Transnational Teacher Education: Towards Theory and Practice

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The numbers of Mexico-United States transnational students and families are increasing across both countries (Zúñiga, Hamann & Sánchez, 2008). Transnational students have many distinguishing features, but a major characteristic is their experience of living and schooling in two countries that are closely tied economically and politically. To their respective classrooms in either country, transnational students bring experiences and skills that are unique, and ideally-suited to the need for fully bilingual and biliterate citizens in an increasingly globalized world (Knight, 2011). Yet transnational students are often viewed from a deficit perspective in both countries (Ruiz, 2010).

In an effort to change commonly-held deficit notions about transnational students, and to optimize their educational contexts, a group of teacher educators from a consortium of California public universities created a unique teacher education program with an international component, the Bi-National Teacher Education Project (Bi-TEP). Bi-TEP was supported by a five-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition and provided stipends to pre-service teachers to study abroad for part of their credential program. Bi-TEP’s overall goals were to prepare pre-service teachers to recognize the resources that transnational students offer to schools, to meet the students’ linguistic and academic needs, and to help bring transnational parents into full participation in their children’s education. For three years (2008-10) the core program consisted of five months of coursework and student teaching in Mexico, with the remainder of the credential requirements completed at several California State University (CSU) campuses. Due to a CSU system-wide ban on travel-study to Mexico in spring of 2011 a cohort of teacher candidates spent one month (July, 2011) in Guatemala, before returning to their home campuses. This article analyzes the results from two cohorts (N=34) to a questionnaire administered immediately after completion of their respective programs in Mexico.
The purpose of the analysis is to articulate our emerging theoretical framework of Transnational Teacher Education. Though our own data deal with Spanish-English bilingual candidates studying in Mexico and Guatemala, we expect that the conceptual framework of Transnational Teacher Education may apply to programs with other target languages such as Chinese and Arabic. In addition, this article may be of use to teacher preparation in other countries whose schools share significant populations of transnational students, e.g., Morocco and Spain (Harry, Arnaiz, Klingner & Sturges, 2008).

Objectives

The principal objectives of this study were: (1) explicate a different theoretical stance to teacher education with an international study component called Transnational Teacher Education, and (2) examine how a Transnational Teacher Education program contributed to the development of pre-service candidates for the bilingual (Spanish-English) elementary credential.

Theoretical Framework

The present study can be viewed as part of a larger area of teacher preparation investigation and practice called International Teacher Education. Here we use a developing theoretical framework that we named Transnational Teacher Education. In our current work, this new framework helped us in conceptualizing traditional International Teacher Education and Transnational Teacher Education as different points on a continuum of teacher preparation that includes international travel-study (Figure 1). Within the field of international education, the continuum itself is one of interconnectedness. Scholars have noted the importance of interconnectedness:

The word “inter-connectedness” should not be underestimated for providing a basis through which students and educators can examine in curricular terms how particular
histories and genealogies register (or fail to register) within global networks of power, whose interests count, and on whose ethical scale when comparative models are used (Roman, 2003, p. 282).

[Insert Figure 1 around here]

The left end of the continuum represents few or loose connections between participants’ study in the target country-- its people, cultures, histories, economics, and so on--, and their home country. An often-cited metaphor for this sort of disconnected international study is “intellectual tourism,” succinctly captured by Roman (2003) when she writes of “… pedagogical and curricular experiences as brief excursions into ‘other’ people’s lived cultures” (p. 272).

Adding to Roman’s metaphor, we see an intellectual tourist as someone who experiences a new country, its citizens, and their culture, but after the trip is finished and is back home, stores away the “luggage” or “acquired objects,” that is, new understandings arising from the experience in the country of study. Storing away this new knowledge is possible because there are usually few concrete and specific connections, or unexamined connections, between knowledge of the target (international) country, and the participants’ academic or professional context back in the U.S.

In contrast, the right-hand side of the continuum represents participants’ strong sense of connection and solidarity between the people of the target and home countries. Once again quoting Roman (2003), this paradigm conceptualizes the relationship as “… a shared sense of belonging to a common humanity across borders” (p. 269).

Figure 2 supplies descriptors for either end of the continuum. We generated the descriptors from a review of the work of several scholars of international study, e.g., Coulby (2006), Rodriguez (2010), Roman (2003), and Talburt (2009). In the following discussion, we further elaborate on the paradigmatic continuum and descriptors. We also locate both
International and Transnational Teacher Education on the continuum in terms of the degree of interconnectedness associated with each.

[Insert Figure 2 around here]

Before continuing, it is important to note that all international study programs have several basic goals in common. The primary shared goals are personal growth, skills for a globalized world, and development of a multicultural/pluralistic perspective. These goals are eminently worthwhile, and we do not want to diminish them, nor underestimate the work that it takes to create international programs that develop them. In our review of the literature on international study, however, we have come to the conclusion that unless we are careful in program design and implementation, international study can work against the third shared goal, that is, a sense of pluralism. Excerpts from a study by Talburt (2009) illustrate that multicultural perspectives are not a guaranteed outcome of international study. We share a few student quotes from Talburt’s research to make that point, and to further describe the left-hand side of the continuum, disconnect.

Talburt (2009) interviewed U.S. university students after their return from a six-week travel study program in Segovia, Spain. In the first quote, we can see that a returning student recognizes his changed understanding of his own culture due to international study. Note, however, that he limits his reference to cultural growth to his own, and not understanding of the target country’s cultures.

