

Abstract

A review of borderland education or issues reveals a dearth of information related to actual teaching and learning practices. Traditionally, examinations of border experiences and issues have related to immigration, law enforcement, environmental safety, economics, etc. Consequently, constructing a body of educational research in our increasingly complex and politicized educational system, particularly in the San Diego-Tijuana region, is crucial. Borderland education promotes educational and other transformation beyond cultural xenophobia or cultural tourism (ethnocentric) to cultural border crossing and dual citizenship (world-centric). Particular to classroom practices, border pedagogy is a set of practices that enables teachers and students to view education as a political, social, and cultural enterprise and transform educational and related systems and socio-cultural barriers. It includes stakeholders (teachers, administrators, students, parents, etc) as contextual, political, integrative and not neutral.

It appears that the dominant story about language, culture, identity and academic success is linked to the portrayal of borders as barriers. In other words, as geo-political borders represent impermeability, socio-cultural (e.g., academic) borders reflect impermeability, particularly against poor, ethnic and linguistic ‘minority’ students. This article will describe the context and academic implications of borderland education. The authors discuss teaching and learning in *la frontera* – the border region of the United States and Mexico. We offer an example of an international teacher education collaboration to clarify and understand the common patterns of bi-national, borderland experiences and best practices. The 5th annual Border Pedagogy Conference to be held at the University of San Diego October 7-8, 2005 is an example of what may be a new direction in international education.

Overview

“Border pedagogy” is meant to transform educational conversations into something more meaningful for teachers and others in order to better meet the needs of all students in the border region. It emerges from a struggle to understand and articulate the dynamics of a particular group of people living and learning in a particular place—a place where the United States borders Mexico—a region in continuous flux, “a borderspace in which cultural ‘hybridities’ are formed, where people from different ethnicities and classes, cultural and geographic backgrounds come together daily to remake their lives,” (Dear & Leclerc, 2003, p. xi).

“Pedagogy,” often narrowly defined as practice, has taken on various meanings in relationship to the institutional culture and politics of schooling. For our purposes,

‘pedagogy’ can be thought of in broader terms closer to “education” or “praxis” that is intended to encourage learners to become critical thinkers and autonomous learners. Such praxis may place a heavy burden on teachers in a border region to operate in ways that may be counter to the existing norms and expectations, and perhaps even place teachers in professional danger.

Border studies are at least a decade old and suggest something to be studied about a particular geographical space, about the social, cultural, and political dynamics and identities unique to a place. However, these studies have primarily been self-contained, taking place on either side of the geo-political and socio-cultural borders. More recently, border studies include and encourage open and honest cross border conversations for the purpose of increasing awareness and understanding of common issues/concerns that influence teachers and students. This article discusses a timely, perhaps historical, conference that offers the potential to move us closer to democratic ideals, an ethic of (social) justice and care (social action) in education, and a collective shift in consciousness (transformation). The 5th Annual Border Pedagogy Conference¹ will create the space to engage in and help define this evolving field of Borderland Education.

The Problem

In the U.S., dropout rates for Latinos and American Indians hover between forty and fifty percent, almost double that for African Americans and triple that for Caucasians (Kitchen, Velaquez & Myers, 2000). According to a UN report: African Americans in the U.S. as 27th ranked nation in world re: social well-being; Latinos would rank 33rd (Delgado, 2003). Similar outcomes can be seen in Mexico for indigenous people.

¹ <http://www.sandiego.edu/borderpedagogy>

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Educators need to develop new paradigms, therefore, that empower teachers, parents, students, and policy makers to transform the educational failures that are most observable in border regions and that are relevant to educational transformation and social justice everywhere. As noted through discussions between educators from both sides of the border for the past few years, it is time for a methodology of teaching and learning appropriate for students, teachers, and parents who live in a permeable border region Cline, Necochea, & Delgado (2003).

There are at least two more obvious aspects to our current social and educational crisis: a growing disconnect between teachers and students; and the limitations of our current standards movement. Upon examining the literature on teachers and demographic changes in student populations, two alarming facts emerge. First, the overwhelming majority of teachers continue to be White or European American and tend to teach in the way that they learn (Romo, Bradfield, & Serrano, 2004). In other words, many teachers misunderstand, marginalize and mis-serve the growing minority-majority population by teaching and interacting with students as if students shared in the teachers' backgrounds (Chubbuck, 2004).

