programs.
A few participants mentioned that this limitation is not critical, and
they could find and connect with male faculty mentors as well. Other
participants, however, emphasized that it would be beneficial to have
more women, and specifically, Latinas as STEM faculty. Mostly because
Latina professors as informal mentors could better understand Latina
students. Latina faculty would provide advice in aspects such as aca-
demic and professional struggles, prior life experiences, and profession-
al-related challenges. As such, the following category, *Preference for
female mentors*, will help understand Latinas' perception in this regard.

   Preference for female mentors. At least half of participants agreed
with the idea that having more female professors, especially Latina fac-
ulty in S&E, would help better understand their struggles and difficul-
ties. In this sense, Isela recognized that she had developed a strong bond
with some of her professors in college. Isela argued, "Mentors, I don't
have any mentor, but informally… I feel more comfortable with my
female superiors than my male superiors. I don't have any close rela-
tionships with my male professors" (INT#6, MUQ, p. 6). Arianna said,
"A girl professor that probably will be easier to talk more about like
personal stuff, like I didn't go to class because of this personal issue, she
will understand more and yeah there will be less boundaries" (INT#10,
UTL, p. 6). In turn, Sina added, "I feel like it could have been a more
positive impact if we did have female professors, but I mean finding

electrical engineers alone that are females is difficult enough" (INT#8, UTL, p. 11). The aforementioned quotes prove that participants feel that women professors could foster a more welcoming and friendly environment in S&E programs. According to some participants' perceptions, with women faculty would be more comfortable and easier to talk to; ultimately, generating a more positive climate for them.

Due to the fact that participants do not have women faculty in their STEM program, they often seek female informal mentors in other places. For instance, some participants continue to visit with female professors they met as freshmen. In other cases, they look for other females with experience in their field in student organizations and at professional meetings, to name only a couple.

Discussion

In addressing the importance of informal mentoring for Latinas who pursue STEM college degrees, this paper aims to find out how mentoring influences their persistence in STEM disciplines at HSIs. In this regard, the study revealed that Latina college students seek to have a mentor in college to expand on/their capital. Despite the informal approach of these relationships, most often participants and mentors connect because of their academic affinities, common research interests, and feelings of personal rapport. On the one hand, participants show deep admiration and respect for the individuals they chose as mentors: Family, relatives, colleagues, friends, females, to mention a few. On the other hand, mentors exhibit care and support for students; thus, they can succeed as scholars and professionals. In this sense, the relational cultural theory (RCT) emphasizes the critical aspect of individuals' human development in mentoring relationships (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007). In such connections, both protégé and mentor should learn from each other and develop fully their abilities to achieve high-quality relationships, which seem to be experienced by participants. Having the opportunity to choose a mentor based on academic, research, professional, and even personal commonalities are of utmost importance. It provides participants great occasion to find someone who is authentic, has developed empathy, and empowers others.

In addition, a secondary research question examined Latina college students' perceptions gender in mentoring at the college level. Given that women in S&E faculty positions are highly underrepresented (NSF, 2016a), participants addressed this issue and commented on how the lack of female faculty in their programs constrains the opportunity to have S&E female professors as mentors. RCT particularly focuses on women's interactions with others. More specifically, women's approaches to lead through collectivism, connection, and mutual empowerment (Jordan, Hartling, & Walker, 2004) are crucial. Participants revealed possible benefits of having more S&E female faculty with whom they can develop strong bonds. Such a deep connection with other women, as professionals in their field, could help participants in sharing personal values, common ethnicity and language, and a better understanding of women in academia. For the most part, participants do not see themselves becoming college professors, as they plan a career mostly in the private sector. This pattern is likely to be related to the low numbers of S&E female faculty functioning as role models in college.

Implications

Several scholars (Gloria & Castellano, 2012; Peralta, Caspary, & Boothe, 2013; Taningco, 2008) have conducted studies that show the importance that mentorship in college has for Latin@s students. Findings in this study further support the importance that mentoring has for Latina undergraduate college students when pursuing STEM degrees as it relates to performing better academically and asking for advice related to the profession. Most participants voiced their opinion in having Latina faculty in their academic programs as advantageous and beneficial; therefore, institutional policies should seek to hire more female and Latina professors into the S&E programs. In addition, faculty mentors, especially those who are male and white, should have options for their professional development, especially to acknowledge Latinas' cultural value, history of oppression as minorities, and approaches to better serve this student population.

Further studies addressing the influence that formal and informal mentoring has on Latina college students, especially in S&E programs,

should analyze a variety of topics. One of these inquiries could explore professors' abilities to build high-quality relationships with students. Another study could examine resources applied, if any, in sustaining student-professor mentor relationships long-term. Overall, Latina college students who pursue STEM degrees often seek people whom they can trust and get advice from. As formal and informal mentors, professors, family members, colleagues, and friends become an important piece in shaping Latinas' STEM success in college. Through mentors, Latinas trace their aspirations to become one of them. Such experiences highlight Latinas' intercultural narratives whose personal and academic performance is highly influenced by their Latin@ culture in spaces where whiteness and manliness remain dominant.

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Transcending national and cultural boundaries: An autoethnographic reflection on my life as a Nepalese female

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Abstract

This autoethnographic narrative showcases the socio-cultural encounters of the first author while working as a researcher-practitioner in Nepal, India and the United States of America. These experiences shifted her positionality from a needs-based approach to a human-rights approach, that also included an examination of sensitivity towards culture, gender relations, and socio-political conflict dynamics along with other ethical consideration. Further, these experiences created learning opportunities as well as challenges in re/defining her personal and collective identity and worldview as a researcher.

Transcending national and cultural boundaries: An autoethnographic reflection on my life as a Nepalese female

A researcher takes her/his point of departure based on specific ontological and epistemological assumptions, which are influenced by her/his positionality in relation to the research participants and to social situatedness (Brannen, 2005). The positionality of a researcher impacts her/his presentation of the self, identity formation, and/or social categorization (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), and it may have implications on her/his research paradigms, interests, processes, and outcomes. Positionality theory posits that "a researcher makes meaning of the social world from various aspects of their identity," that are ascribed to them on the basis of their sex, caste, gender, ethnicity, class, religion, and socioeconomic status (Kezar, 2002, p. 96). The identity of an individual, including that of a researcher, is socially constructed, and therefore it is fluid, dynamic, malleable, adaptable, multiple, competing, and negotiable within different contexts (Taylor, 2015).

Conducting research as a student researcher, and/or development researcher and practitioner with regard to perspectives on transcending national and cultural boundaries, is both an opportunity and a challenging endeavor in the context of rapidly changing national and international research landscapes. On one hand, it is an opportunity for a researcher because it allows her/him to understand an issue as an outsider to the context and be objective, natural, and free from bias (Greene, 2014). On the other hand, it may be a daunting task as it requires a researcher to demonstrate unending patience and creativity as well as cultural, gender, and conflict sensitivity. It necessitates the acquisition of rigorous training to conduct research in diverse cultural, historical, linguistic, social, religious, and political settings (Liamputtong, 2008; Papadopoulos & Lees, 2002).

Developed and developing countries, classified on the basis of their economic threshold such as gross domestic product (GDP), gross national product (GNP), per capita income, industrialization, and the standard of living (Myint & Krueger, 2016), offer unique vantage points for emerging and contemporary researchers to understand the opportunities and challenges of conducting research in diverse settings. Not many researchers have documented their experiences conducting research in global south as well as global north countries. The juxtaposition of

these varied contexts impact their research exposure and outlook. In this chapter, I (the first author) use an autoethnographic approach that combines retelling of 'epiphanies' through personal engaging stories with the ethnographic goal of comprehending the social world (Chang, 2008). I self-inquire into my research experiences in three countries: India, Nepal, and the United States (U.S.) as a student researcher and/or development researcher and practitioner. These countries not only differ in terms of economic classification; they are also geographically, culturally, and intellectually distinct.

As a means to follow the guidance of Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson & Spiers (2002), I, as a doctoral student, purposefully engaged use of a co-author, who is an established qualitative researcher, to provide constructive scholarly feedback throughout the development of the manuscript. With regard to building rigor in qualitative research, Morse, et al., (2002) suggests that "rather than relegating rigor to…post-hoc reflection on the finished work…verification and rigor will be evident in the quality of the text" (p. 19). Morse, et al., note further that "we need to refocus our agenda for ensuring rigor and place responsibility with the investigator rather than external judges of the completed product" (p.19). Thus, throughout the development of the manuscript, the co-author provided scholarly guidance with regard to qualitative methodology in general, as well as specifically autoethographic and rural education expertise. Furthermore, together, our iterative communications around the logic and sequence of my life events in the manuscript as well as codifying parallel themes to support coherence in the manuscript, afforded the emergence of an even more engaging and worthy story (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011).

The parallels realized between myself as an autoethnographer and my co-author with regard to our research interests and passions as well as life trajectories (from underrepresented and marginalized to "privileged") were realized over the course of our developing relationship and interactions. The epiphany of shared parallels led to development of this manuscript as she implored, that I must indeed tell my story. Thus, my co-author provided significant insight throughout the varied aspects of this work, whether it was related to the insight and attraction to the

challenges of rural populations such as those I have chronicled here in Nepal and across the world, or through the realization of becoming: becoming researchers, becoming 'privileged' (through our educations), and, becoming heard as females.

Chronicling life trajectory

My research interest on the Nepalese community is motivated by my rootedness in Nepalese heritage. This autoethnographic narrative delves into my life trajectory and cultural encounters in different geographical contexts by providing insights into my social and cultural backgrounds, which have implications on my social outlook as a researcher. It encapsulates some of my identifiable moments of lived experience that were crucial in changing/maturing my understanding of self and my relationships to the social world (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In particular, I reflect on how the change in my geographical location caused change in my individual and collective identity, and how I negotiated my identity in order to establish myself as a student researcher, and/or development researcher and practitioner. I discuss some of the cultural traditions, de facto practices of Nepalese society, which were unique but contradicted international human rights norms and challenged my human rights lens. My reflection chronicles the cultural, gender, and conflict sensitivity skills that I developed as a researcher, and how and where I utilized these skills with the research participants. Also, my account encapsulates how I transitioned from a basic-needs approach to a human-rights approach.

A basic-needs approach focuses on meeting people's basic needs, such as food, water, shelter, and security. This approach is not grounded in international human rights norms; instead, it fulfills needs through charity and development aid by prioritizing the needs of people, allowing duty-bearing stakeholders' greater leeway in accountability, without empowering the target population (Jonsson, 2003). A human-rights based approach focuses on the universality of the rights of people by empowering them at the individual, household, community, national, and international levels to claim their rights. It is guided by international human rights norms that entrust accountability and obligations on the

part of duty-bearing stakeholders to fulfill these rights, and regard soliciting of charity and benevolence as lack of accountability and dependency syndrome (Jonsson, 2003).

This reflection is the result of my cumulative research and professional experience over a period of more than 10 years working with vulnerable and disenfranchised communities in Nepal and India. Also, I have augmented my reflection by documenting my research and cultural experience as a graduate student in the United States. My self-inquiry takes an autoethnographic research approach, which "refers to ethnographic research, writing, story, and method that connect the personal to the cultural, social, and political" (Given, 2008, p. 48). Utilizing this approach helped me to discover my researcher self by acknowledging and articulating my voice as a socioculturally-situated researcher (Johnston & Strong, 2008). This study also presents my personal and collective identity, my relationships with others in the social milieu, and my perception of Nepalese culture, including the cultural paradox in relation to my research orientation.

I write this autoethnographic account with "epistemological humility" (Barone, 2008, p. 38) by using data from my "life stories as situated in sociocultural contexts in order to gain an understanding of society through the unique lens of self" (Chang, Ngunjiri, & Hernandez, 2013, p. 18). Academic endeavors as a graduate student researcher in India, Nepal, and the United States, as well as professional jobs in nonprofit organizations in Nepal and universities in the United States, have offered me space to reflect on my researcher self. With the changes in geography have come some changes in my social and cultural lives; yet, the social orientations that I received as a child and a teenager have left indelible marks on my self-construction and my social and cultural orientations today. All of this is reflected in some way or other in my understanding of the self and the social world.

In this autoethnographic reflection, though I may seem to be at the center giving utmost attention to my experience and knowledge, I have tried not to negate the influence of many individuals and community members with whom I have interacted and who have shaped my understanding of self and the social world. This narrative is hollow without

inclusion of stories of my encounters with them. This autoethnographic narrative may not be free from limitations, and may be, to some extent, self-indulgent, introspective, and individualized, containing overemphasized personal characteristics while ignoring circumstantial factors in judging the behavior of others as indicated by Atkinson (1997) and Sparkes (2000). Moreover, this account may be emotionally charged and biased by romanticizing "the other" (Said, 1978) or producing a narrative that negates the heterogeneity within cultures (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011).