I think at least one of the values might be that you look at your own culture a little more carefully, more closely… If you can do such a thing as make progress, or at least lead a fulfilling life instead of a vacant life, then a lot of it has to do with knowing something about your own culture, you, and your people, and knowing something about other people that
contrast with those things, and to know whether you’re really leading a happy life or not… (pp. 110-111).

A quote from another participant illustrates that the international study has done little to change his stereotypical notions of Spain. The student first dismisses a brief trip to England as too similar to the U.S. in comparison to his study in Spain:

[In England] they do the same things [as in the U.S.] They go out to bars and then drink, and there’s nothing like the corridas de toros [bullfights]… I’m interested in this seeming Spanish fascination with like death. And I think it’s because, you know, of their violent, bloody history. But something like that would never go over in America (p. 112).

Continuing on with the theme of participants’ cultural notions, the following quote shows their expectations of culture as static. Here the student comments on a Spaniard who approached her at a disco:

And he comes in, he’s like very little. He had this dumb Metallica T-shirt on or something. Very not, like Latin-like at all (p. 112).

In fact, in reading through Talburt’s study, one gets a clear impression that disruption in the participants’ pre-conceived notions of Spain created consternation:

We were surprised that there’s so much American stuff here. We were like, we’re going to buy T-shirts and little toys and stuff that are Spanish. But we can’t find any. It’s all Americanized, Bugs Bunny and Disney, and just like, I didn’t come here to buy this. I could buy this at home (p. 113).

A final quote that we highlight from Talburt’s study is one that shows that this participant was unaware of previous interrelationships between the U.S. and Spain:
It seems like they don’t like Americans too much… Even if they like American stuff, even if they like American ways, they still don’t like Americans… I don’t know what the politics are, but I’m sure there’s some political background to that. Me and Joel were talking about, we can’t understand why they’re so rude. It’s like, yeah, we’re tourists, we’re trying to learn the language, we are speaking. And it’s like, okay, you’re being so rude to us, but if we weren’t here, half of your little shops wouldn’t be open.

Talburt’s (2009) research is very useful to teacher education programs with international components, and we are grateful to her for providing evidence of what can happen in international programs with the best of intentions. For the present article, her study also gave vivid voice to the descriptors under the left side of continuum in Figure 2, disconnect. The quotes from the participants convey an emphasis on individualism, of social distance between the students and target countries, and notions of culture as essentialized and static. Furthermore, nation borders, or a sense of disconnected “us” and “them,” are prevalent among the participants. It is clear, also, that the participants quoted above were engaged in observing distanced “others,” not in planning collective action for common goals.

With Talburt’s powerful examples of understandings that we want to work against in any international program, we now bring the discussion specifically back to teacher education and what seem to us to be two current paradigms for credential programs with travel/study components: International Teacher Education and Transnational Teacher Education. In terms of the continuum of interconnectedness, we locate International Teacher Education approximately in the middle of the continuum. (See Figure 3). Transnational Teacher Education, in contrast, we view as closer to the right-hand side of the continuum, towards solidarity and social action.
As we will see, however, any one teacher education program can have components that fall along varying points of the continuum.

[Insert Figure 3 around here]

**International Teacher Education**

Relying on our own and others’ reviews of the research, e.g. Quezada, (2005), we characterize International Teacher Education using a number of parameters, including its overall purpose and underlying beliefs. We also examine it along a series of program goals for teacher candidates: language, culture, global, citizen, professional, and personal. Furthermore, we look at International Teacher Education’s structural components such as usual sites of study and licensure expectations. The discussion along these parameters allows for a comparison between International Teacher Education and Transnational Teacher Education.

With regard to its overall purpose, International Teacher Education (ITE) usually aims to give teacher candidates an international experience related to teaching, either through coursework, field experience, or a combination of both, in order to encourage the development of a global perspective. Part of that perspective is embodied in the notion of *global competence*, and the individual benefits and payoff that such skills produce in the global market (Talburt, 2009; Zeichner, 2010). On the continuum in Figure 1, individual global competence as a goal would be located on the left side. Another crucial part of a global perspective, however, veers away from individualism and heads toward a widened sense of one’s place in the world. ITE program implementers expect that teacher candidates will return to their home county with a heightened respect for pluralism. Teacher candidates’ intercultural perspective is thought to derive from the new understandings of the world, themselves, and teaching that emanate from international study (Rodríguez, 2011). The goal of producing citizens with a pluralistic view of
society is located further along to the right of the continuum towards connectedness, but not to the final end point, as we will see in discussing the emerging conceptual framework of Transnational Teacher Education. In summary, ITE closely aligns with traditional undergraduate study abroad in its emphasis on both personal growth and development of a multicultural perspective.

In recent years, ITE programs have resisted the role of intellectual tourist for their participants and have tried to stress teacher candidates’ connections between the target culture and its members, and their future U.S. teaching practices (Quezada, 2005; Quezada & Alfaro, 2007). For example, Rodríguez (2011) studied curricular issues arising from her education course that included a 10-day travel-study experience in Bolivia. Her research led her to pose the following questions for her teacher candidates—largely white and female from a private university—in order for them to connect their Bolivian experience with their future teaching in multicultural urban settings in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: “How can we provide opportunities to our preservice teachers to meet people and communities different from them in a way that the voice of the ‘other’ is heard? In other words, how can we engage with ‘others’ in a conversation initiated and defined in their terms rather than ours?” (p. 156)

In asking this question Rodríguez (2011) encourages connectedness, pushing her program towards the right side of the continuum. Still, it is interesting to consider whether the use of the term ‘others’, natural in Rodriguez’s research because of the ethnicity of her teacher candidates and the different demographics of the urban schools where they will teach, could be construed as contributing to the perceived distance between the target and home cultures. These questions may be a pragmatic recognition of the differences between her teacher candidates and Bolivians. We will take up this question later in our discussion of the Bi-TEP program. What is clear at this
point, however, is that implementers of some ITE programs such as the one analyzed by Rodríguez, work hard to help teacher candidates bring home a stance for pluralism, and the tools to critically analyze the historical, economic, political, linguistic, and sociocultural circumstances of a range of U.S. ethnolinguistic groups, including themselves.