A second institutional, yet more subtle area that impacts student connection to teachers and academic success is the overuse of monocultural teacher education standards. In the past decade we have seen many approaches to improving student learning. By the 1990's the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the National Board of Professional Teacher Standards (NBPTS) contained minimal standards regarding diversity in general. In addition, the broad statements in these standards do not specifically address multicultural approaches to learning and

teaching in diverse classrooms. While some states, such as California, implemented a Cross Cultural Language and Academic Development credential in the early 1990s, the newest iteration of California credentialing standards have been challenged for being vague and fewer in number than in the earlier credential. In short, there is ongoing disagreement over what teachers should know and do in order to help students succeed in diverse K-12 classrooms. At this writing, the California Commission on Teacher Education is in the middle of a contentious process to determine a standard set of ‘Teacher Performance Assessments’ (TPAs), which may not even be available or enforceable in near future (Quezada & Romo, 2004).

However, another aspect of our educational crisis relates to what is not very obvious or even conscious. In border regions, the potential for teachers and students, particularly for African Americans and Latinos/as, to have internalized a marginalized or inferior self image is particularly potent. Ogbu discusses the patterns of students and families of ‘involuntary minority’ groups have internalized negative beliefs about academic and cultural success (1997). Many students of color experience the bitterness of not fitting in to school environments. Many turn inward and subsequently find themselves disconnected from the educational gatekeepers and resources that can help them resist assimilation or identity loss and find school success (Romo, 2005; Stanton-Salazar, 1997, 2001; Tatum, 1998).

The Context

“The Tijuana/California border zone offers an ideal laboratory for understanding how globalization is shaping a new kind of urbanism” (Herzog, 2003, p. 120). San Diego is paradoxically a coastal desert community consisting of some of the wealthiest and

poorest in the state with dynamic, complex, diverse hybridization of Mexican *mestizaje* that is any combination of indigenous, European, Asian, and Black-historically both conquerors and the conquered. It is the “home” of over 20,000 homeless depending on the season. This is a region of border fences and border patrols, missionaries and threatening vigilante groups. It is a zone filled with fear, fierce competition for resources, survival-of-the fittest attitudes, and negative anticipation. It pulsates with energy, is alive, real, everything but mainstream. Baja California consists of Los Angeles/San Diego and Tijuana/Mexicali metropolitan regions that no longer represent separate growth poles within two nations, but areas that have coalesced to become a single region with an emerging social order separated by an international border.

This region “should now be regarded as a single, integrated, urban system of global significance,..with a demographic trend toward “Latinization”...still characterized by coercion and disenfranchisement of its inhabitants. This new place...is densely populated, and complicated; it is multicentered, multicultural, and multilingual...a world city of increasing national and international significance... although the relationship between place and culture is readily conceded, there are few mental or material maps of border cultures,” (Dear & Leclerc, 2003, pp. 2-3). “Ethnographic research on border crossings...shows that travelers carry with them an openness to difference, but they also report frustrated encounters, that the search for a better (or different) life runs up against fences, police and dogs, death and suspicion, and confusion about conventions governed by different rules. Border-crossers demonstrate their share of discovery and indifference, unrest and transgression, joint borrowings and discriminations of every kind. These

ambiguities can be documented, to a degree, in social science studies (especially anthropology)...”

Among the new forms of interaction are those that reflect the ideas of Mexican political leader Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas called “ideals without boundaries” – movements that promote fundamental freedom and rights, that is, human, women’s and ethnic rights as well as environmental and health concerns, and that expose uneven power relations and persistent inequalities based on ethnic, racial, gender, and class differences. Latino/a worlds of the North and South transcend geographic, cultural, and linguistic borders, and described by Constance Sutton as a “transnational sociocultural system” that increasingly and reciprocally influences cultural experiences both within the U. S. and within Latin American countries of origin.

Toward a theory of Borderland Education: context of place, space, borders, etc.

Our primary concern in this writing centers around how the border region or “place” relates to theory and practice in education and the relationship and interconnections between literacy, culture, identity, and difference as it pertains to groups traditionally excluded within the dominant discourse of schooling. Border pedagogy is used as the catalyst for discussion though complicated by its interdisciplinary implications and gaps in the literature specific to the concept—clearly difficult to research and organize. Articles in the *Journal of Borderland Studies* (2003) that were reviewed balanced on the side of economic issues and trends, immigration, migration and identity, and national security, and less on educational issues though clearly stated as part of their global vision. In the case of the San Diego–Tijuana border there exists a plethora of

information regarding illegal immigration, trade (NAFTA), and drug trafficking that indicate increasing hostility and political polarization. However, there is also a growing amount of research that speaks of transformation and more hopeful futures. Border pedagogy is an attempt to broaden the dialogue to include teachers and educators and others in the educational environment.