Worldview as a researcher: Childhood and adolescent influences

Childhood and enculturation

Autobiographical writing "displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 739). I begin by sharing my identity formation and positionality as a student researcher and/or development researcher and practitioner by recounting my early life and enculturation process, which have left an enduring mark on my researcher self. I am a Nepalese woman who spent a substantial part of my childhood and teenage life (1974–1998) in India, as my parents migrated to India from Nepal in the early 1950s. The Nepalese-speaking people constitute one of the largest migrant-communities in India. There are around five million Nepalese in India (Subba, 2008). My parents left Nepal in search of jobs and better livelihoods to support their family. They migrated to Meghalaya with no education; my mother was illiterate, and my father was a self-trained literate individual. I am the youngest child (kanchi) of seven siblings; I have two older brothers and four older sisters.

I was raised in the small tribal state of Meghalaya, located in the hilly northeastern part of India, a 516-mile flight from Nepal (See Figure I: Location of Meghalaya and Nepal on the Indian subcontinent). Meghalaya is predominantly inhabited by the Khasis, the Janitias, and the Garo tribes, and Khasis constitute the largest native group (Singha & Nayak, 2015). Khasis are said to be the "largest surviving matrilineal culture[s]" in the world (Laird, 1995, p.1). Nepalese constitute an important aspect

Figure 1
Location of Meghalaya and Nepal on the Indian subcontinent

| Meghalaya | India | Nepal |

of political, social, and economic life in Meghalaya. Around 200,000 Nepalese people reside in the state of Meghalaya (Subba, 2008). The Nepalese of Meghalaya were/are not homogenous in terms of caste, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status. The majority of these Nepalese immigrants were followers of Hinduism, and they migrated to Meghalaya with their cultural baggage of caste, gender, and ethnic orientations. The caste system, which is a rigid social structure that stratifies a Hindu

individual based on socially-ascribed class, including derogatorily labeling some caste groups as Dalit, or untouchables, was salient among Nepalese in Meghalaya and determined almost every aspect of religious and social lives. In particular, the institution of marriage was strictly governed by caste; inter-caste marriages were forbidden, and couples in inter-caste marriages were ostracized. Despite intragroup differences among Nepalese on the basis of caste, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, they shared cultural commonalities, and the great majority were loyal to their Nepalese ethnic identity. The Nepalese community more or less was bound together by their roots. In contrast, the intergroup differences between Khasis and Nepalese were prominent and overt. Nepalese, through the process of social categorization, strongly identified their community members as "in" groups and Khasis as "out" groups; developing a feeling of "them" versus "us" that fueled a negative attitude toward the "out" group (Tajfel, 1982).

Social categorization and stereotyping. First-generation Nepalese migrants in Meghalaya faced considerable insecurity about their identity in post-colonial India due to the government's exclusionary policies and nativist thinking (Nath, 2006). This identity crisis was compounded by economic challenges, lack of education, and political access. Nepalese immigrants were mostly engaged in non-skilled and non-academic work. A large number were working as mercenaries, protecting Indian sovereignty and integrity, and many others were engaged in menial jobs such as watchmen (chowkidars), porters (dai), agriculture and livestock farmers, and plantation, mine, and construction workers. Like most Nepalese, my father also started to work as dai (porter) first, but in the course of time, due to his hard work, he was able to establish a retail business.

Because of the asymmetrical economic power relations at play, there was overt stereotyping of Nepalese as chowkidar (watchman), dai (porter), and kanchi (housemaid – although in Nepalese language, kanchi meant the youngest girl child, it was/is connoted as housemaid in many parts of India). These stereotypes contributed to disempowerment of the Nepalese community, preventing them from fully participating in

socioeconomic, cultural, and political activities. These stereotypes have left an enduring effect on my self-esteem, security, and independence as an individual and as a researcher. I had limited knowledge and lacked the courage to question the validity of these negative stereotypes in my childhood and teenage years; but since then, I have worked to develop a positive and empowering self-image.

In the absence of adequate external and institutional support to deconstruct negative stereotypes against Nepalese immigrants, my parents believed that education was the only shield to protect us. They made all efforts to impart a good formal education to me and my siblings in public schools, the only option due to their limited access to private school education due to financial constraints. Despite Nepalese society being highly patriarchal in ways that perpetuate discrimination against women in education, health, and economic access, my parents challenged gender prejudice in education, which values the education of sons more than daughters, by providing equal education opportunity to their seven children (all five daughters earned master's degrees and both sons earned bachelor's degrees). My parents were able to break down some of the Nepalese society's misguided perceptions of daughters that existed in those days, for example, that daughters are liabilities and the property of others, and a daughter's education correlates to reduced marital opportunities (Stash & Hannum, 2001). The equal education access provided by our parents contributed not only to the empowerment of their two sons personally, socially, culturally, and economically, but also empowered their daughters similarly.

Intergroup relationship between Nepalese and Khasis in Meghalaya. The relationship between Khasis and the non-tribal Nepalese derogatorily labeled as Dkhar (meaning "foreigners" in Khasi) was never harmonious since the creation of the Meghalaya state of India in 1972. The tribal people never accepted the Nepalese as insiders and practiced exclusion in social and political arenas. The lack of trust between the two communities resulted in ethnic conflicts; the Nepalese became the target of Khasis nativist violence in 1987 and 1992, which resulted in killings, torturing, and the setting on fire of Nepalese villages

and schools, as well as the systematic deportation of Nepalese by the state government with police support (Haokip, 2014; Nath, 2006).

I witnessed these conflicts as a teenager, which was traumatic and distressing. These conflicts further deteriorated the relationships between Nepalese and Khasis. Guided by ethnocentric orientations, both groups adopted separation orientations in which they valued their own culture and showed indifferent attitudes towards the other (Berry, 1997). There was minimal cultural contact between the two groups. As a result, the process of acculturation for the Nepalese was very slow. In fact, the Nepalese community demonstrated more affinity to their culture and started creating ethnic enclaves; they became organized to preserve and affirm their identity.

As a graduate student researcher in Meghalaya. Though the social relationships between Khasis and Nepalese were never harmonious and were marred with distrust, as a graduate student researcher in Meghalaya, I had diverse exposure to different cultures, which widened my outlook. I became more aware of socially-constructed differences between patriarchal and matriarchal societies by observing the Khasi society, which follows a matrilineal tradition, where property and family lineage is transferred from mother to daughter rather than father to son, in contradiction to Nepalese society that deprives daughters' equal rights to parental property via patrilineage.

My focus and interest as a student researcher was on a small Nepalese migrant community that was struggling to meet their basic needs. As my orientation was grounded in a subjective interpretative paradigm to understand the participants' social reality, I believed, as stated by Bhattacharjee (2012), that there was no social order, as multiple realities existed in the society in which I grew up, and people held different perspectives on various political, economic, and social issues. I had a perception that I was an insider to the Nepalese community, and I tended to construct Nepalese as a homogenous community, ignoring differences on the basis of caste, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status. My worldview was guided by a basic-needs approach. When I reflect back on my researcher self in Meghalaya, I see in retrospect that my Nepalese

identity influenced my research choices and processes. Moreover, the ethnic loyalty that was pervasive among the Nepalese people influenced my outlook as a researcher. I had limited exposure, knowledge, and opportunity to escape my comfort zone to conduct cross-cultural research to understand the Khasi community, in particular the underlying causes of protracted conflict between Khasis and Nepalese.

Worldview as a professional: From marginalized to privileged

I went back to Nepal in 1998 as an adult and a professional to understand my parents' roots. I started working for nonprofit organizations dedicated to the causes of marginalized groups, including women, Dalit, indigenous people, people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI), human rights defenders, those who worked for the promotion of LGBTI human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity rights, and victims of armed conflict. I was engaged as a development researcher and practitioner. Moreover, I conducted mainstream research on women human rights defenders as part of fulfillment of my post-graduate diploma in women's studies.

The change in geography caused a shift in my identity and positionality, which impacted my worldview. My identity shifted to a privileged group due to my ascribed caste identity as a Brahmin woman in Nepal. The Brahmins belong to the highest rung in Hindu caste hierarchy and are historically considered as the privileged caste responsible for marginalization of other caste groups and indigenous people in Nepal. Though the caste and ethnic discrimination and exclusion were prevalent in Nepalese society for centuries, and resentments simmered in the minds of people, the rise of ethnic awareness and the politicization of identity and ideological mobilization became prominent after the 1980s (Paudel, 2016). The then Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-Maoist) capitalized on these resentments by including ethnic, caste, and regional inclusion in their revolutionary agenda during the decade-long "Maoist People's War" (1996–2006) waged against the government of Nepal (Lawati & Hangen, 2013). Identity chasms among different social groups further widened during the war and continue to be a dominant

ideological force in its aftermath, affecting the social, political and developmental landscapes of Nepal.

I worked in several nonprofit organizations in Nepal from 1998 to 2012. Through my professional engagement with Nepalese communities, I gained intimate knowledge of identity issues with which they were grappling, which changed my perspective about my identity in Nepalese society as a student researcher and/or development researcher and practitioner. I share a vignette here in which my identity was questioned.

In the aftermath of the armed conflict in Nepal, I was working in a national nonprofit organization that had a goal to promote the rights of indigenous women. I was coordinating/leading an indigenous women's political empowerment project. As part of the project's activities, my organization conducted national consultations with political and civil society stakeholders to lobby for the political rights of indigenous women in the ongoing peacebuilding process, which was mandated to write the new constitution of Nepal. It was a high-level national consultation, with the then-prime minister of Nepal being the chief guest of the function. Many high-ranking politicians and civil service representatives attended the program and addressed the gathering. As project coordinator, I was the master of ceremonies. One of the renowned indigenous civil society representatives said in his speech that he was surprised to see a Brahmin woman leading a project aimed at the empowerment of indigenous women. His inherent meaning was that the project coordinator should not be a Brahmin woman.

This incident made me think about my identity as a development researcher and practitioner in Nepalese society, because my caste identity was questioned as a point of contention with regard to my work on behalf of the rights of indigenous women. I realized that my Brahmin caste identity, which is ascribed to me by virtue of caste membership ingrained in the Nepalese society, interfered with my gender identity and my self-homogenized Nepalese identity. I always thought that I was a part of Nepalese women, who were struggling to establish various gender equality and equity rights in the new constitution of Nepal. I realized that my gender identity as a Nepalese woman was not sufficient to estab-

lish myself as an insider to issues related to women from the indigenous communities and women from caste backgrounds other than mine.

While in Nepal, my encounters with the people of the community and members of the civil society, both at the national and local levels, was a learning ground for me, which helped in my maturation process as a student researcher and/or development researcher and practitioner. Working for the rights of marginalized groups was an insightful experience in my life. I was deeply impressed by incisive action and initiative from civil society organizations, which were dedicated to promoting the rights of excluded communities. I witnessed many determined and coordinated efforts to make the voices of these communities heard. I became more aware and knowledgeable of issues impacting Nepalese society, including social exclusion, gender inequality and inequity, social injustice, gender injustice, human rights and women rights violations, and violations of the rights of indigenous people, Dalit, and LGBTI.

While I was in India, I had known about the transgender community known as Hijras (in Hindi) or Chhakka (in Nepalese), who were looked down upon by society. I had limited knowledge of LGBTI and their human rights. In 2009, while working as a security and protection trainer in a nonprofit organization dedicated to the promotion of rights of human rights defenders in Nepal, I attended a four-week training titled, 'LGBT and Human Rights' in Sweden. My knowledge of concepts such as sexuality, sexual orientation and gender identity, sexual health, gender, and human rights, was further enhanced. After attending the training in Sweden, I organized several trainings for Nepalese LGBTI defenders to build their capacity on their security and protection, which were crucial to protect them from violence, and to create awareness about their human rights and sexual orientation and gender identity rights ensured in various international human rights laws.

From 2007–2009, I was actively engaged in LGBTI rights advocacy and capacity development in security and protection. The interventions and advocacy efforts by various organizations in Nepal have heralded positive changes in policies during the last decade, which have made Nepal a beacon of LGBTI rights in Asia and globally. The new constitution, promulgated in 2015, recognizes LGBTI rights as fundamental

rights in terms of equality, social justice, identity, and participation in state mechanisms (Knight, 2017).