In terms of language goals, ITE programs often encourage acquisition of the foreign language by teacher candidates, but full proficiency is not a requirement. For example, a pattern in ITE programs is that teacher candidates deliver instruction in English and not the target country’s language (Quezada, 2005). Furthermore, learning about the target culture is viewed as important in the service of taking up a multicultural or global perspective, but not usually as specific knowledge that will be applied in U.S. classrooms with significant numbers of children from the target culture. For example, in the Rodríguez study, teacher candidates studied the Bolivian struggle for water rights, but they were not expected to apply the specifics of their learning to Bolivian students in their future U.S. classrooms; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania is not a frequent migration site for Bolivians. The candidates were, however, expected to take new learning from international travel-study, and broadly apply it to their future teaching in urban Philadelphia. For example, participants in the Rodriguez study observed how deeply Bolivian parents in poverty cared about their children’s education and were ready to collectively work to improve schools. Rodríguez elaborated on how her teacher candidates could apply this new understanding to the U.S. context: “We need to help these prospective teachers to understand that what my students witnessed in Bolivia is not an isolated phenomena but an intrinsic part of the hope that poor communities place in formal schooling” (p. 158).

The cultural component of ITE also plays an important role in terms of creating empathy among teacher candidates for U.S. immigrant or distinct ethnolinguistic groups once back in U.S.
classrooms. The struggles that U.S. teacher candidates experience while studying abroad-- for example, culture shock or living in a country with limited target language proficiency--, have been found to carry over to their understandings of similar cultural adaptation by groups new to the U.S. (Quezada, 2005).

Structural components of ITE programs show patterns across programs, similar to their shared goals and underlying beliefs. With regard to licensure goals, ITE programs are usually part of a standard teaching credential program with no specialized certifications associated with target language proficiency, or cultural knowledge of target groups in U.S. schools. Furthermore, ITE programs often send teacher candidates to developed countries (Quezada, 2005).

In closing this section on ITE, it is important to note that well-intentioned programs can struggle to develop cultural pluralism in their teacher candidates. For example, researchers Menard-Warwick and Palmer (2012) presented results from a critical discourse analysis of eight narratives written by U.S. teacher candidates during a month-long program in Mexico. The narratives were elicited after the teacher candidates listened to a testimonio (testimony) by a Mexican woman, Elvira, living in poverty, and doing all in her power to make sure that her four children received a good education in Mexican public schools. The authors report that the ITE program they studied had as its specific goal the development of teacher candidates’ critical awareness about education and global inequities. Yet, the authors report that the program “fell short” (p. 135) of the goal:

“Our analysis of the journals, however, show that most students did not get past their initial emotional response into a critical analysis of what the visit meant to them as future
teachers, nor how Elvira’s difficulties could be seen as interrelated to other problems within a total context” (p. 135).

Fortunately for those of us implementing teacher education programs with international components, Menard-Warwick & Palmer (2010) conclude with very helpful advice in more effectively reaching our goals, emphasizing the need for in-depth and structured preparation for teacher candidates’ reflections before, during, and after their international language and educational studies.

**Genesis of a Transnational Framework for Teacher Preparation**

*Transnational Teacher Education* (TTE) differs from ITE’s overall purpose and underlying premises in a number of ways. Many of these differences derive from the notion of *transnationalism* itself. For this study we primarily relied on the research of sociologist Manuel Barajas (2009) and anthropologist Lynn Stephen (2007) with migrant communities in California and the Pacific Northwest for our conceptual framework of transnationalism. Essentially, a transnational perspective recognizes that there are many historical, structural, and sociocultural factors at work when students and families cross multiple borders. These borders encompass both nation divisions, and metaphorical ones, with examples of the latter being linguistic, cultural, and school borders (Knight & Oesterreich, 2011). A transnational perspective on teacher education first and foremost considers our U.S. and Mexico educational communities to be part of the same social fabric (Ruiz, Barajas, McGinty & Romo, in press). Further, it attempts to transcend borders beginning with, in the case of U.S.-Mexico migrant students, a consideration of research and education in both the U.S. and Mexico. For example, teacher candidates in a transnational teacher preparation program would examine research from Mexico, not solely from the U.S., on transnational students, e.g., the work of Zúñiga et al. (2008). This
series of Mexican investigations shows that previous schooling in either U.S. or Mexico was viewed as subtractive when transnational students enter the new country (Ruiz, 2010).

In TTE, teacher candidates would explore how and why transnational students and families come to the U.S. (Baird & McCaughan, 1979). Sharing this knowledge would be an attempt to supplant “blaming” the students and families for their challenging life circumstances, or viewing them as unsuccessful migrants from their home countries (Ruiz & Barajas, 2012). For example, teacher candidates would study the insufficiency of theories such as push-pull (i.e., a bad economy pushes migrants out of their home country, and they are pulled to the new country with better economic resources; see Barajas 2012 for an extended discussion) to explain transnational students’ presence in schools that are new to them and to their families. They would also examine race as a critical factor in the degree of incorporation, or lack thereof, for transnational immigrants to the U.S.