Much academic discussion of border pedagogy has been confined to theoretical paradigms (comparing gender, race, ideology, etc., as a way to understand socio-cultural domination (Cook, 2000). Popular media from advertisements to television news, promote a national chauvinism and parochialism that opposes rather than joins border communities. (Giroux & MacLaren, 1994). The resultant view that Mexico has little socio-cultural, economic, or educational value to inform or offer U.S. society overlooks the complex reality of interaction, integration, and complexity around the U.S.-Mexican border (Giroux, 1994, p. 337).

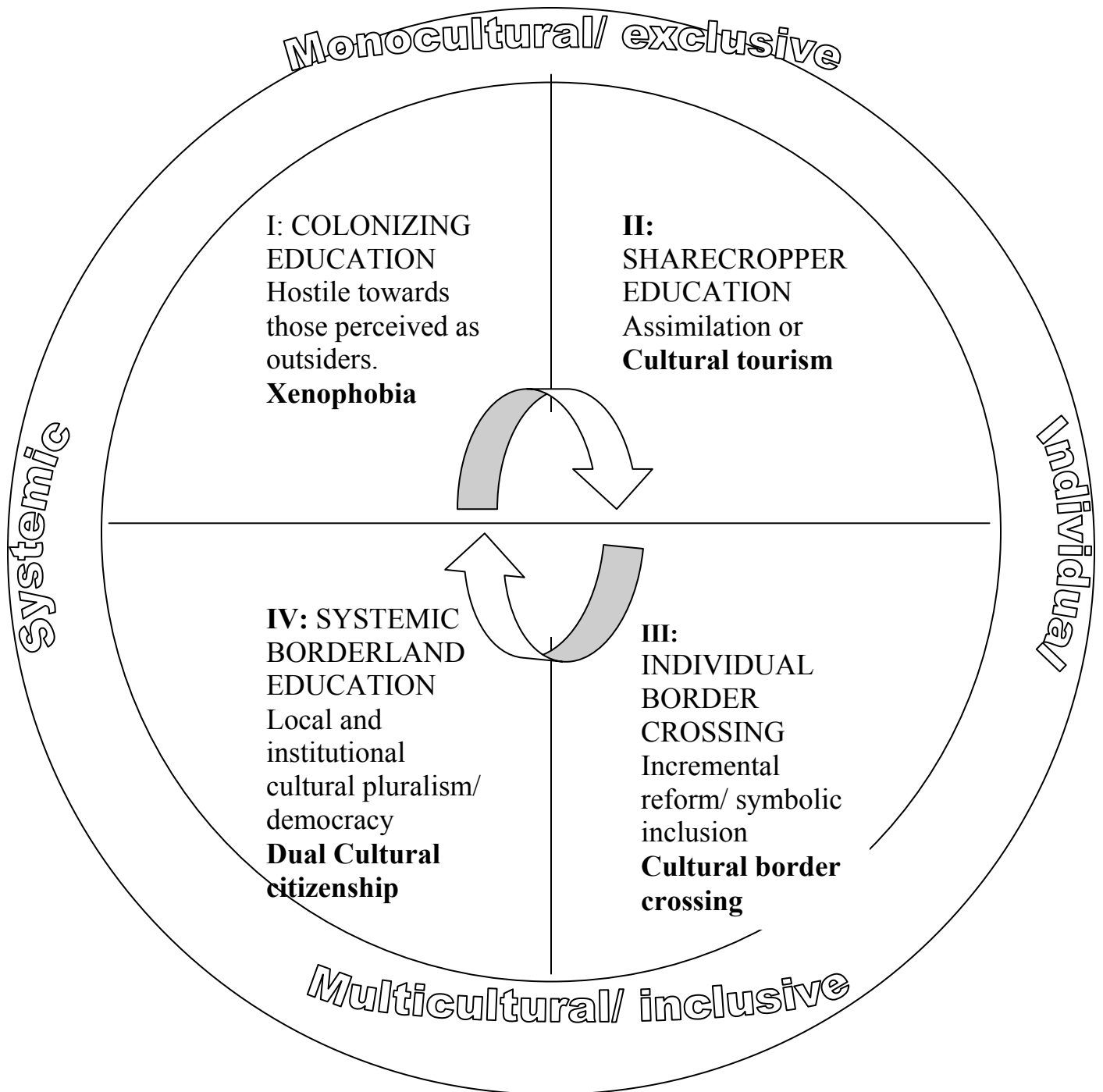
Toward a theory of Border Pedagogy/ Borderland Education: a conceptual model