In Nepal, my research interests lay in understanding multiple issues impacting Nepalese society in its social, economic, and political development. Working at both the national and community levels, most of my work was situated in communities. I developed a deep respect for people who had been successful in organizing themselves for self-empowerment. I focused my research on social issues impacting the Nepalese society guided by the right-based and human rights orientations, emphasizing participation and inclusion, non-discrimination and equality, and accountability and obligations to the state. I tried to analyze inequalities that existed in Nepalese society, which interfered with various development efforts. I focused my research on generating knowledge for immediate consumption, such as public advocacy for the rights of marginalized people. My gender identity also impacted my role as a researcher on various occasions. I became guided by the "women rights are human rights" approach, which argues that discourse on the issue of human rights should include a discussion of women's rights. (Salaam, 1979).

Worldview as researcher

Research priorities and gaps in India
India has become now an important locus of science and innovation, but when I was a graduate student researcher there, priorities focused on meeting people's basic needs, not the generation of high-quality scientific research. A very small portion of the national funding was allocated for research and development (R&D). Consequentially, even less funding was granted to academic and R&D institutions (Abhyankar, 2014). Research was mainly the domain of men, particularly within science fields. Also, institutions for overseeing ethical issues, such as research ethic committees (REC) and transparency in research, were not well-developed. When I conducted my master's research, there was no institutional review board in my university that provided oversight for the ethical conduct of research. Lack of awareness of research ethics and

institutional review committees was common for many universities and research institutions in India (Thatte & Marathe, 2017).

Research priorities and gaps in Nepal

Nepal lags behind other countries in research, as investment in research is not yet a government priority. The government invests only 0.3 percent of its GDP in research; data on gender equality is skewed with men (92%) and women (8%) (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization Institute for Statistics, n. d.). Mechanisms for ethical research and transparency are not well developed. As a researcher in Nepal, I was not under the purview of a REC, as universities and research institutions lacked effective REC as a norm for the research approval process. I was more inclined to qualitative than quantitative research since I believe that social phenomenon, which is highly complex, could be better understood using a subjectivist rather than reductionist approach (Diesing, 1991).

Considering culture, gender, and conflict

While working in Nepal, I understood the importance of cultural and gender sensitivity, as well as conflict sensitivity, in research with women, and other vulnerable groups. All of these considerations are crucial for conducting cross-cultural research transcending cultural and national boundaries. Cultural sensitivity research accounts for the culture of the participants and researcher in the research conceptualization, implementation, and dissemination. Cultural competence can be achieved by developing both in-depth as well as accurate understanding about different cultural groups with whom the researcher engages. This includes embracing the cultural and historical context of participants that is crucial to culturally-sensitive research. An equally important element of culturally-sensitive research is culturally-appropriate communication and a willingness to learn on the part of a researcher (Eide & Allen 2005).

From 2006–2009, I worked with victims of armed conflict in the Bardia district of Nepal. Most of these people hailed from the Tharu community (an indigenous group residing mostly in the southern plains)

who had joined the Maoist revolutionary war against the Nepalese government. As combatants in large numbers, many became war victims. I tried to conduct the research with cultural humility, by developing an in-depth understanding and knowledge of the Tharu culture, including familial relationships, gender relationships, religious traditions, and historical and political backgrounds. Moreover, I tried my best to balance the power asymmetries between the victims and me, due to my different positionality as an outsider. While working with women, I used appropriate and do-no-harm strategies, including use of appropriate body language to mitigate conflict; ensuring privacy of women to answer questions without fear of reprisal, and understanding community dynamics and gender norms (UNFPA, n.d.).

I present a vignette where I faced a dilemma on how to reconcile my personal views with societal norms on a gender issue while working in an international nonprofit organization from 2007–2010 that had a mandate to build capacity of women human rights defenders (WHRDs) in security and protection. Our main task was to provide security and protection trainings to WHRDs to reduce their risk from violence. For the training, we used a manual developed by a Brussels-based international organization. As a researcher, when my colleagues and I were trying to contextualize the training manual for Nepalese WHRD, we encountered a cultural dilemma. In the chapter on how to protect WHRDs from sexual aggression, one strategy to prevent the harmful consequences of rape if the victim fails to stop the aggression suggested, "if possible, try and mention the condom" (Protection International, 2009, p. 106). It was hard for us to decide whether to include that section of the chapter in our manual because in Nepalese culture, women carrying condoms or talking about condoms is a taboo that might be falsely considered "consent" for sex by potential perpetrators. Though my individual outlook on gender, reproductive rights of women, and sexuality issues were open, my collective outlook interfered on the question of condoms. We decided not to include that section in an effort to make the manual more culturally sensitive and relevant.

As a researcher interested in the issues of women, I adopted a gender-sensitive approach in dealing with participants by striving to take

into account the differences between men and women in all aspects of research. This approach helped me in understanding gender hierarchies that were prevalent in different cultures in Nepal. Moreover, this lens helped me in understanding and acknowledging the similarities and the differences between the experiences and viewpoints of both men and women. This approach better addressed my efforts at equally acknowledging both perspectives. I believe that the validity of research is questionable if women's voices are excluded.

I share anecdotes of some of the strategies that I adopted while working with women in Nepal that are noteworthy and important for researchers seeking to incorporate perspectives of women in developing countries. For example, one strategy included single gender, women-only focus group discussions (FGDs), as Nepalese women are more comfortable raising their concerns in the absence of men. We met various victim groups in many parts of Nepal but noticed that women were hesitant to speak up in front of men; some of whom were family members. Another strategy included meeting women in their own communities because we anticipated they would be more comfortable in that environment and would not require travel, which placed value on the economic time commitment of these women, as most were sustenance farmers.

I share a vignette on how the strategy of conducting women-only FGDs was helpful in bringing to awareness the needs of women for our development agenda. While working with victims of armed conflict in Nepal during the peacebuilding process, I was a part of a research team that conducted security and protection needs assessments of victims of armed conflict. The needs assessments were supported by an organization working for these victims. In some of the women-only FGDs, women were very open in talking about their needs. They prioritized their needs by saying that although security and protection was important to them, they were more concerned for their livelihood and the education of their children. The war caused single-woman households to struggle to meet the livelihood needs of their families. The question of livelihood and other social security issues raised by female victims caused me to contemplate the importance of participatory research when

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working with vulnerable groups, and the legitimacy of a top-down approach to developing interventions for these females in Nepal. I realized that including the voice of target beneficiaries in the conceptualization of any development interventions was crucial in designing efforts for supporting and empowering these women.

Another important ethical issue that I seriously considered while working with victims of armed conflict in the peacebuilding process was the adoption of a conflict-sensitive approach, or the principle of "do no harm" or "non-violent communication." A conflict-sensitive approach entails careful analysis, design and monitoring of the possible positive or negative impacts that any research may have on existing tensions/conflicts in a given context (Swedish International Development Agency, 2017). Knowledge of the use of a conflict-sensitive approach to research is another crucial factor to be considered when conducting ethical research in countries transitioning to peace after violent conflict. Researchers who are individually and collectively accountable ensure protection of dignity, or privacy, of participants without harming them.

Worldview coming of age: My research experience in the United States

I moved to the United States in 2012 to pursue higher education. As a graduate student and student worker, my identity changed to a female international student from Nepal, a developing country. In the United States, my positionality shifted from a privileged caste in Nepal to a demographically and linguistically marginalized community. I have been trying to acculturate into the United States, both academically and culturally. It has been relatively easier for me to assimilate into the United States academic culture, but learning social skills has been challenging. Though there have been some visible changes in my social and cultural ways of life, I have maintained my language and culture to reaffirm my Nepalese heritage. In the United States, my Nepalese identity is intact, and I have not explored much the ways in which others perceive my identity.

As a graduate student for last five years, I have learned much about issues impacting society in the United States, and particularly vulner-

able groups such as those of low income or racial, ethnic, and linguistic minorities. But I continue to be drawn to the Nepalese community for my research, as it is who I am, both culturally and linguistically. Though there are some differences between me and my Nepalese research participants due to my education background, gender, and socioeconomic status, these differences are not irreconcilable. Therefore, I will continue to perceive myself as insider to Nepalese community and this positionality (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009), affords me access to and insight of gender, socioeconomic, and cultural dynamics of Nepalese communities in the United States.

In my opinion, the observed cultural differences between the United States society, which is mostly guided by an individualist orientation that values privacy and independence, and Nepalese society, which values collectivism and interdependence, may have implications on my future research interests.

My graduate studies at United States universities have helped to further strengthen my knowledge and skills as a researcher, and I have gained a wider worldview. From late 2012 through early 2019, I embraced opportunities to interact with many diverse people, both from academic and non-academic fields. Sharing a learning platform with diverse students from across the world has helped me to understand the research process as well as how research is viewed and has progressed in different countries. Additionally, interactions and learning opportunities with diverse faculty in various United States universities have further broadened my horizons, and I believe have enhanced the quality of my research efforts. My exposure to interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary research in cross-cultural research contexts has been invaluable.

I have developed respect for United States universities, for their ability to invest huge resources in research and to publish voluminous scientific research by promoting quality and innovation. In particular, the representation of women in science is encouraging, with women comprising 43 percent of the United States workforce for engineers and scientists (National Science Foundation, 2017). My experience is that

universities in the United States have set high standards in the ethical conduct of research and research transparency.

Hindsight is 20/20

Lived experiences in India, Nepal, and the U.S. have helped me to establish myself as a graduate student researcher and practitioner researcher. I have come to notice the visible differences in the arena of research in both economically developed and developing countries.

I have noted that the United States, as an economically-developed country, assigns high value to quality research; the U.S. invests major resources in innovative research and is a global leader in research publication. Developing countries prioritize fulfilling basic needs of people over innovative and rigorous research for global consumption; they invest far fewer resources than developed countries. My second observation is that the institutional research ethics committees are still not well-developed in many developing countries, including in Nepal and India, which may have implications for the protection of human participants and/or biophysical resources. My final observation is that the gender disparities between men and women conducting research are more evident in developing countries than developed countries. These differences have directly and indirectly influenced my research outlook and worldviews. Understanding of such differences may help researchers to contribute to bridging the gap in research between developed and developing countries.

Throughout this manuscript I have referred to several "turning points" in my perspective and positionality as a researcher. Whether it was my experience in essentially being "called out" with regard to the ambiguity and perceptions of others regarding being a Brahmin woman leading a project aimed at the empowerment of indigenous women; or in realizing, or engaging in, some intensive personal reflection when I encountered my own values conflicting with cultural norms around contraception and rape, specific turning points such as these shifted my positionality and/or made me starkly aware of changes in how I perceived my work as a researcher. Moreover, the shift in positionality from needs-based to human-rights based approach orientations have transformed

my worldviews. I am inherently guided to employ the concept of right, giving utmost value to ethics and inclusiveness in research, and to put the agendas of marginalized and excluded communities at the frontline of my research endeavors.

If I decide to go back to Nepal after finishing my degree, I am sure I will be a more confident and responsible researcher in terms of research methodologies, design, and ethical issues, with the knowledge and skills that I have developed as a doctoral student researcher in the United States. I will also advocate to promote research ethics and transparency in undergraduate and graduate education, as well as in other development research. Although I am aware that it is hard to conduct neutral or apolitical research because of the influence of the researcher's cultural values, beliefs, and social background (Halse & Honey, 2005; Lather, 1991), I will try my best to make my research "knowledge-guided" rather than "emotions-guided" by isolating my personal experiences from those of research participants (Kanuha, 2000).

Hindsight in a researcher's narrative has the potential to represent knowledge "from the bottom up," Canagarajah (1996, p. 327). This reflection has engaged me in capturing my researcher self in three different countries/societies. My past and present social circumstances and social identity have shaped my positionality as a researcher. My identity changes and life experiences have impacted the ways I understand social phenomena and build relationships with my research participants. These identity changes have helped me in constructing and reconstructing my positionality as a researcher in different contexts. According to a popular adage, What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us. Yet, as I look behind me, I am humbled. And, as I look ahead, I am in awe.

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<div style="text-align: right; font-size: 3em;">9</div>

Teachers without borders: Science in Costa Rica

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Faye Bruun
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Abstract

A duty of in-service teachers is to prepare K–12 students in STEM education. However, due to the nature of science education in post-secondary settings, in-service teachers are ill-equipped to teach science in the K–12 classroom. The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of classroom teachers who participated in a science-focused study abroad during their time as pre-service teachers and how they use their study abroad experiences in science curriculum and instruction. Participants were two in-service science teachers who enrolled in a two-week study abroad course. This study employs an experiential learning theoretical framework, resulting in the conceptualization of a new lesson after the study abroad experience. A cross case study design was used to answer research questions. Data collection included participant-created concept maps of science experiences during study abroad, in-depth interviews detailing study abroad and classroom instruction, and participant reflective journal entries. Four themes were constructed via data analysis: (1) Experiencing science in Costa Rica, (2) Studying abroad in Costa Rica, (3) Transferability of science experiences, and (4) The multicultural classroom. Implications for study abroad decision-makers are included. Recommendations for future research are also described.