**Transnational Teacher Education**

How does Transnational Teacher Education (TTE) compare with the program characteristics of traditional ITE discussed previously? In terms of an overall goal, TTE seeks to develop a paradigm of connectedness and solidarity with the target people, culture, and educational community. Several international study scholars have written about the importance of transcending nation states in developing this view and write that students need to: “… step outside of the national borders that define their social and political identities… [engaging in] ‘border-crossing’…” (Rodriguez, p. 158). Coulby (2006) also contends that for ideal international study “… neither its pupils nor its subject matter can be constrained by familiar boundaries” p. 254). To capture the dynamic border crossings and connections, both metaphorical and literal, for Bi-TEP we choose the metaphor of fabric-- here, social fabric,
stretching across nation states-- as the operating understanding for our teacher candidates. The students whom TTE teacher candidates work with in Mexico, Guatemala, and in the U.S. are part of the same fabric, as are they themselves.

Like the teacher candidates in ITE, teacher candidates in TTE programs are expected to emerge with global competence and cultural pluralism. In TTE, however, teacher candidates also analyze the negative effects of globalization (Coulby, 2011). They consider power relationships between sites of integration including those stemming from colonization, economics, military/police intervention, narcotics, and politics, in addition to educational issues. TTE candidates look at patterns of inclusion and marginalization across the target country and the U.S., and their own role in those dimensions. Immediately apparent from these points of analysis should be the need to bring in academic departments beyond education—sociology, history, political science, economics, ethnic studies, and anthropology—as collaborators in preparing transnational teacher educators.

In contrast to many ITE programs, TTE programs have the goal of full proficiency in the target language. TTE program licensure goals include a specific authorization on the credential that signals target language expertise, as well as knowledge of the target culture.

The depth and breadth of these analyses and skills are related to a different citizenry goal for TTE. While ITE strives for a pluralistic perspective in returning teacher candidates, TTE expects that these new areas of knowledge, combined with a sense of “we” not “others” through the metaphor of social fabric, will encourage both a sense of solidarity in the struggle for educational equity, and the need to take collective action for social justice (Coulby, 2011).

Methodology
The present study is part of a larger investigation, the California Bi-National Teacher Education Project (Bi-TEP), in which five cohorts of teacher candidates have participated in international study as part of their credential program, either in Mexico or Guatemala. There are several data sources for the Bi-TEP research project including pre- and post- performance on a survey examining teacher candidates’ knowledge and preferences for the instruction of English Learners (Ruiz & Lozano, 2010), focus interviews with graduates, written surveys, and questionnaires after graduates’ first and second years of teaching.

With the goal of the present article to explain Transnational Teacher Education as a theoretical framework, we chose a subset of data from two cohorts of Bi-TEP teacher candidates totaling 34 participants. Of the participants, 28 were females and six were males. In terms of ethnicity, the participants were evenly divided with half from minority backgrounds (17), and half White (17). Fourteen Latinos, one Afro Latina, one Asian, and one Mixed Hispanic comprised the minority group. All teacher candidates were seeking the Spanish-English bilingual authorization with their elementary credential. Their level of Spanish proficiency ranged from advanced beginner in the case of one participant, to native or native-like proficiency in the case 14 participants. The preponderance of the teacher candidates began the program with an intermediate range of Spanish proficiency.

**Overview of 2010 and 2011 Bi-TEP Programs of Study**

Half of the teacher candidates for this study participated in the Oaxaca, Mexico 2010 Bi-TEP program for five months, and half in the Antigua, Guatemala 2011 Bi-TEP program for five weeks. As noted previously and analyzed at length as a struggle for transnational teacher preparation curricula in another article that we have co-authored (Baird & Ruiz, in press), the 2011 program was moved to Guatemala because of the university system’s
ban on travel-study programs to Mexico. The program of study was shortened due to time constraints in moving the former five-month program to a new country with new teacher preparation partners with little advance notice. An important constant between the two programs was the second author’s (Baird) position as in-country director for both the Mexico and Guatemala programs and the participants whose data are the focus of this study.

The Oaxaca 2010 program consisted of two weeks of small-group, intensive Spanish instruction at a Spanish language school in the city of Oaxaca. Groups were constituted according to the results of a Spanish language assessment administered upon arrival to Mexico. Bi-TEP candidates stayed with families for the first month of their program, and then had a choice of remaining with a family or finding an apartment for the remaining four months of their stay in Mexico. After the language instruction period, candidates began credential classes and field work through collaboration with a local teacher preparation institute, the Centro Regional Escuela Normal de Oaxaca (CRENO). CRENO instructors taught credential courses in pedagogy, language arts, science, math, physical education and art to Bi-TEP participants in specially designed classes that integrated Mexican pedagogy and content with California Teacher preparation standards, resulting in California coursework equivalencies. A weekly seminar for participants to learn about indigenous comunalidad (Martínez Luna, 2010) and to discuss their general learning process was also conducted by the Oaxacan coordinator of Bi-TEP, Dr. Pedro Torres Hernández. In this way, Oaxaca 2010 Bi-TEP candidates completed a little less than half of their course of study for their California credential in Mexico. At the end of their international study, and upon completion of other course and field work in California, all candidates took a performance test for prospective teachers, as required by the state, and as another assurance that the course and field work in Mexico fulfilled the equivalency requirement for California teacher
preparation programs. All participants in this study were successful in passing the state performance test at the end of their credential program.