Teaching and learning in *la frontera* – the border region of the United States and Mexico – is filled with complexities requiring an understanding of the cultural, linguistic, and political dynamics that influence student performance in school. As educators in a border region where a high percentage of schools are designated as high risk or under-performing according to accountability standards imposed by mono-cultural thinkers and some perhaps less-informed policy makers, and whose multi-cultural students have limited access to academic opportunities that provide pathways to higher education, we need to recognize the need for more empowering forms of theory and practice. We must

rethink linguistic, social, and theoretical boundaries within pedagogical practices if we believe that pedagogy is a serious tenet central to democracy. About this Adriana Hernandez writes "...it must link not only the pedagogical to the political but must be taken up in a way that engages the specificity of contexts in which people translate private concerns into public issues" (1997, p. 7).

In arguing for emancipatory pedagogical practices, Hernandez borrows from Roger Simon to define pedagogy as a "deliberate attempt to influence how and what knowledge and identities are produced among particular sets of social relations..." (1988, p. 2). She sees school settings as places where struggle and contradictions are inherent and she proposes more dialectical ways of learning and knowing that take into account power structures and culture that engage the educator/teacher as well as the student/learner in a process for change that moves away from oppressive models and toward critical citizenship and agency. She suggests the use of voice and dialogue in the tradition of critical pedagogy (that legitimizes difference) and Bakhtin's theory—to deconstruct and reconstruct the occurrences of everyday life. In this space shifting consciousness has the potential for transformation and possibility, and at the same time proposes the construction of a political vision that might better serve teachers and students in the region. Hernandez recommends and stresses the importance of taking into account theoretical developments from a diversity of fields within social theory.

Figure 1: Context of Borderland Education



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Borderland education activism (Figure 1) goes beyond activity and includes an individual's readiness to be constructive or generative in knowledge, dispositions (attitudes, values, beliefs), and skills related to border identity, community, and justice (Romo, 2005). In short, if critical pedagogy can be seen as 'naming' issues and hidden dynamics, Borderland education can be seen as 'working' them. Borderland education works to de-colonize and revitalize learning and teaching practices, and employ systemic integration between apparently opposite parts (e.g., conscious/ unconscious, individual/ collective, colonizer/colonized, majority/ minority) to promote liberty and justice for all. Border pedagogy promotes the transformation beyond cultural xenophobia or cultural tourism (ethnocentric) to cultural border crossing and dual cultural citizenship (world-centric). Particular to classroom practices, border pedagogy is a practice that enables teachers and students to view education as a political, social, and cultural enterprise and transform educational and related systems and socio-cultural barriers.

Border pedagogy for this discussion is most related to Quadrant III practices. It is related to culturally responsive teaching or multicultural education goals: the theory of cultural pluralism; ideals of social justice and the end of racism, sexism, and other forms of prejudice and discrimination; affirmations of culture in the teaching and learning process; and visions of educational equity and excellence leading to high levels of academic learning for all youth (Bennett, 2002). It is related to critical pedagogy, which begins with an understanding that knowledge is contextual, therefore political and not neutral (Darder 2002). Quadrant IV reflects the institutionalization of knowledge, dispositions, and skills in a critical mass of a dynamic organization. This conference offers a glimpse into the implications of Border Pedagogy.

5th Annual Border Pedagogy Conference

The first Binational Border Pedagogy Conference took place on May 18th, 2002. At the invitation of the two founding universities—La Universidad Iberoamericana (UIA), Tijuana and California State University (CSU), San Marcos—the event gathered teachers, academicians, and education administrators from both sides of the border. Participants left as members of a binational family with a shared commitment to better understand both educational systems and forge alliances to benefit education along the U.S.-Mexican border. Each year has seen the participant pool swell through greater participation and interest.

Over time, the conference has made concrete contributions to education in the border zone. From past years, there has been sufficient material developed to build curriculum, including a doctoral program in Border Pedagogy housed in the UIA, Mexicali campus, as well as research programs and a research center at the Tijuana campus. There have also been papers presented nationally and internationally.

The Binational Border Pedagogy Conferences have started a process of collaborative reflection and analysis, sharing information and striving for educational programs that reflect the reality and the needs of students and teachers along the U.S.-Mexican border. It is necessary to continue this dialogue and build models that impact life and learning along this border. The success of these conferences has demonstrated the need to create a space and time in which the exchange of ideas can occur.