Today's community relies heavily on science. Individuals must be science-savvy decision makers. As a result, there is a call for science education reform (Liu, 2009). Students in the United States perform poorly in science compared to other countries, including China, Singapore, Japan, and Finland (Froese-Germain & Canadian Teachers, 2013). Scripted lessons and standardized tests dictate the direction of teaching in the classroom. Students benefit from engaging lessons that encourage critical thinking (Songer, Kelcey, & Gotwals, 2009). Teachers must have a deep understanding of science to facilitate student learning in science.

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of classroom teachers who participated in a science-focused study abroad during their time as a pre-service teacher and how they are using their study abroad experiences in science curriculum and instruction. This study is guided by two research questions: 1) What are the study abroad experiences that have influenced classroom teachers; and, 2) How do classroom teachers incorporate study abroad experiences into science curriculum planning and instruction in the classroom?

Literature review

To become an effective science teacher, a teacher education student must complete science content courses and instructional classroom methods courses. Science content knowledge is required for in-service teachers' instructional practices in the science classroom (Luft, Dubois, Nixon, & Campbell, 2015). New in-service teachers enter the field with limited science content knowledge required for classroom instruction (Luft, Nixon, Dubois, & Campbell, 2014). Without opportunities to develop science content knowledge, new in-service teachers may struggle to instruct their students, and moreover negatively affect their science learning. Science-focused study abroad courses may afford pre-service teachers the opportunity to develop science content knowledge.

Study abroad also qualifies as a pre-service teacher field experience (Jefferies & Nguyen, 2014). For pre-service science teachers, study abroad opportunities in science education allow students to explore areas of ecological importance while participating in constructivist learning—learning by doing (Norris, 2016). By participating in science-

focused study abroad opportunities, pre-service science teachers contribute to their own experiential learning and are able to prepare to teach science in their own classrooms.

Higher education instruction is beneficial to pre-service teachers when the instruction is constructivist in nature; however, instruction in higher education lacks constructivist methods of instruction (Thompson, Windschitl, & Braaten, 2013). It is generally accepted that instruction in higher education is both lecture-based and instructor-centered. Learning by doing is the essence of constructivist teaching practices. When applied in the higher education classrooms, pre-service teachers may be more likely also to employ constructivist teaching methods in their own classrooms (DeVillar & Jiang, 2012). The nature of the science-focused study abroad in this study employed a hands-on approach to instruction as science lessons were carried out in the field and the laboratory.

During field experiences, pre-service teachers observe science content knowledge delivered through instructional activities, producing authentic learning. Field experiences should ensure learning for both the adults and the children in the classroom (Harrington & Enochs, 2009) and those that are inquiry-based in nature provide constructivist teaching methods for pre-service teachers – learning by doing (Bhattacharyya, Volk, & Lumpe, 2009). Additionally, when groups of pre-service teachers visit the same site for field experiences, a professional development partnership occurs (Saxman, Gupta, & Steinberg, 2010). Another type of field experience includes Family Science Nights. Family Science Nights provide pre-service teachers the opportunity to interact with students and parents, another important facet of pre-service teacher professional development (McCollough & Ramirez, 2012; McDonald, 1997). Observations, tutoring, teaching assistantships, and other teaching opportunities also serve as field experience opportunities (Capraro, Capraro, & Helfeldt, 2010). Pre-service teachers have the chance to engage in real-world classrooms that provide authentic science experiences thereby supporting their own classroom efforts.

When pre-service teachers have the chance to create curriculum and implement instruction in the same way as in-service teachers, they are able to advance their science learning (Hanuscin & Musikul, 2007).

According to Hanuscin's and Musikal's (2007) research, field experiences that occur during the summer may also benefit pre-service teachers. Summer field experiences meet the same requirements of field experiences in fall and spring, yet do not succumb to the scripted lessons and high-stakes testing schedules that dominate during the traditional school year. Summer field experiences warrant further exploration. For instance, during the study abroad course in this study, pre-service teachers were exposed to science content, lab and practices, and writing for reflection with the intention of planning for classroom science curriculum and instruction.

Still, some field experiences do not occur in the traditional classroom. Science museums and nature centers also offer a site for pre-service teacher field experiences (Worsham, Friedrichsen, Soucie, Barnett, & Akiba, 2014). Science-related clubs and hobbies, community education programs, and exhibits also qualify as pre-service science teacher field experiences (Liu, 2009). During the summer or on the weekend, visits to beaches and national parks are considered sites of science education, as well as zoos and aquariums (Worsham et al., 2014).

One group of learners in the science classroom requiring additional support includes individuals who are English Learners (ELs). English Learners (ELs) have diverse science backgrounds, knowledge, and skills to bring into the classroom. A student's current science knowledge plays an important role in acquiring new science learning (Bautista, 2011). A major bonus of study abroad of teacher education students includes exposure to world cultures—especially cultures who have speakers of foreign languages, thereby encouraging cultural competency (Blair, 2011). Cultural competency, a positive, professional characteristic that aims to recognize differences among individuals of different backgrounds, is not an attribute limited to individuals in public education. In addition, cultural competency results from a shift in worldview afforded by studying abroad (Graham & Crawford, 2012). Experiences achieved by studying abroad affect an individual's transformative thinking by providing the shift in worldview needed to encourage a pre-service teacher's cultural competency (Colville-Hall, Adamowicz-Hariasz, Sidorova, & Engelking, 2011; Fine & McNamara, 2011; Marx, 2008).

Study abroad is one method to encourage pre-service teacher professional development. Blair (2011) asserts study abroad is another path to authentic learning for pre-service teachers as in-class theory meets real world experience through course objectives. In-service teachers must have science content knowledge and a grasp of best practices to be effective classroom teachers. These best practices for classroom instruction must include strategies for a special sub-population of students. For example, one important sub-population of such students include diverse learners that require additional supports for classroom successes (DeVillar & Jiang, 2012).

Methods

Qualitative research methods of inquiry are useful for exploring experiences through data analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Concept maps, interview transcripts, and reflective journal entries supplied the data for analysis that would later give structure to the meaning pre-service teachers made from their study abroad experiences.

This research was guided by two questions: 1) What are the study abroad experiences that have influenced classroom teachers; and, 2) How do classroom teachers incorporate study abroad experiences into science curriculum planning and instruction in the classroom?

Participants in this study included in-service teachers who participated in the course *Environmental Science and Multicultural Experience for K–8 Teachers*. It was a stacked course, meaning the course was offered to undergraduate and graduate students who were concurrently enrolled. Twelve undergraduate and graduate students completed the study abroad course. The course was offered through the Department of Curriculum, Instruction, and Learning Sciences at a university in the Southwestern United States. The course was offered during a two-week mini-semester occurring between the traditional spring and summer semesters. Two of the 12 students met inclusion criteria for participation and elected to participate in this study. Participation in this study was voluntary, and confidentiality was insured by an IRB protocol.

The study abroad course was housed at a research and education center in Southeastern Costa Rica, located in primary and secondary

growth rainforest. The center's facilities included dormitories, laboratories, classrooms, a computer lab, offices, a video conference room, and a cafeteria. The entire campus was disability-accessible and Wi-Fi enabled. Opportunities for engagement at the center included research, education, and community service/service learning. The center was available for use by universities in and out of the university system to which it belongs. The location of the center was conducive to area cultural and recreational activities. During the study abroad course, students participated in classroom observations at the village elementary school and multicultural debriefing sessions with course faculty at the research center during the first half of the day. During the second half of the day, students participated in pre-lab discussion in the research center classroom before heading into the field to complete authentic, science-focused data collection, framed with a problem-based instructional approach for a variety of science topics. Evenings, after dinner and homework, were spent "in town" exploring and running errands as the research center was located in a small remote rural village. Weekends were spent exploring deeper into Costa Rica via science-focused excursions including, but not limited to, traveling to Jaco Beach, relaxing at a natural hot springs spa, hiking the grounds of Mount Arenal, and rafting along the Penas Blancas.

This study followed a cross case study design, in which each pre-service teacher comprised her own case, with the goal of building a fleshed-out description of the study abroad course, *Environmental Science and Multicultural Experience for K–8 Teachers*. The purpose of case study research, as with other qualitative inquiry, was to develop an in-depth construct of a social learning situation and the meanings made by the participating educators involved in the study (Merriam, 1998). With each teacher as the focus of his or her own case, nuances of each participant's retellings were teased to describe the cases, and then cases were compared to expose similarities between the cases. Through this qualitative, constructivist lens, the data gathered from the participants was scaffolded in a way that allowed for organization and participant meanings (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). Before data collection could

commence, permission from the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) was acquired.

During the two weeks in Costa Rica, the participants spent time in the nearby village grade schools observing teacher and student interactions, and in the neighboring rainforest completing field science activities. After each observation and science activity, students and faculty debriefed at the center's main, and only-air conditioned, classroom. Time outside of classroom observations and field science data collection, were spent touring Costa Rica for academic and cultural purposes. All activities were planned by the faculty and staff for the course, and facilitated by the staff or contractors of the research center where the study abroad course was housed. The researcher attended all classroom observations, field science activities, and cultural excursions. To describe these experiences, the participants of this study constructed concept maps to outline the study abroad course (Greene, Lubin, Slater, & Walden, 2013).

Participants received verbal instructions about how to illustrate their concept maps, along with an example concept map about an arbitrary topic, before they were asked to build their own (Greene et al., 2013; Wheeldon & Faubert, 2009). For the purpose of this study, concept maps listed participant science experiences as a result of the study abroad— the first step in Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 1984). After concept map completion, participant interviews were implemented to fill in the gaps of understanding participant experiences during study abroad and applications of these study abroad experiences in science curriculum and instruction (Gieser, 2015).

Additionally, teachers were able to comment on any gains in self-confidence as a result of the study abroad experience, especially as it related to science content knowledge and classroom instruction. Questions that punctuated the interview were developed by the researcher. They were formed from the timeline of events during the study abroad experience in Costa Rica. These events ran the gamut of classroom observation, field science experiences, college classroom debriefings, or cultural experiences in and around the village where the research center is located. Some questions were added, modified, or even omitted (Glesne, 2011). Participants provided field journals from their study abroad

experiences. Journal entries from field journals enabled participants to enact the second phase of Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory—reflection.

Concept maps were qualitatively explored based on the construction of the concept maps by participants (Kinchin, Hay, & Adams, 2000). Interviews were transcribed and underwent two rounds of coding to identify themes from the data provided by the participants (Saldaña, 2009). Field journals were processed via content analysis to identify codes. Categories were formed by grouping similar codes. Themes were developed which contributed to the essence of the participants' experiences as it manifested from data analysis (Glesne, 2011; Yu, 2008). The data corpus, including interview transcripts, reflective journal entries, and concept map reflections, were processed via content analysis and underwent two cycles of coding. Significant data excerpts from data sources were summarized into short, descriptive phrases to create the codes. Codes were recorded on index cards. Codes were sorted by the basis of their similarities and were manually grouped based on relatedness. This process created categories. Categories containing similarly coded phrases were grouped together to construct themes (Saldaña, 2009).

Experiential learning guided the direction of this study because study abroad provides participants personal and professional development opportunities. Study abroad affords the participant an experience to reflect on and the chance to create new ideas, including, but not limited to, science curriculum and instruction for the grade school classroom. According to Kolb (1984), there are four levels to experiential learning. The first level includes having a concrete experience. In this, the study abroad course provides the experience for students who completed the course. The second level of experiential learning involves reflective observation. Students enrolled in the study abroad course completed reflective journal entries each day abroad. The third level of experiential learning includes abstract conceptualization. After the study abroad course, teachers applied the experiences in their curriculum planning. The last level of experiential learning includes active experimentation in which teachers implement instructional lessons. Kolb's Experiential

Learning is cyclical in nature. After the last level of experiential learning, a learner may use the results of active experimentation to provide a new experience to reflect on and conceptualize a new idea – perhaps a different instructional lesson. (Kolb, 1984).