Oaxaca 2010 Bi-TEP participants also had intensive contact with Mexican student teachers during their program. First, during their language program, Bi-TEP and Mexican student teachers were paired for language exchange. Second, several Mexican student teachers were invited to attend the Bi-TEP courses taught by CREN0 instructors. Third, Mexican teacher candidates were paired with Bi-TEP candidates for field work. Candidates first taught in urban schools, and then in more rural schools. Their third placement in escuelas marginadas (schools “at the margin,” i.e., remote schools with almost 100% Mexican indigenous children) was cancelled due to flooding that year, but Bi-EP participants were able to visit a community with a school for indigenous students with their CREN0 instructors.

For the Oaxaca 2010 program the in-country director spent the first two weeks with the candidates, and then made five additional visits during the remainder of the program. During those visits he met with language instruction and CREN0 personnel, and with Bi-TEP candidates. He also was able to co-teach a number of seminars with the Oaxaca Bi-TEP coordinator during those visits to Mexico.

The Guatemala 2011 Bi-TEP program held both commonalities and significant differences with the previous year’s program. In terms of commonalities, Guatemala participants took intensive Spanish language classes, lived with Guatemalan families for a month, and did field work in local schools. The major difference between the two programs was, clearly, the length of the program, from five months 2010, to four weeks in 2011.

Given the shortened program duration, Bi-TEP personnel attempted to “ramp up” other aspects of the program. For example, Spanish language instruction was increased from two
weeks to the entire program length of four weeks. Also, the Guatemalan language school’s format for Spanish instruction was one-to-one instruction, providing even more intensive focus on improving the participants’ academic Spanish proficiency. Another key difference between 2010 and 2011 was the coursework load, down from 21 semester units to six. Instead of mandatory coursework for the credential, impossible because of the compressed length of program and the short amount of time that Bi-TEP personnel were given to change the program from Mexico to Guatemala, the 2011 program offered course credit for two “enrichment” courses, one titled *Spanish Language and Culture*, and the second titled *Immigration Studies: Focus on Guatemala*. Within this course, in-country director Baird arranged travel experiences and brought in experts to speak about topics such as the violent Civil War and its brutal repression of the indigenous communities in the 1970’s. He also emphasized collaboration between the candidates and their language instructors, who were mostly trained public school teachers and indigenous themselves, to conduct research and write an academic paper in Spanish on a topic of their choice and present it to the entire group of candidates and teachers. This resulted in a profound catharsis and learning experience for all involved about the social justice context of bilingual education in general, and in particular about the role of our own U.S. government in aiding and abetting repressive Latin American regimes such as Guatemala.

Another strategy to “do more with less [time]” for 2011 was to have the in-country director stay for the entire five weeks of the program. The full-time presence and participation of the director with the candidates was designed organize group travel experiences within Guatemala and to assist them in additional reflection and processing of their coursework, student teaching, and living experiences in Guatemala.

**Data Set and Analysis**
The particular data used for this study stem from a short questionnaire administered to the 2010 and 2011 candidates at the end of the international component of their program. Originally, the four questions on this protocol arose from Bi-TEP teacher candidates’ repeated statements regarding the unique contributions of the Bi-TEP international component to their preparation as teachers. As a result, we posed four very general questions about possible personal or professional growth from their travel-study program, and their perspectives on the factors contributing to the growth: (1) *Do you feel that you changed or grew as a person through your experiences in Mexico/Guatemala? If so, how?* (2) *Did your understanding about what it means to be a Bilingual Teacher change through your experience in Mexico/Guatemala? If so, how?* (3) *Did you experience other changes, for example, in your beliefs, or perspectives, or identity, or in other ways? If so, what were they?* (4) *What experiences in Mexico/Guatemala do you feel caused these changes?* Readers should note that we asked what we felt were open-ended questions, not anything specific to transnational education. In fact, we constructed this questionnaire before we began to formally conceptualize our emerging framework, and instead, used this data set and others for constructing our initial understanding of a Transnational Teacher Education paradigm. Teacher candidates hand-wrote their responses to these questions. They had the option of providing their names on the original protocol. A research assistant then transcribed the handwritten responses, assigning each teacher candidate a number to establish participant anonymity during data analyses.

We used several discourse analysis and qualitative research methods in our approach to data analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Gee, 2011a, 2011b). First, both authors independently reviewed half of the data, generating categories of responses from patterns that they identified in the data. As a second step, we together revised the categories to best capture all participant
responses. Table 1 lists the final version of categories accompanied by brief descriptions. As expected from the nature of the prompts-- ones that ask both about areas of growth, and for the factors responsible-- the categories are a combination of reported development and what propelled the changes. Each category that represents a particularly salient feature of Transnational Teacher Education is marked with TTE in parentheses.

[Insert Table 1 around here]

As a second step in our research design, the first author, an educational linguist, parsed the candidates’ responses into semantically-related discourse units, or stanzas (Gee, 2011b). This approach helped us more accurately represent trends in the results. For example, we counted a single stanza as one token, whether it was expressed over the course of several lines/sentences, or in a short phrase, thereby avoiding over or under assessment of the topic’s importance in the overall thinking of the teacher candidates. In total, there were 249 stanzas in the candidates’ responses.

Our third step was to separately analyze each stanza for the category that it represented once again. We then compared our ratings, corroborating the findings in common, and reached consensus on the best classification for those instances where our ratings differed.

Results and Discussion

We first discuss the results with a brief report of the most frequent categories of responses. We then examine how the teacher candidates’ responses gave evidence that their understandings reflected elements of Transnational Teacher Education.