Event Description, 2005

This year we will expand the conference format to include two days of activities. In addition to connecting researchers and practitioners from counseling, leadership,

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special education, and marriage and family therapy, the conference will bring parents and policy makers together on the second day. The conference, which promises to gather approximately 300 participants, is the result of partnerships that will impact learning and other related areas throughout borderlands in the Southwest and beyond. It will be a historic gathering of scholars from both sides of all four U.S.-Mexico Border States. The theme of “Bridging Borders That Divide Us: Opening Access to Educational Opportunity,” indicates the intent to inform and promote future binational civic and educational program development. Additionally, this year’s event will lead to the creation of a joint master’s degree in Border Pedagogy, becoming the only such binational, U.S.-Mexican degree in existence.

Conference Goals

Border pedagogy is both a process and product of trans-cultural, interdisciplinary, constructivist teaching and learning. Therefore, the conference design departs from traditional research and academic discourse, which is no longer adequate for systemic transformation, particularly in the border region. Discourse about action research as a way to develop new paradigms and new practices informs the intent and design of this conference. This year’s conference goals include:

- To model a forum of critical inquiry and constructivism
- To foster participants’ (parents, K-12 practitioners, researchers and policy makers) creative/ generative learning (learning that produces new or adaptive knowledge)
- To promote binational ownership and authorship of border pedagogy knowledge, dispositions (attitudes, values, and beliefs), and skills
- To explore the application of learning in the context of social justice in a borderland region

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To achieve these goals, this conference approach may be described as ‘experiential education,’ in that it emphasizes the integration of experience, theory and application in a collaborative and constructivist context.



To this end, the first day of this year’s conference has been designated as a day to **experience** borderland education (border pedagogy), as well as to **share experiences** among educators from Texas to California on both sides of the border. Participants from various disciplines will visit classrooms and sites designated by the Border Pedagogy Steering Committee as ‘outstanding borderland education.’ In addition parents and policy makers will join with practitioners and researchers on the second day, to construct of a new paradigm related to, but not limited to the following key educational issues:

- The intersection and complexity of language, race, nationality, and social difference;
- Key concepts, principles, and major models of diversity;
- Perspectives of teacher-scholars and the roles of schools in education/ society;
- An examination of stakeholder identities as members of teams and/ or learning communities;
- The close economic, political and social ties that bind both countries and communities within each country

The appendices will offer the reader some insight into the complexity of the conference in attendees, participants, and assessment construction. Notwithstanding the complexity, teacher education instructors from the various participating universities are working in conjunction with the hosting university’s director of evaluation to assess the impact of the conference on participants’ development of cross cultural competencies. In fact, there are several evaluations taking place in the context of the conference. After a

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brief description of the various evaluations that offer hopes of significant research related to border pedagogy on both sides of the border, I will highlight how two of the several courses in teacher education have incorporated the conference as tools to promote course learning outcomes.

There are several research/ assessment projects directly related to the 5th Annual Border Pedagogy Conference. In conjunction with the host university's director of assessment, they are designed to: identify and assess the development of 'intercultural competence' at the university; assess explicit intercultural competencies for courses and then examine growth or improvement based on conference experiences (in class/ out of class).

On a larger, conference level, a research team will study the themes, implications of learning points, and next steps for conference participants as the conference unfolds. Each session facilitator will have access to technology in the session rooms and will record summaries that will be made available to conference directors and research subcommittee members at the end of each session. The summaries will include at least: 3 major learning points/ themes; 2 implications of discussions for teaching and learning in a border region (i.e., implications for border pedagogy); 1 next step for conference attendees/ research. There are approximately eight morning sessions and eight afternoon sessions, not including the large group gatherings or self-organizing groups that will be facilitated. Beyond the immediate utility of being able to report a sketch of the conference attendees experiences at the luncheon and at the final large group review session, the data will be available for formal study.

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In service teachers will offer another research possibility. We anticipate that approximately 50-75 K-12 teachers from both sides of the border will participate in the conference. Some will seek one unit of Continuing Education credit through this participation. The final projects from this group will provide data from integrative essays, journals/ reflections about border pedagogy and impact of various aspects of the conference on their professional development (re: border pedagogy).