Study abroad courses have the potential to transform understandings through authentic experiences, and even more so when study abroad course faculty members are familiar with experiential learning as it relates to studying abroad (Roholt & Fisher, 2013).

Findings

Participant concept maps, interview transcripts, reflective journal entries, and the researcher's journal were analyzed resulting in four themes. These themes are: Experiencing Science in Costa Rica, Studying Abroad in Costa Rica, Transferability of Science Experiences, and The Multicultural Classroom (Figure 1).

The first participant in this study, Victoria, was a certified elementary generalist with two years of experience. She worked in a school district that served 39,000 students during a traditional school year. The second participant, Mitchell, was a certified high school science teacher with five years of experience. She worked in a district that served 4,000 students during a non-traditional (year-round) school year. Neither participant had ever studied abroad before; only Mitchell had experience travelling abroad. Victoria enrolled in the study abroad course as an undergraduate student and Mitchell enrolled as a graduate student. The participants of this study had varied science backgrounds and experiences. Victoria reported participating in an elementary science fair and enrolling in geology during college. Besides holding a degree in chemistry, Mitchell had experience collecting science data in the field and was active in outdoor hobbies. Moreover, Mitchell hosted three study abroad students in her classroom—one each from Korea, Belgium, and the Czech Republic.

Figure 1
A visual representation of themes and associated categories
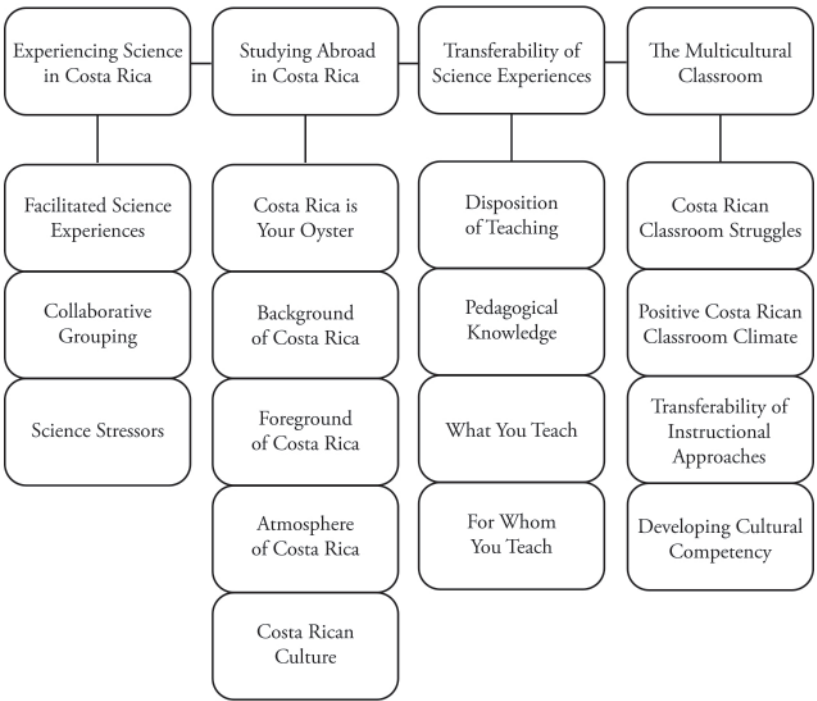
Concept maps

Victoria's concept map contributed to the categories "Facilitated Science Experiences," "Collaborative Grouping," and "Atmosphere of Costa Rica" (Figures 2 and 3). Under "Tour," Victoria listed "tilapia," "fish," "tanks," "ICE plant" (a hydroelectric plant), "dam," "river," and "beach." Recalled from area excursions, Victoria evidenced these experiences as the first stage of experiential learning – concrete experience. From the node, "Group," Victoria listed "leader" and "followers." In her interview, she mentioned, "It was nice to see a different perspective of somebody that actually taught or knew it," – referring to the strengths of the collaborative student groups during the field science activities.

Around "Forest," Victoria fleshed out the characteristics of the surround-
ing rainforest: "animals," "rain," "natural," "cleaner," etc.

Mitchell's concept map contributed to the categories "Developing
Cultural Competency," "Pedagogical Knowledge," and "Foreground of
Costa Rica" (Figure 4). Under "Informal Meeting," Mitchell explained
her experience with the Costa Rican students. She even commented in
her interview, "I will say I definitely have a different perspective about
kids coming from other countries." Also under "Informal Meeting,"
Mitchell wrote about connecting with the other graduate students. She
detailed in her interview that the graduate students discussed integra-
tion of science equipment into science instruction, which also meets
Kolb's fourth stage of experiential learning – active experimentation. By
"Hiking," Mitchell lists the animal encounters in the forest: "poison dart
frog," "lots of snakes," and "huge insects."

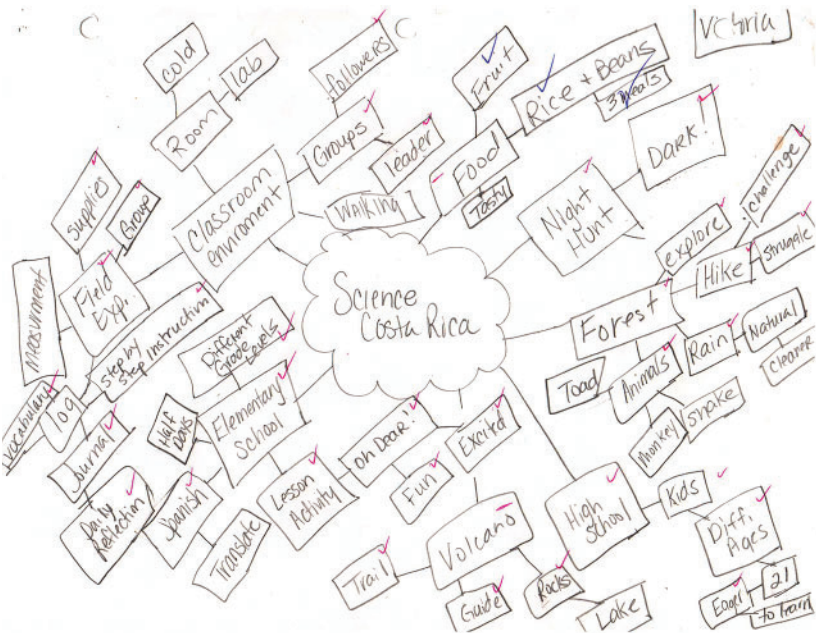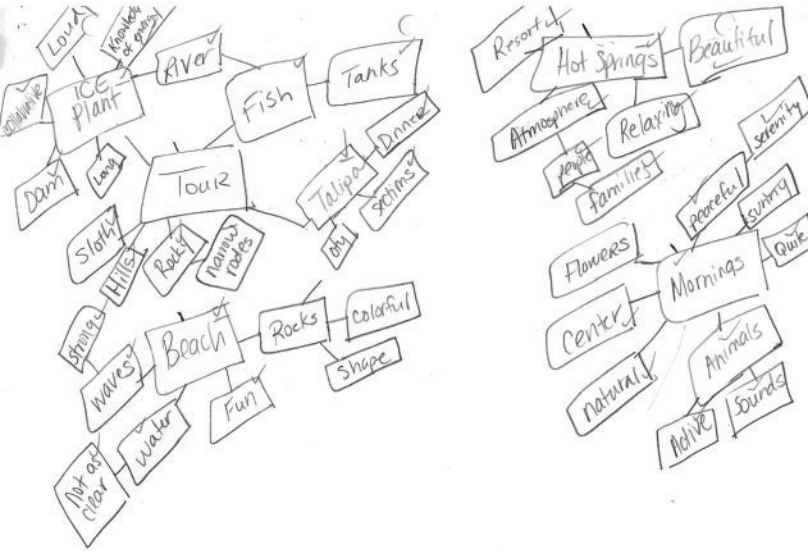**Figure 2**
Victoria's concept map (front)

Figure 3
Victoria's concept map (back)

Interview transcripts

Victoria's interview contributed to the categories: "Disposition of Teaching," "Pedagogical Knowledge," and "Costa Rican Classroom Struggles." Victoria reported struggles with the science content knowledge required to teach her students. She stated, "It's a challenge to make sure that you know a lot of science. That's still a learning process for me." She noted the differences in struggle between her classroom and the Costa Rican classroom. Defeated, she stated, "They didn't have a lot of supplies, and what they did have, it's not brand new."

Mitchell's interview contributed to the categories "Disposition of Teaching," "Facilitated Science Experiences," and "Positive Costa Rican Classroom Climate." Mitchell's attitude toward science was evidenced when she proudly reported, "I've pretty much grown up with science. My mom's a biologist. I've always grown up with science. My dad is an avid hunter – biology has always been a part of me." A natural fit for the field science activities, Mitchell said, "We did the elevation [profile] and

Figure 4
Mitchell's concept map

percent vegetation ground cover. And didn't we look at plants at differ-
ent elevations?" Also regarding the Costa Rican elementary school's
student garden, "They would grow their own food and make it for the
kids. The kids seemed to really enjoy the garden. They were definitely
happy to show what they were growing."

Reflective journal entries

While abroad in Costa Rica, students wrote in their journals nightly
after the day's lessons and activities. Victoria's reflective journal entries
contributed to the categories "Disposition of Teaching" and "Devel-
oping Cultural Competency." Prompted to write about confidence in
teaching science halfway through the trip, Victoria wrote, "I feel more
confident in teaching science. I like that we get hands-on experience.
I know that my students will benefit." Near the beginning of the study

abroad course, Victoria described her cultural competency as limited. By the end of the course, that had changed. "I feel that if you have a better understanding of your students, you can modify your lesson to ability levels and that will get your students interested in science."

As a result of data analysis, Mitchell's reflective journal entries contributed to the categories "Background of Costa Rica" and "Transfer-ability of Instructional Approaches." When asked in a journal prompt to compare and contrast the beaches at home and in Costa Rica, Mitchell explained, "I will use this knowledge to bring back to my students and talk about where sand comes from and how it influences the environ-ment." Integrating this study abroad experience with science curriculum for the classroom demonstrates the third phase of experiential learning, abstract conceptualization. In response to a prompt about supporting students from other cultures in the classroom, Mitchell wrote, "I will also use groups and pair-share to allow my ELs to speak without being put on the spot. I also want my students to feel free to discuss their experience with the class." Studying abroad has afforded Mitchell the opportunity to integrate culturally-responsive instructional methods in her classroom.

Similarities in Victoria's and Mitchell's meaning-making from the study abroad experience across the cases yielded similar contributions to the categories that were formed as a result of cross-case analysis. Both participants stressed an importance on field science activities in the forest around the research center and the science-focused excursions in and around the local village. Each participant noted the importance each individual played in the student group dynamic – some followed as they were new to the field and natural leaders emerged within the group. The women also agreed that there was a certain amount of stress in studying abroad, whether it was completing classroom assignments or acquiring new science vocabulary or instrumentation skills. Even new memories and passions for traveling were established as the participants continue to reflect on their experiences. Most importantly, both participants highly regarded the bonds they made with their peers and the students they worked with in the Costa Rican classroom.

Limitations

The participants in this study were few and from one university. An area of concern is to continue with the same vein of research but with a larger group of participants. The participants in this study were from one instance of study abroad. Another area of concern is to research participants from other instances of travel. This study abroad trip was two weeks in length. It may be advantageous to research another instance abroad in which the stay is longer.

Discussion

A culmination of the data included concept maps, interviews, and reflective journals. Qualitative data analysis yielded four categories: "Experiencing Science in Costa Rica," "Studying Abroad in Costa Rica," "Transferability of Science Experiences," and "The Multicultural Classroom." The two participants in this study were different relative to science experiences and content knowledge, and confidence in and attitudes toward science learning, curriculum, and instruction. Participation in this science-focused study abroad course allowed students/participants the opportunity to answer real-world, problem-based questions, using science instrumentation and data collection. It also afforded the students the constructivist/hands-on/learn-by-doing experiences required to move beyond instructor-centered, lecture-based experiences in other higher education courses. Moreover, because of the built-in daily reflection, students were able to plan how to use their learning in their science classrooms. While Victoria expressed a positive impact on confidence in and attitude toward science, and while Mitchell may have been indifferent, this interaction between two different in-service teachers may be beneficial overall in the same way an effective mentorship is effective to both parties involved.