Table 2 lists the five categories with the highest number of responses, accompanied by the percentage of data that they represent. Together, these five categories account for 66% of the data. Given the open-ended nature of the questions, we were surprised that the top two
categories in order of frequency were *Critical Global Connectedness* and *Cultural Proficiency*, at 20% and 14% respectively. There was no direct mention of these and related terms in the prompts.

[Insert Table 2 around here]

Responses in the category of *Critical Global Interconnectedness* category clearly indicated candidates’ recognition that they were part of a larger community than their nation states. Their responses emphasized commonalities despite differences, and understandings that transcended borders.

- “… Taking into account how much struggle and violence people experience and live in Guatemala expanded my patience and understanding of being human.”
- “Living and teaching in Oaxaca, and especially rural Oaxaca, really fortified my beliefs about many political and economic issues relating to Mexico, and U.S.-Mexico relations. Getting to know the Oaxaca people, mostly children, and talking to them about their experiences with family members who have traveled to the U.S. looking for work was truly an incredible experience.”

Responses in this category also noted connections between the teacher candidates’ own challenges as second language learners, and those facing their future students in California.

- “I also learned what it feels like to be at a linguistic disadvantage in a classroom as I had the opportunity to teach in my second language in a different country, unfamiliar to me. I think it will help me to better empathize as a bilingual teacher back home in California.”

In addition, this category contained responses showing candidates’ awareness of privilege and oppression associated with class, race, language, gender, and nation:
•“I struggled (and have during trips to other countries of extreme poverty) with our role as Americans when we come to other countries. The idea of constantly wanting to swoop in and fix things, then swoop back out seems to be the American way. I wish the program, and we as Americans, could work more with the culture to help establish cooperative changes which can continue on their own without us.”

•“Being in Guatemala really made me think about my identity being female-bodied and how that bears so much struggle/violence, yet also strength and peace and nurturance and community. At home I am sometimes able to ignore gender and, in a way, feign a level playing field. But here I feel that I’m a woman all the time. The value of the feminine in all people as well as solidarity that works towards a safer, healthier world for women that honors their strength, does not mean renouncing vulnerability and receptivity, but celebrates it.”

Earlier in this article we brought up the question of whether it is possible to lessen U.S. teacher candidates’ sense of “others” when interacting with people in the target country, in favor of encouraging a sense of the larger collective. We have noticed thus far in our data analysis that Bi-TEP participants tend to enact Roman’s (2003) conception of common differences. Here Roman elaborates:

The idea of common differences stresses how people may establish what is interconnected, shared or different in their experiences. The purpose here is not to over-valorize differences or read universal sameness in the process of making interconnections, which would thus repeat the past mistakes. Instead, it is to determine the bases and practice of solidarity (Roman, 2003, p, 284).
The idea of common differences repeatedly appeared in Bi-TEP candidates’ responses in the category of *Critical Global Interconnectedness*, and may be helpful to those who design ITE and TTE teacher programs, especially programs whose candidates vary so markedly from the target country’s peoples in terms of race, class, and language.

The second most frequent category of responses was *Cultural Proficiency*. Teacher candidates often reported how their knowledge of the target culture grew. In both Mexico and Guatemala, they were sure to highlight indigenous cultures as part of their new learning.

- “I felt that the program gave me a lot of knowledge about the culture of my future students, which is something that will be so helpful in the future. I am really excited this semester to take everything I learned in Oaxaca—language culture, experiences, and tie it to [California] education.”
- “Perhaps because of the huge contrasts in the role of the indigenous versus Latino culture there is greater opportunity for clarity and recognition of extremes which we can ultimately apply to our own experiences and realities in California.”

The next most frequent category of responses, *Bilingual Education and Teaching*, is not surprising given a direct question in the protocol regarding the teacher candidates’ understanding of being a bilingual teacher. The following extended quote is representative of those in this category:

- “My understanding of Bilingual Education changed in many ways. It is much more than transitioning English Learners into the mainstream education system. By recognizing, preserving, and strengthening the background language and culture of our students, we are allowing them to explore and discover their own self-identity. Through this we will see higher confidence and self esteem, which leads to higher school performance.”
In the category of *Bilingual Education and Teaching*, the relationship of indigenous languages to bilingual education also emerged frequently:

• “I also learned a lot about bilingual education in the sense of Spanish and an indigenous language which I had never thought of before. It opened my eyes to the fact that lacking bilingual education is causing some languages to almost disappear.”

The fourth category in terms of frequency reflected the common goal held by both ITE and TTE programs, *Personal Growth*. We expected that this was one of the top five categories given the protocol’s direct query about changing as a person. Responses similar to the following quotes were frequent:

• “The program setting offered a number of challenges and by overcoming them I feel more mature and ready to face the challenges that may come into a diverse classroom.

• “The largest change would be in my self-esteem, which I think has an impact in all areas of one’s life. I learned to be less self-centered, and found that I am more relaxed and perform better when I focus on the big picture instead of stressing over small things. My maturity level has definitely risen.”

The fifth and final category discussed here, *Importance of International Immersion*, appeared related to the final prompt on the questionnaire directly asking about factors behind any personal or professional changes because of the program.