Pre-service teachers will provide data regarding their development as borderland educators respective to their conference experience as co-curricular learning tool. This assessment will primarily take place through individual instructors' assessments. However, a rich follow up may be the collective assessment of the role of border pedagogy across public and private institutions on both sides of the border. Below, I highlight two of the currently known six courses that are related to the Border Pedagogy Conference.

Integration of K-12 teacher preparation

Various teacher education courses from both sides of the border are infusing the border pedagogy conference into their syllabi. We offer three U.S. examples, although there are five others from the U.S. and Mexico that are involved in this process. The first is a credential course: *Philosophical and Multicultural Foundations of Education*

This course is designed to:

- to stimulate explorations of the concept and context of “borders”, internationally, institutionally (within the curricular, research and service components of the University of San Diego), and interpersonally;
- to serve as a vehicle of communication, dialogue, exchange and collaboration, in order to break down all sorts of barriers between the peoples who live on both sides of geo-political, social, and cultural borders.

From the course description, we read:

The intent of the course is to enable candidate's to acquire the background and skills necessary to adjust their teaching techniques and strategies to promote academic success for all students in the culturally (i.e., race, ethnicity, language, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, exceptionality, privilege, religion, etc) diverse classroom.

For these students in thin introductory level course, participation in the conference will fulfill their requirements to interface with County Office of Education resources (e.g., AVID; Bilingual Education; Parent involvement; and technology). They may also fulfill the introduction to Community Service Learning by visiting designated schools on Friday.

The second course is a master's course: *Cross Cultural Communication*. It is part of the new master's in Language, Literacy and Culture. From the course descriptor, we read:

This highly Interactive course will be divided into two major themes. In order to fully explore the nature of cross-cultural interaction in the United States, the first theme will cover both dominant and co-cultural U.S. values and communicative patterns. The impact of media, economics, education and politics will also be explored. The second theme will provide insight into international cross-cultural relationships, with emphasis on the U.S.-Mexican border community. However, a cross-analysis of U.S. values and cultural patterns will continue throughout the course.

A major project in this course involves a synthesis and application of border pedagogy (knowledge, dispositions, skills) development with integral theory, as well as training related to psychodynamic organizations (e.g., the collective unconscious as it relates to education) (Romo & Roseman, 2004; Monroe, 2004; Wilbur, 2004).

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Task: Analyze two events from the day as they relate to the collective unconscious and border pedagogy/ borderland education. One event must relate to an issue that you personally connect with; the second must relate to an issue that is not 'personal.'

Method: At any point in the conference, you may notice a strong emotional or visceral reaction. This indicates an area of cross cultural conflict that may be worth examining, as it may teach us something about the 'system in the mind'/ collective unconscious at play in this gathering.

The area of cross cultural conflict may be about some area that you know a great deal about and take very personally or it may be something that is fairly new to you. This reaction, nonetheless, is the starting point for the assignment.

Part 1 (I/ it): Examine the situation/ context in which you found yourself. What was the text (what was going on/ what was it about)? Who was involved? What were the comments/ dynamics that led to this point of conflict? See Course Objectives A: 1-4.

Part 2 (we): What does this interaction represent or act out on behalf of the group? Consider any major events that have shaped the character and perceptions of the people? What are the group goals? What values seem to be important to this group? What does it (or subgroups within it) deem important? Use the major value dimensions discussed in class plus any others that you consider to be important. For example:

Materialism; Relationship to Time; Relationship to Nature; Power Distance;
Collectivism vs Individualism; Work/Leisure; Order/Detail; Education; Tolerance;
Present/Past/Future Orientation

As a rule of thumb, select at least five areas to cover in this section. See Course Objectives C:6, E: 9, 10.

Part 3 (its): What is the system in the mind that seems to be operative? How does the geographical location influence this system in the mind? (I.e., describe the political economy of the group culture re: production, distribution, and consumption of cultural and material goods.) How does this system in the mind relate to the system of the conference? How does this relate to events/ systems in the mind in society at large?

Future studies

The problem of academic failure, particularly among poor Black and Latino students is unacceptable. The 5th Annual Border Pedagogy Conference is an attempt to systematize the study of and engagement in the development of effective educational policy and practices. The complexities that arise in an exaggerated way along the U.S.-

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Mexican border offer researchers, practitioners, and educational policy makers the opportunity to address comprehensive and substantive educational transformation.

Future studies should build upon some of the areas that this conference examines:

Efficacy of various pre-service and in-service teacher education methods, among private and public institutions;

Impact and nuances of particular support programs in border region (Migrant Ed, Bilingual ed, AVID)

Role of collective unconscious in current educational outcomes and borderland education

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