Furthermore, the participants also developed their cultural competency. During time abroad in Costa Rica, participants completed observations of student-teacher interactions in the Costa Rican classroom. Additionally, participants interacted with students: helping with students with classwork, playing with students in the soccer field, or visiting with students in the breezeway. Both participants reported being affected by

the time spent in the Costa Rican classroom and with the students. Victoria commented on the disrepair of the classroom and how appreciative she was of the resources available to teachers in American classrooms. Mitchell asserted her deeper understanding of the struggles ELs face in the classrooms. Since her time in the study abroad course, Mitchell has implemented culturally-sensitive instructional strategies that facilitate ELs acquisition of new science content (DeVillar & Jiang, 2012; Palmer & Menard-Warwick, 2012).

One of the goals of this study abroad research was to explore how the participants make meaning of other cultures. Similar to the findings of this research, study abroad experiences have been credited with cementing cultural understanding for teachers (Northcote, et al., 2014).

As a result of completing the study abroad course, teachers can expect to participate in authentic science experiences in the lab and field, acquire culturally-sensitive instructional strategies, and explore Costa Rica. For a study abroad experience to positively impact students, they must engage with the students at the Costa Rican schools and participate in the multicultural seminars, field science activities, and excursions that provide an all-inclusive science-focused study abroad experience.

Conclusion

During their time abroad, participants in this study were exposed to Costa Rican classroom observations, multicultural classroom seminars, field science activities, and science-focused excursions. The participants adopted science practices modeled by the faculty. They utilized science field and lab instrumentation and were introduced to problem-based learning as an instructional method for the science classroom. Their hands-on experiences strengthened their confidence in, attitudes toward, and perceptions of science knowledge, skills, and education. Reflection prompted the identification of student engagement in science. Last, participants recognized the struggles of ELs in the classroom and offered insight to their own cultural competence.

Each component of the study abroad experience in Costa Rica played a role in the professional development of the pre-service teachers who studied abroad. Participant classroom practices, guided by the

authentic science field experiences in Costa Rica, foster constructivist learning in K–12 classrooms. Participants of this study have used culturally-sensitive strategies to support science learning in ELs in their classrooms. Participants had a greater appreciation and excitement for science curriculum and instruction, and they were empowered to relay those traits to students as well. Implementing science-focused study abroad courses for students in teacher education provides the opportunity to positively impact professional development of pre-service teachers and, moreover, positively influence student learning in K–12 science education.

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10

Transcending boundaries and borders through the implementation of culturally sustaining pedagogy: A Japanese literacy professor at a Hispanic-Serving Institution

Hitomi Kambara

Abstract

This study reports how a Japanese literacy professor teaching in a college with 96% Hispanic students at a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) integrated culturally sustaining pedagogy into her undergraduate courses. The author is originally from Japan and came to the United States at age 18. She completed her higher education at a predominately white institution before coming to an HSI on the southern border as a Tenure-Track Assistant Professor of Literacy Education one and a half years ago. During the first year in her tenure track position, she read the book Culturally sustaining pedagogies: Teaching and learning for justice in a changing world *(Paris & Alim, 2017). She adopted those pedagogies in order to enhance her teaching practices, which resulted in her making connections with her students and hence maximizing student learning. The author addresses the ways in which she integrated culturally sustaining teaching strategies into her undergraduate literacy education courses. In addition, she discusses how she transcended cultural boundaries to develop positive relationships with her students during the process.*

Transcending boundaries and borders through the implementation of culturally sustaining pedagogy: A Japanese literacy professor at a Hispanic-Serving Institution

The National Center for Education Statistics (2019) reported that students of color occupy approximately 51% of the student population in K–12 education in the United States, and this percentage is predicted to continue to increase over the next several years. Despite the rapidly increasing diversity in student demographics, teachers of color have been excessively underrepresented in U.S. schools. Eighty percent of all public-school teachers were white, 9% were Hispanic, 7% were black, and 2% were Asian (2015–16 National Teacher and Principal Survey). The increasing number of students of color occurs in higher education settings as well as public schools. Approximately 40% of college and university students identify themselves as black, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, or two or more races (Higher Education Today, 2018). However, less than 25% of all faculty members are people of color. Regardless of the increasing number of students of color, teachers of color continued to be underrepresented in K–16 education (Choi, 2018).

In 2009, Kim, Twombly, and Wolf-Wendel (2013) reported that 11.5% of all tenure-track faculty at colleges and universities in the United States are foreign-born scholars. However, this number is larger than the number of domestic minority groups, such as Asian Americans (10.5%), blacks (0.5%), and Hispanics (0.4%). Many foreign-born scholars are found in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, which often lack the number of qualified candidates available in the U.S. (Hoffer, Hess, Welch, &Williams, 2007). However, many qualified candidates are available in the social sciences. Therefore, international faculty are rarely needed in these fields (Jang, 2017).

While there is a general assumption that native-speaking faculty are best qualified to teach language arts and reading (Jang, 2017), there is now a demand for global perspectives in this discipline. Over the past two decades, the number of international scholars contributing to literacy research and practice has increased (Jang, 2017; Lam & Warriner, 2012). Their scholarly contributions have led to a gradual growth of recognized spaces for international scholars in the field.

Despite the increasing presence of international scholars in the field, there are very few studies investigating international faculty members' experiences in terms of teaching, research, and service (Jang, 2017).

Among these few published studies, most literature focused on faculty of color born in the U.S., including blacks (Johnson & Bryan, 2016), Asian Americans (Choi, 2018), and Hispanics (Guanipa, Santa Cruz, & Chao, 2003). Experiences of international faculty have been reported in specific areas, such as multicultural education or second language acquisition (Jang, 2017); however, little is known about international faculty members' experiences in the literacy field.

The institution where I work is one of the largest Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) in the U.S. and is located in one of the fastest-growing regions on the southern border. The student body is largely Hispanic, with the College of Education serving 96% Hispanic students. The surrounding area is a microcosm of multiculturalism with rich multilingual traditions. Teaching with this population necessitates using a culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) (Paris & Alim, 2017) for the students we serve. According to Paris and Alim (2017), CSP aims to transform schooling cultures positively to promote all students' success, emphasizing unique cultural aspects as significant contributions and assets to students' learning.

Although Hispanics are the largest ethnic group in the U.S. (Census Bureau, 2018), available data indicate that they are the group least likely to earn a college degree (Fry and Lopez, 2012). Extensive literature identifies various factors affecting Hispanic students' academic success. Among several factors, feeling more connected to faculty and a sense of belonging as well as valuing their culture and language are seen as particularly vital (Arbelo-Marrero & Milacci, 2016; Davila, Berumen, & Baquedano-López, 2015; Giraldo-García, Galletta, & Bagaka's, 2019; Martinez, DeGarmo, & Eddy, 2004). Therefore, implementation of CSP aims to connect the boundaries between faculty and students and develop positive relationships to increase students' success.

With this chapter, I share my experiences and practices from my undergraduate courses during my first year of teaching. More importantly, this work illustrates how I, as an international faculty member, transcended the cultural boundary and border between myself, a Japanese woman, and my predominately Hispanic student population. This paper will help readers understand CSP, how to integrate CSP, and how

CSP helped me to increase my connectedness and teaching effectiveness beyond languages and cultures.

Frameworks

This work is informed by three frameworks: LatCrit (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001), Asian Critical Race Theory (AsianCrit) (Chang, 1993), and CSP (Paris & Alim, 2017).

LatCrit

LatCrit was originally developed from Critical Race Theory (CRT), but it mainly focuses on the lived experiences of Hispanics and addresses issues they face based on immigration status, language, human rights, ethnicity, culture, phenotype, identity, and sexuality (Hernandez-Truyol, 1997; Montoya, 1994; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). LatCrit embraces race and racism affecting the educational experiences of Hispanic students. Also, LatCrit challenges the dominant ideology that supports color blindness and racial neutrality, which benefits majority white students in society, while disadvantaging Hispanic students and students of color (Calmore, 1992; Delgado, 1989). LatCrit also centers on social justice practices to "eliminate all forms of subordination on the basis of race, gender, language, generation status, sexual preference, and class" (Villalpando & Ortiz, 2004, p. 45).

AsianCrit

Similar to LatCrit, AsianCrit focuses on the issues that Asian Americans face. AsianCrit mainly discusses nativism (i.e., nativistic racism) and myths of the model minority (Chang, 1993). Nativism refers to "intense opposition to an internal minority on the grounds of its foreign (i.e., 'un-American') connections" (p.1253). Foreignness is defined as "xenophobia regarding 'accent, use of language, tone of voice, [and] different surnames [as] bicultural markers of differences'" (Ford, 2011, p.460, as cited in Han, 2014).

Culturally sustaining pedagogy

In this research, I mainly relied on Paris and Alim's (2017) framework of CSP to guide my reflective practices as a teacher educator at a predominately HSI. The main goal of CSP is "to find ways to support and sustain what we know are remarkable ways with language, literacy, and cultural practices, while at the same time opening up spaces for students themselves to critique the ways that they might be–intentionally or not–reproducing discourses that marginalize members of our communities" (Paris & Alim, 2017, p. 11). CSP emphasizes bridging the cultures of students of color and valuing their cultural heritages as important sources of knowledge to move beyond the applications of dominant cultural, linguistic, and literacy practices toward embracing the knowledge of communities of color as assets that can be revitalized, cultivated, and sustained. In addition, CSP seeks to offer "a vision for schooling that combines learning and academic achievement with social justice and educational equity" (Paris & Alim, 2017, p. 94).

Although my cultural background is different than that of my students, my students and I have some common understanding and experiences as minority group members. As both LatCrit and AsianCrit emphasize, we are in unique positions to challenge the dominant ideology that tends to ignore students of color and create a space in which minority groups, such as people of color, are also respected and valued. CSP is an effective practice that strengthens opportunities for success for students of color.

Method

Critical reflection (Fgook, 2011) is a mechanism for learning from experiences and improving professional practices. I adopted critical reflection as a means of reflecting upon my understanding of CSP and the process used to implement it into my practice (Hook, 2011). I have documented my practices and ongoing reflections as I read the book *Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies: Teaching and Learning for Justice in a Changing World* (Paris & Alim, 2017) and began to implement those pedagogies in my university classroom. In addition, I included students' feedback as I implemented CSP.

Transcending boundaries and borders through the implementation of culturally sustaining pedagogy: A Japanese literacy professor at a Hispanic-Serving Institution

Positionality of the researcher

I was born and raised in Japan. I came to the U.S. at 18 and completed all my higher education in this country. I served as a reading interventionist for more than 3 years at a Title I elementary school in the Midwest and worked with a diverse student population, including Hispanic and black elementary-aged students. Then, I completed my Ph.D. in language and literacy education in a research-intensive institution before accepting my current job as an assistant professor of literacy education.

Data sources

This study used data from the artifacts collected from (1) the author's weekly reflections, (2) course syllabi, and (3) undergraduate course evaluations, including students' written feedback, and (4) students' reflections. All data, including the author's weekly reflections, were documented online and stored in a secured computer. An institutional review board (IRB) has been approved to use all data sources for this study.

Data analysis

Data was triangulated across data sources and analyzed using a constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to explore my experiences and teaching effectiveness with CSP. I used initial coding (Charmaz, 2006) to develop codes. Then, I reviewed the codes three or four times, while writing memos and comparing to look for overlap. Glaser and Strauss (1967) addressed the need for writing memos while developing themes because memos help the researcher identify the relations between codes and themes. Afterward, I named the themes and wrote a report using the themes.

Findings

Three themes were generated from the data related to my experiences and implementation of CSP: (1) Making Connections, (2) Integration of Multicultural Books, and (3) Developing Students' Critical Consciousness.

Making connections

During my first year, I was assigned to teach an early literacy course that pre-service teachers are required to take at the very beginning of their teacher education program. One of the assignments I used, the *Literacy Journey*, invites all of us to reflect upon where we have been and who we are becoming as teachers and learners. The primary emphasis of this assignment is to honor and sustain the literacy, heritage, and practices of each student to create a welcoming and inclusive environment. Because the course was about early literacy education, the students were required to include the "Fabulous Five" (National Reading Panel, 2000) (phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and reading comprehension) and discuss literacy activities outside of school with a focus on the Fabulous Five in their literacy journeys.

Students were asked to create a book related to their literacy journey—one that they would be able to share in class and then again with their future students. Some students became very emotional when they shared their childhood struggles with reading. Others shared how difficult it was to learn English in school. There were several students who shared that they had immigrated to the U.S. from Mexico and experienced learning English in elementary or middle school while struggling with reading in English. Additionally, some students noted that they were punished at school when they spoke Spanish.