• “The experiences that I feel caused these changes were making new friends, meeting new people, living with host families for most of the time, and learning from them and their stories and experiences, being able to observe and practice in a Mexican education setting, meeting teachers and administrators, and living in Oaxaca for a 5-month period to allow ourselves to be immersed in the most aspects possible of Mexican ways of life.”
Summarizing this part of the results section, analysis of the responses of 34 teacher candidates participating in Bi-TEP in two different countries revealed that the most prevalent growth areas for participants were in the areas of *Critical Global Interconnectedness* and *Cultural Proficiency*. Interestingly, none of the four protocol prompts directly asked about new understandings in these areas. Instead, teacher candidates independently generated these responses as critical understandings stemming from their teacher education program with an international component. The other 3 top categories emerging from this analysis were *Bilingual Education and Teaching*, *Personal Growth*, and the *Importance of International Immersion*.

**Teacher Candidates Acquiring a Transnational Education Paradigm**

Building on the quantitative description of the data in the previous section, we now return to the continuum of interconnectedness, particularly the descriptors of the right-hand side of Figure 2. How did Bi-TEP teacher candidates provide evidence of their transnational perspective in this short questionnaire regarding personal and professional growth? As in the Talburt study (2009), we use representative quotes from the candidates to illustrate their developing paradigm.

First, in terms of the continuum of interconnectedness itself, a Bi-TEP teacher candidate succinctly captures a transnational view:

• “In Oaxaca I learned how important my role as a bilingual teacher will be in helping build the bridge between these two nations that are inevitably becoming closer each day.”

The second descriptor on the right side of the continuum, *Solidarity*, was reflected in responses similar to the following:

• “Spanish was a struggle for me through the whole semester… I really have developed respect for people immigrating to the U.S. What an incredible challenge! As a future bilingual teacher I look forward to using this experience to ease the transitions.”
In contrast to the feeling of social distance among the participants in Talburt’s (2009) study of undergraduates studying in Spain, the third descriptor, Contact, was often reflected in Bi-TEP teacher candidates’ responses:

• “Bilingual teachers need to be ‘insiders’ to a community. This trip has made me realize how deep the understanding of another culture is, and how much first-hand experience with that culture is necessary to be able to understand it adequately.”

Standing in just as stark contrast from the Talburt study participants, was the Bi-TEP candidates’ recognition that cultures are dynamic and need to be studied or experienced in order to dispel stereotypes:

• “In general, there are so many stereotypes about Mexico and Mexicans, a lot of which depict Mexico as dangerous, an almost savage place. For me, Oaxaca was one of the most inviting places… I have my preconceptions/prejudices replaced with actual first-hand experiences.”

The Bi-TEP candidates also noted the hybrid nature of cultures in contact, especially in terms of their own identities. The quotes below come from a Chicano and White student, respectively.

• “My identity changed when I lived in Oaxaca because I was not Mexican enough. In Mexico, I am Mexican American and in the U.S., I am only Mexican.”

• “I am not quite sure why we use silly definitions to define our identities. I feel like a part of Mexico is with me at all times. I think at least 25% of my day in Spanish… Therefore, I do not feel the same. Something has changed.”

Evidence for two more descriptors located on the right side of the continuum of interconnectedness—Transnational “Fabric” and Social Action—are perhaps the ones that stand
out the most to us. For the first example, in recognition of the social “fabric” stretching across nation borders, a Bi-TEP candidate points out our shared responsibility in transnational migration:

• “Many Americans are not even close to being aware of how their country has contributed to this immigration pattern.”

The Bi-TEP candidates also establish through their responses that they are committed to go beyond simply observing and acquiring understandings of “others” through travel-study, to taking action on behalf of our shared communities:

• “I am more aware of the possible (probable) causes of social inequalities and the need for solutions through active citizenship, cultural awareness, coalitions, research and social activism.”

They also made the link to their future profession as teachers:

• “It taught me that becoming involved in the community and taking on a social activist role is part of the job.”

For our final example of Bi-TEP candidates’ developing transnational paradigm, we include here a sample of a child’s work. The sample was shared with us by a Bi-TEP participant, Alana Cayabyab, who was part of the Oaxaca, Mexico cohort (Torres & Cayabyab, 2011). After spending five months in Oaxaca, Alana returned to California to complete the requirements for her elementary bilingual teaching credential, which included four months of student teaching in a fourth-grade classroom. Alana epitomized our goal for candidates graduating from a TTE program, that is, to put their new understandings and commitments to work in classrooms with children and their families. Figure 4 is an unedited sample of a pen pal letter from a U.S. fourth-grader to a Oaxacan fourth-grader. The sample, part of an instructional unit designed by Alana,
is a powerful reminder to us all that we are part of a rich, transnational social fabric that can work in the service of student achievement and intercultural understandings.

[Insert Figure 4 around here]

Transnational Dispositions and Actions without International Travel?

In the context of our Bi-TEP work the question arises: Is international travel necessary for teacher candidates to acquire understandings about transnational students and their education? (e.g., cultural dynamism, a shared social fabric, local and global citizenry, common differences, solidarity as impetus for social action, among others discussed in this article.) We certainly know that international travel does not guarantee these understandings, as illustrated by the student quotes in Talburt’s study (2009). Within teacher education research, similar evidence emerged from the Menard-Warwick & Palmer study (2012) where a carefully planned visit and opportunity for discussion and reflection to hear a member of a transnational community give a testimonio did not sufficiently shift the teacher candidates’ understandings and dispositions. So if international study does not ensure transnational knowledge and solidarity, could we then design local, U.S. teacher preparation programs that do? In-country programs would reduce international program costs, pragmatically important in the absence of a grant like Bi-TEP or similar external funding, that can support teacher candidates’ international study.

With these practical considerations in mind, we are cautiously hopeful that local, non-international teacher education programs can be designed to emphasize solidarity with transnational populations. On the other hand, through five years of work with Bi-TEP, we have witnessed that daily interaction in the international setting outside of one’s home culture—whether for one month or five months—enacts in a powerful way the contact descriptor on the continuum of connectedness (Figure 2). In turn, this intercultural immersion seems to propel the
deep understandings regarding transnational students and families that we have documented here. Educational philosopher David Hansen (2010), in writing about a cosmopolitan orientation (cosmopolitan in the sense of citizen of the world, or global consciousness), asserts that the orientation is “… triggered in part by [peoples’] encounters with different norms” (Hansen, 2010, p. 9). International immersion ups the frequency and stakes of those intercultural encounters. Furthermore, we agree with Coulby (2006) that the dual language proficiency required of bilingual teacher candidates, and targeted in the Bi-TEP program through intensive language learning and application outside of the home country, is essential to intercultural and transnational dispositions. He writes:

Understanding fully another culture is probably impossible for most people. Those fortunate and diligent enough to be brought up in more than one language or those who take the time and trouble to acquire additional languages probably have the best chance. (Coulby, 2006, p. 252).

So while we acknowledge that it is not pragmatic to expect that all teacher candidates working with transnational families will engage in international teacher preparation, we would assert that for bilingual teacher candidates, who will be the primary experts and advocates in their future school settings for transnational communities, any and every effort to bring a transnational framework to their teacher education program is exceedingly important. To us that effort includes study outside of the U.S., in the partner transnational country.

**Conclusion**

For this article we analyzed questionnaire responses from two Bi-TEP cohorts to illustrate what seems to us a powerful, emerging paradigm for teaching credential programs with an international component, *Transnational Teacher Education*. Though few would be surprised
that we as California teacher educators are working in this area of transnationalism, it is important to note that over the past 10 years many other states have experienced a much greater rate of transnational migration of Latin American students and families than California (Crawford, 2004). We believe U.S. teacher educators may want to consider the addition of an international component to their programs, and the inclusion of elements of Transnational Teacher Education as we have laid out its initial description here. We would welcome colleagues from across the U.S. and from other countries who are experiencing transnational migration to join us as we continue to examine how best to help our teacher candidates recognize the unique skills and experiences of K-12 transnational students and their families, and how to work across borders in solidarity for the common good.
Figure 1
Paradigmatic Continuum for Teacher Preparation Programs with
International Travel/Study

Disconnect                                  Interconnectedness

“Intellectual Tourism”                       Transnational Solidarity
### Figure 2

**Continuum Descriptors**

| Disconnect                                      | Interconnectedness |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Individualism                                   | Comunalidad/Solidarity |
| Social Distance                                 | Contact            |
| Essentialized Cultures                          | Cultural Dynamism/Hybridity |
| Nation Borders                                  | Transnational “Fabric” |
| Nation Citizen                                  | Global Citizen      |
| Observation of “Others”                         | Social Action       |
Figure 3

International Teacher Education and Transnational Teacher Education

Along the Continuum

Disconnect  |  Interconnectedness

|  |

International Teacher Education

Transnational Teacher Education
| Category | Description |
|----------|-------------|
| Critical Global Interconnectedness (TTE) | Recognition of being part of a larger community; emphasis on commonalities despite differences, and connections that transcend nation borders; critical awareness about race, class, gender, politics, and historical relationships between home and target countries |
| Cultural Proficiency (TTE) | Acquisition of knowledge about target culture; challenging and dispelling of stereotypes |
| Bilingual Education and Teaching (TTE) | The importance of bilingualism, including maintenance of indigenous languages; pride and new understandings about being a bilingual teacher and about bilingual education |
| Personal Growth | Report of growth in strength, confidence, and self-acceptance |
| Immersion Experience | Acknowledgement of the role of language and cultural immersion in the target country for new understandings and personal growth |
| Social Justice (TTE) | Recognition of the need to work together against oppression and for social justice |
| Cultural Identity (TTE) | Teacher candidates’ self-examinations of their cultural, racial, and linguistic identities |
| Student Teaching in Target Country/in Target Language (TTE) | New understandings and skills arising student teaching experiences during travel-study |
| Rejection of Materialism | Devaluing of material goods for living and for teaching |
| Appreciation of U.S. Standard of Living | Comparisons of the level of poverty in the target country with their home country |
| Importance of Collaboration | New learning on the value of cooperation |
| Social Justice Research Projects during Travel/Study (TTE) | Value of independent and collaborative research projects on a social issue in the target county during travel-study |
| Increase in Flexibility | Becoming more flexible and adaptable in everyday living and in teaching |
| Teaching | Value of additional student teaching in general |
| Spanish Proficiency (TTE) | Increase in Spanish-speaking skills |
| Philosophy for Teaching | Importance of reflecting on beliefs about teaching |
Table 2

Top Five Reflection Categories

| Category Name                                      | Percentage |
|---------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Critical Global Interconnectedness (TTE)          | 20%        |
| Cultural Proficiency (TTE)                        | 14%        |
| Bilingual Education and Teaching (TTE)            | 13%        |
| Personal Growth                                   | 10%        |
| Importance of International Immersion             | 9%         |
Figure 4
Sample of Student Work from the California Classroom of a Bi-TEP Student
Teacher after International Travel-Study in Oaxaca, Mexico

- Explores the world through writing
- Letters to 4th grade class in Oaxaca

Dear 4th grade class in Oaxaca,
I am a second grade at B Elementary school. We want to know what you are learning in your class. Do you know my grampa was born there in Oaxaca. What is your favorite place in Oaxaca? Do you guys watch scary movies. What is your weather like? Sincerely,

Signature
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