After all of the students shared their journeys, I shared my literacy journey book, including my study abroad experiences and the reasons why I became a literacy professor in a foreign country. I shared that I did not speak English at all when I landed in the U.S. for the first time in 2005. I also shared some experiences when I felt I was seen as incompetent and having a deficit in academic and social settings because of being an English learner (EL) and an international student. Also, I discussed my experiences working with students who have diverse linguistic and racial backgrounds at a Title I public elementary school.

Through sharing our stories, we engaged in conversation about the importance of everyone's literacy journey and what it means to share as teachers. This included recognizing their backgrounds, including their heritage, languages, and identity, and also creating a classroom space

that is student-centered through assets-based, humanizing perspectives (Paris & Alim, 2017). I recognized that teachers must implement practices that are culturally sustaining, flexible, and reflective of multiple languages to meet all students' needs, especially students of color. Additionally, I mentioned that the struggles they experienced through their literacy journeys and language practices such as bilingualism or multilingualism should be assets as they prepare for their careers. Moreover, sharing my literacy and life journey fostered connectedness with my students and demonstrated what can be is possible with hard work and persistence.

Building a positive relationship. Through the implementation of the literacy journey assignment, I strongly felt that I had a solid sense of connectedness with students (Arbelo-Marrero & Milacci, 2016). However, it wasn't until I received student feedback (through my course evaluation) that I came to understand the strength of CSP and this assignment to connect with students. For example, one student wrote, "I appreciate that you shared your literacy journey with us and also believe in our full potential. You are one of the strict[est] professors I've ever had, but on the other hand, you are the best professor I have ever had." Other comments extended beyond the literacy journey assignment to include aspects of my teaching that were inspiring for others to continue into the teaching profession, "Dr. Kambara is amazing. She is caring and very understanding. She has such a passion for teaching, which has inspired me even more to go into teaching."

Integration of multicultural books

CSP emphasizes supporting and sustaining language, literacy, and cultural practices each student brings into classrooms. In my early literacy development classes, I implemented several multicultural books to address a variety of concerns related to diversity and social issues. I selected a variety of multicultural literature to include cultural richness (Yokota, 1993) and great illustrations that accurately represent culture, story, people, and events (Iwai, 2015). Books were chosen based on how they: (1) demonstrate social injustices, (2) describe immigrant

experiences, and (3) show multilingualism. See Figure 1 for a list books used. The books we used in the classroom included characters who are Hispanic, Asian, black, and Native American to reflect diversity in our society.

I paid particular attention to make sure that students were able to develop an appreciation for various cultures and also recognize the richness in their own (Iwai, 2015) consistent with the aims of CSP. As a literacy educator, I tried to "create and engage my students in literacy practices that promote awareness, understanding, respect, and a valuing of differences in the society" (IRA, 2010). I also strongly emphasized the importance of teachers' having positive attitudes toward diversity (Thompkins, 2010) given the goal of my students to become teachers in the future. Many students in my classes shared their inexperience interacting with other races and mentioned that I was the first Asian person/professor with whom they interacted. They did not have much understanding of Asian cultures. The integration of multicultural books aimed to broaden my students 'understanding toward many different cultures, including Asian. I feel this helped me to transcend cultural boundaries and develop positive relationships with my students.

As I utilized various genres of literature, I strongly emphasized the significance of using multicultural literature effectively and modeled reading strategies these future teachers could use with multicultural children's books, including:

- *Stretch to stretch* (Harste, Short, & Burke, 1988). Students draw sketches from reading that demonstrate the main ideas and important messages. After drawing, students share their sketch with class.
- *Double-entry journals* (Ceil, Baker, & Lozano, 2015). Students write down specific phrases or sentences from their assigned reading and then write their own reaction next to the phrases or sentences.
- *Venn diagram* (Ceil, Baker, & Lozano, 2015). Students compare similarities or differences across different literature.

Figure 1

Book list

Title	Author/s
Genre: Hispanic	
Yes! We are Latinos: Poems and prose about the Latino experience	Alma Flor Ada & F. Isabel Campoy
Enchanted air: Two cultures, two wings: A memoir	Margarita Engle
Dear primo: A letter to my cousin	Duncan Tonatiuh
Separate is never equal: Sylvia Méndez and her family's fight for desegregation	Duncan Tonatiuh
Genre: Asian	
I live in Tokyo	Mari Takabayashi
The name jar	Yangsook Choi
Bee-bim bop!	Linda Sue Park
My first Chinese New Year (My first holiday)	Karen Katz
Genre: Black	
The snowy day	Ezra Jack Keats
Mae among the stars	Roda Ahmed
Last stop on Market Street	Matt de la Peña
Genre: Native American	
Jingle dancer	Cynthia Leitich Smith
Hiawatha and the peacemaker	Robbie Robertson

Developing students' critical consciousness

In addition to the implementation of literacy journey assignments and multicultural books, I assigned other readings related to CSP and social justice with the intent to foster students' critical consciousness. The lessons created opportunities to "provide students with the skills and confidence to advocate for themselves-indeed, to sustain themselves and their communities" (Paris & Alim, 2017, p. 97). First, students also read selected chapters from Paris & Alim (2017) and engaged in a conversation on CSP. As my students are students of color, reading and learning CSP helps my students recognize the positions of student of color and understand the importance of creating an environment that sustains and support marginalized student population for academic success.

In addition, I assigned excerpts of Paul Freire's *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (1970) as a course reading. As students read these books, they were asked to write their reflections and share in class. Through assigned readings and class discussion, many students appeared to develop their critical consciousness with asocial justice orientation.

For example, one student noted:

> I have never doubted our current curricula, systems, and environment. I just accepted the fact in our society. Reading the books and engaging class discussions really helped me think who has power. I have to take action to make a positive change in our community and future generations.

These assignments helped students better understand the importance of CSP and also framed their questioning of their positions in the school system and society. Students' written reflections showed that they were able to identify a variety of social issues around them and consequently revealed the centrality of race and racism in society. Consistent with CSP, it is important to create an opportunity for students to critique the dominant ideology and the fact that the needs of marginalized populations are not adequately addressed. CSP not only encourages students of color to sustain their language, literacy, cultural practices, but also critiques the dominant ideology that disvalues their unique backgrounds. In sum, CSP opened an opportunity that students can raise their

consciousness toward issues people of color including themselves face in our society.

Discussion and implications

Learning about CSP by reading the book *Culturally sustaining pedagogies: Teaching and learning for justice in a changing world* (Paris & Alim, 2017) and reflecting on my own practices helped me recognize the richness of my students' cultural backgrounds as valuable resources and assets that are traditionally overlooked in curriculum and instruction. Moreover, CSP created a bridge that transcended the cultural boundaries between myself and this student population, which allowed us to develop positive rapport with one another. For instance, creating and sharing our literacy journeys helped everyone understand each other's experiences and backgrounds. Moreover, sharing my own journey as an immigrant and EL bridged our common experiences. The implementation of multicultural books and assigned readings related to social justice and multilingualism broadened their understanding toward different racial and ethnic groups. They aimed to develop their critical consciousness about the positions of student of color and issues around them.

Research continues to report that Hispanic students lag behind other racial groups (Paris & Alim, 2017). As students of color continue to increase in number over the next several years, faculty members in higher education can benefit from using an asset-based approach such as CSP to empower their students and validate all of the languages, cultures, heritages, and backgrounds that they bring into classrooms. As a professor at an HSI, I continue to learn about CSP and ways empower my students.

There is a very limited research about the professors themselves and their introspective journeys toward becoming culturally sustaining educators. As Hispanic students continue to become a larger percentage of the student population in K–16 (Colby & Orttman, 2015), colleges and universities must research strategies to help students of color including Hispanics, and undoubtedly professors and administrators have begun the task of introspection.

This body of work addresses the challenges and the growth of an international faculty member who started working at one of the largest HSIs in the U.S. This research not only adds important perspectives to the existing research, but it also documents efforts to improve teaching practices in the hopes of meeting the needs of every student

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Revisiting educational programs that develop linguistic and cultural awareness for all students

Frank Lucido

Abstract

National laws, court rulings, and policy guidance help ensure that English Learners (ELs) have equitable access to a meaningful education amidst an ever-increasing diverse linguistic and multicultural demographic. Research has shown that dual-language programs for elementary age students and newcomer centers for recent immigrant arrivals at the secondary level are effective in fostering student academic success, linguistic growth, and multicultural understanding. While these programs are becoming more common in Texas and other states, there has been a reluctance to implement them in some areas. This manuscript provides a detailed description of these program models and discusses relevant research related to their implementation and benefit. An openness to implementing newcomer centers and dual-language programs infused with culturally and linguistically responsive teaching and learning will provide not only success for all learners, but also engage ELs and native English speakers in interaction to promote one united country for all.

Zong, Batalova, and Burrows (2019) from the Migration Policy Institute reported that in 2015, of the close to 70 million children under the age of 18 in the United States, 17.9 million (26%) lived with at least one immigrant parent. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2016), some school systems are having to integrate large numbers of school-aged migrants whose native tongue is different from that of the host community. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2019) reported that the number of English Learners (ELs) in U.S. public schools increased from 3.8 million in 2000 to 4.9 million in 2016. Similarly, in 2016, Texas reported the second-highest percentage of ELs in the nation among its public school students, with 17.2% (NCES, 2019).

To serve the unique needs of ELs, dual-language models of bilingual education for elementary students and newcomer centers for secondary students who are new immigrant arrivals in the schools are increasingly used in Texas and other states (Lucido & Leo, 2015).) Although precise counts of these programs are not available, these educational programs contribute to the development of linguistically and culturally competent students amidst an ever-increasing diverse linguistic and multicultural demographic (Lucido & Tejeda-Delgado, 2013).

Oftentimes, negative and uninformed media rhetoric contributes to misunderstandings about the ability of public education to assist newly-arrived immigrant students to succeed in our state and nation. Still, amidst this rhetoric, U.S. public schools have welcomed tens of thousands of child migrants, most from Central America. Clemens and Gough (2018) contend that between 2011 and 2016, 178,825 children (ages 17 and under) from El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala, traveling unaccompanied and without authorization, were apprehended by U.S. officials. Aside from the legal obligation to educate migrant children, educators work to establish trust and provide appropriate services while financially strapped schools may have to adjust budgets, reassign staff, and/or "juggle schedules to accommodate the need for migrant students to get one-on-one support from specialists" (Cardoza, 2019, para. 7). Furthermore, as the number of immigrants continue to grow,

educators must be aware of programs to educate and assist EL students in getting an education that will help them be productive citizens.

The purpose of the chapter is to bring together literature focused on educational programs serving ELs: dual language and newcomer centers. This chapter is an important reminder for school districts and policymakers of educational programs that have proven effective, not only in developing linguistic and literacy skills in two or more languages, but also in building a bridge to increase the cultural understanding of the students living in the multicultural societies of Texas and the nation.

Background

National laws, court rulings, and policy guidance help ensure that EL students have equitable access to a meaningful education. Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and under the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974, states are obligated to not discriminate based on race, color, or national origin, and public schools are required to ensure that EL students can participate meaningfully and equally in educational programs. Further, in the *Plyler vs. Doe* (1982) Supreme Court ruling based on the 14th Amendment of the Constitution, the Court held that states cannot deny "a basic education to undocumented children without showing that it furthers some substantial state interest" (American Immigration Council, 2016).

As a result, public schools may not:
- Deny admission to a student during initial enrollment or at any other time on the basis of undocumented status
- Treat a student differently to determine residency
- Engage in any practices to "chill" the right of access to school
- Require students or parents to disclose or document their immigration status
- Take inquiries of students or parents intended to expose their undocumented status
- Require social security numbers from all students, as this may expose undocumented status (IDRA Newsletter, April, 2014, pp. 3-4).

In 2016, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that 21.6% of the U.S. population spoke a language other than English, and 13.3% of those spoke Spanish. In Texas, there are more than one million English learn-

ers in the public schools (Texas Education Agency, 2018). Gándara and Hopkins (2010) explain that from the time EL students enter school, they struggle and fall far behind other children on virtually all academic measures. Yet, from *Castañeda vs. Pickard* (1981), states are to provide not only language support services, but also academic support to enable ELs to overcome academic limitations they might have incurred while learning English. Gándara and Hopkins (2010) go on to explain how the very policies that define ELs and how they are judged to have learned sufficient English are intimately attached to the debates encompassing language of instruction and the adequacy of various ways of educating ELs.

These statistics, laws, and policies support the need to implement educational programs that will benefit all ELs to meet the educational needs of this growing population. As such, literature concerned with two educational programs – dual language and newcomers – is presented as a reminder that language assistance programs can improve students' English language proficiency, and in turn, has been associated with improved educational outcomes.

Dual language programs

Dual language programs, broadly defined, are educational programs in which students from two language groups learn academic content in the partner language, such as Spanish and in English. Another variation is one-way programs which involve mostly one language group of students who are learning a second language in a high-quality enrichment model of bilingual education. There are two models of dual language, a 50-50 model and a 90-10 model. For identification purposes, the students' home language is noted as L1, and L2 is the language that the student is learning, which in the U.S. is English.

In the 50-50 model of dual language, half of the school day is taught in the child's home language (L1) and the second half of the day, the instruction changes to the second language being learned (L2). The instruction in the 50-50 model can also vary by day. Monday, Wednesday in one language, Tuesday and Thursday in the second language, and

Friday, half the day in one language and the other part of the day in a second language.

In a 90-10 model, language instruction in the primary grades has 90% of the instructional day in the minority language, and 10% of the school day in the majority language. The percentage of instruction in the minority language diminishes up to 3rd grade, when the instruction moves to a 50-50 model for 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades. The high level of instruction in the minority language at the onset of the program is to ensure that English-only speakers are exposed to the minority language which will not be otherwise emphasized at home.

One-way programs. Implementers of one-way programs must make their curricular decisions to meet the needs of their student population, so the resulting program design can be quite different from that of a two-way program. One-way programs are focused on one language group as their student population. However, the basic principles are the same–a minimum of six years of bilingual instruction (with eight years preferable for full gap closure in L2 when there are no English-speaking peers enrolled in the bilingual classes), separation of the two languages of instruction, focus on the core academic curriculum rather than a watered-down version, high cognitive demand of grade-level lessons, and collaborative learning in engaging and challenging academic content across the curriculum (Collier & Thomas, 2009).

Two-way programs. Two-way programs invite native-English-speaking students to join their bilingual and EL peers in an integrated bilingual classroom. Two-way bilingual classes should include all students who wish to enroll, including those who have lost their heritage language and speak only English. These classes do not need to enroll exactly 50% of each linguistic group to be classified as two-way, but it helps the process of second language acquisition to encourage an approximate balance of students of each language background.

In addition to enhanced second language acquisition, two-way bilingual classes resolve some of the persistent sociocultural concerns that have resulted from segregated transitional bilingual classes. Often, nega-

tive perceptions have developed with classmates assuming that those students assigned to the transitional bilingual classes were those with "challenges," resulting in social distance or discrimination and prejudice expressed toward linguistically and culturally diverse students. Two-way bilingual classes taught by sensitive teachers can lead to a context where students from each language group learn to respect their fellow students as valued partners in the learning process with much knowledge to teach each other. Native-English speakers' language and identity is not threatened, because English is the status language and they know it, so they have a huge advantage in confidence that they can make it in school, from a sociocultural perspective. Yet ELs can outpace native-English speakers year after year until they reach grade level in their second language, when they are part a high-quality enrichment program that teaches the curriculum through their primary language and through English (Collier & Thomas, 2004).

   Benefits. Dual language programs in elementary schools have shown positive academic, linguistic, and bicultural benefits for all students (Thomas & Collier, 2012). Dual language programs work to ensure that students are exposed to a biliteracy curriculum, developing their language and understanding of other cultural groups in the classroom. Too often, literacy is developed but the bicultural and multicultural focus is at times totally ignored in other programs.
   Much of the research in bilingual education has centered on language development, which is important, but equally important is the understanding that connects language development and cross-cultural understanding. Language does not develop in a vacuum but always in the context of culture and cultural understanding. According to Thomas and Collier (2012), dual language education develops language skills in ELs and promotes second language learning in English only speakers, thus having the potential for bicultural and multicultural understanding. Most important is that the research has also shown that the dual language model closes the achievement gap between ELs and English speakers over the academic years in the program. The longitudinal research of Collier and Thomas (2017) has found that one-way and

two-way dual language enrichment models of schooling demonstrate the substantial power of this program for enhancing student outcomes and fully closing the achievement gap in the second language (L2). There are also some programs that have added a third language to their dual language program, thus promoting tri-cultural understanding.

The amazing effectiveness of dual language education extends beyond student outcomes, influencing the school experience of all participants. As the program develops and matures, dual language schooling can also transform the experience of teachers, administrators, and parents as they create an inclusive and supportive school community for all. Adults connected to such programs may come to view them as efforts at school reform, where school is perceived positively by the whole school community. The respect and nurturing of the multiple cultural heritages and the two main languages lead to friendships that cross social, class, and language boundaries. Teachers typically express excitement once they have made it through the initial years of planning and implementing an enrichment dual language model, reporting that they love teaching and would never leave their jobs (Collier & Thomas, 2004). They report feeling lots of support, once the staff development and teacher planning time is in place for this innovation. They can see the difference in their students' responsiveness and engagement in lessons. Behavior problems decrease, because students feel valued and respected as equal partners in the learning process (Collier & Thomas, 2007). All student groups in dual language classes benefit from meaningful, challenging, and accelerated, not remedial, instruction (Baker, 2011).

Newcomer centers

Newcomer centers have proven effective in assisting secondary students in making the transition to the U.S. educational system. A newcomer student is typically defined as a student who has been in the U.S. for less than 2 years and whose English proficiency levels on initial placement inventories result in a pre-primer or beginning proficiency level. Students are usually placed in newcomer centers for a period of six months to a year to ensure that they are able to maneuver through the routines of secondary schools and not left to "sink or swim" (Custodio, 2011). Short

and Boyson, (2004), national experts on the development and nuances of newcomer programs across the country, listed three main categories of newcomer students:

1. *Literate newcomers:* students with on-grade-level educational backgrounds who have literacy skills and academic schooling in their own language,

2. *Newcomers with limited formal schooling* (also known as Students with Interrupted Formal Education or SIFE students): students with disrupted or weak educational backgrounds and below-grade level literacy in their own native language.

3. *Late entrant immigrant newcomers:* students who enter after first quarter or semester of the school year.

Short and Boyson (2004) go on to state that, "students in each category stand to benefit from placement in a newcomer program as the program allows them to better assimilate to the U.S, school climate, and culture, as well as…gain a deeper understanding of its many nuances" (p. 146).

Adolescent newcomers must quickly develop oral language skills and basic reading skills to acquire the academic content in the math, science, social studies, and English language arts in secondary classrooms. Students with higher academic self-concept generally have a stronger sense of belonging in the classroom, as well as the belief that they are able to achieve academically (Goldenberg & Coleman, 2010; Hung-Hon & Yeung, 2005).

Benefits. Matas (2012) contends the relationship between higher academic self-concept and the acquisition of English, as well as overall academic success, makes it essential for schools to seek solutions to enable immigrant youth to develop a strong academic sense of self. In a newcomer center setting, the immigrant youth are able to develop the sense of self that is needed to advance in a supportive environment where instruction is made comprehensible. The difficulty facing newcomer immigrant youth is understanding others, communicating basic needs, and comprehending new academic vocabulary and concepts can have a negative effect on each student (Zwiers, 2004), and eventually lead to a lower academic self-concept level, or academic view of

oneself. Low academic concept is a likely contributor to the alarming high dropout rates among secondary immigrant youth.

Furthermore, the newcomer students have a better attendance rate on average than U.S.-born students (Ruiz-de-Velasco & Fix, 2000; Waggoner, 1999), however, the dropout rate of newcomer students is generally almost double that of U.S.-born students from the same ethnic group (Short & Boyson, 2004). The explanation is not complicated. Most of the newcomer centers are found at the secondary level and are designed for the majority of newcomers who arrive in the U.S. at the middle school or high school age. Time becomes a major challenge for these students. Younger immigrants are generally admitted to ESL or bilingual programs at the elementary level.

Cultural responsiveness is a key component in both programs
According to Darling-Hammond (1996), "What teachers know and can do is the most important influence on what students learn" (p. 6). The premise of culturally responsive teaching is that it "filters curriculum content and teaching strategies through students' cultural frames of reference to make the content more personally meaningful and easier to master" (Gay, 2010). Pang (2005) defines culturally relevant teaching as "an approach to instruction that responds to the sociocultural context and seeks to integrate the content of the learner, including "aspects such as experiences, knowledge, events, values, role models, perspectives, and issues that arise from the community" (p. 337). He further refers to the context of the learners to "behaviors, instructional patterns, historical experiences, and underlying expectations and values of the students" (p. 337). Incorporating the home cultures and value systems into teaching the students allows the students to connect with the content and instructional practices of the teachers.

A need to analyze and address cultural factors as possible contributors to academic and challenging classroom behaviors is a way of minimizing and effectively responding to those challenges. To be culturally responsive and in order to foster a culturally responsive way of learning, the teacher must ensure that the students coming from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds feel welcome and can be academically suc-

cessful. Culturally responsiveness also requires that teachers are *socio-culturally* conscious, have affirming views of students from diverse backgrounds and seeing themselves as responsible for and capable of bringing about change to make schools more equitable (Aguilar, 2015).

A prevailing attitude reflecting unity of teacher and student in the goal of mastering material is an essential component of a culturally responsive classroom environment. Teachers need to collaborate to develop lesson plans that not only incorporate the state curriculum standards, but also support students' social and emotional needs (Jones & Kahn, 2018). This critical characteristic was evident in the newcomer programs that were visited as part of this study. In the lives of newcomer immigrant student populations who are not only adjusting and acculturating to a new country and way of life, but also learning a second language, the importance of effective educators and programs is of the utmost need. Jones and Kahn (2018) noted:

> Social, emotional, cognitive, linguistic, academic are deeply intertwined in the brain and in behavior. Strengths and weaknesses in one area foster and impede development in others. All are central to learning. Often conversations about academic learning leave out the body of evidence that high lights a set of skills and competencies that are primarily social and emotional. Not only do these important skills facilitate academic learning, but we know that the quality and depth of student learning is enhanced when students have the opportunities to interact with others and make meaningful connections to subject matter (p. 25).

Newcomer centers can facilitate this learning in a supportive environment for students who are transitioning to the American public school system.

Educators in the newcomer centers support students by utilizing approaches that promote the acquisition of linguistic and academic skills, as well as an increased sense of belonging and academic self-concept (Gándara, 2017). Students in newcomer centers commented "the teachers in the centers had supported them in acculturating into the school and had provided an environment for growth and academic development without any type of negative judgements." Teachers at the centers pro-

vided extra tutoring for the students so that they would be able to pass state assessments. Students expressed that "being new to the American education system was often lonely and depressing, however, the support that was provided by the personnel in the centers was comforting and reassuring" (Lucido & Tejeda-Delgado, 2013). While high quality instruction is essential, that along may fail to meet immigrant teens' complex needs. Newly-arrived immigrant youth who experience caring connections with peers and supportive adults at school show an increase in academic engagement and other measures, such as attendance, that contribute to educational attainment (Case, 2019).

Final thoughts

An openness to implementing newcomer centers and dual language education infused with culturally and linguistically responsive teaching and learning will provide not only success for all learners, but also ways in which English learners and native English speakers can interact to promote one united country for all. Developing the bicultural and multicultural understanding among all students through educational programs that infuse these concepts can lead not only to academic success but future career opportunities.

As we continue to grow in our diversity, educators and policy makers need to change the mindset of blaming students and families and expecting them to adapt to their educational setting to taking a responsible stand for transforming school practices and policies so that all students have the opportunity to learn. (Robledo & Montemayor, 2018). To ensure that immigrant students and ELs feel culturally validated as they enter schools in the U.S., culturally responsive strategies must be incorporated into the programs for these youth.

In California, State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson has encouraged administrators to declare their districts and schools as "safe havens" for students and families, and dozens have done so. Such local actions aim to maintain a welcoming environment for children so they can access the education to which they are entitled (Sugarman, 2017).

Teachers often comment that their biggest challenge is getting ELs who are learning English to believe in themselves. Students must overcome far more obstacles than the average white middle-class American student before they can focus on learning. Some have repeatedly heard people tell them they will never amount to anything because they live in poverty, however, our schools must work hard to overcome these negative scenarios (Acker, 2015). In many areas there has been a reluctance to implement either of these two programs that the research supports as being favorable to student success and linguistic growth for ELs. An openness to implementing newcomer centers and dual language education infused with culturally and linguistically responsive teaching and learning will provide not only success for all learners, but also engage ELs and native English speakers in interaction to promote one united country for all. Developing the bicultural and multicultural understanding among all students through educational programs that infuse these concepts can lead not only to academic success but future career opportunities. With school districts implementing programs such as dual language education and newcomer centers, student success and empowerment will become a reality for all students.

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