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Teacher Dispositions for Effective Education in the Borderlands

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Abstract

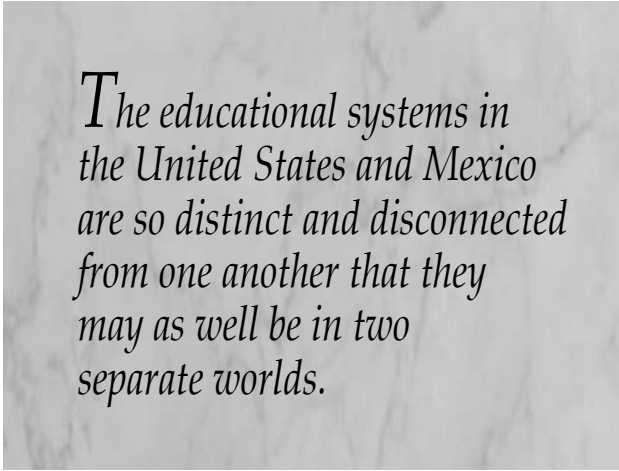
Teacher dispositions, attitudes, and motivation play important roles in educating students so that they are highly successful in school. This is particularly true for students in borderland areas who frequently need to negotiate two cultures, two languages, and two worlds. Using grounded theory with extant data from Tijuana and San Diego-area teachers who participated in a border pedagogy training institute, characteristics that are critical to teacher dispositions—which can make significant differences in effectiveness with students in the borderlands—have been identified.

The educational systems in the United States and Mexico are so distinct and disconnected from one another that they may as well be in two separate worlds (Cline and Necochea 2002; Necochea and Cline 2003; Reyes and Garza 2005). Current teacher preparation and in-service training programs in the United States, even those close to *la línea* (the border), rarely mention the Mexican educational system, much less provide the professional development programs teachers need to be effective with borderland students—especially in the areas of dispositions, attitudes, and motivation (McLaren 1994; Oppenheimer 1998; Martínez 1994, 2001). Though the authors have focused on the regions adjacent to the United States and Mexican border, borderland communities can extend deeply into either country when individuals from both nationalities come into daily contact (Cline and Necochea 2004a). Discerning which teacher dispositions are necessary for effectively educating students in borderland communities has become extremely important in light of the changing demographics within schools. As Major and Brock (2003, 8) stated:

Empirical studies indicate that effective teachers of diverse learners share a common core of knowledge, skills, and dispositions. This includes knowledge of

second-language-acquisition theory and pedagogy, use of culturally relevant curricula, the propensity to validate the students' home language and culture, engagement in reflectivity and professional growth, a clear sense of their own ethnicity, and a commitment to student advocacy.

The notion that the border is confluent and requires a particular disposition is one that borderland teachers need to be aware of and make a fundamental part of their training. Armed with this knowledge, teachers become better prepared to adapt to the local context, linguistic diversity, and cultural differences they encounter, and to make necessary modifications (Flores and Clark 2002; Cline and Necochea 2002; Major and Brock 2003). The cultural confluence of the two countries impacts all aspects of life; therefore, it is paramount that teachers understand the transnational influences that come knocking at the schoolhouse door. As educators try to understand language issues, societal expectations, and the impact of biculturalism, their dispositions will have a profound effect on students, their families, communities, and schools (Martínez 1994; McLaren 1994; Flores and Clark 2002; Reyes and Garza 2005). Flores and Clark (2002, 9) discussed the need for border pedagogy at confluent borders:



The educational systems in the United States and Mexico are so distinct and disconnected from one another that they may as well be in two separate worlds.

Other researchers have called for a 'border pedagogy' in which educators recognize that the border is confluent, that it must be navigated and traversed, and that it is not simply a dividing line between two countries. . . . Instead, the border region should be viewed as an energetic, constantly changing area where 'new possibilities are always on the horizon.'

For schools to successfully educate transnational children, teachers must possess certain dispositions that allow them to incorporate students' needs into the educational setting, thus enabling learners to negotiate both cultures academically and socially (Martínez 2001; Major and Brock 2003). Transnational students must learn in an environment in which both cultures are accepted, celebrated, and affirmed for the strengths they offer (McLaren 1994; Nieto 1996; Cline and Necochea 2004a; Reyes and Garza 2005).

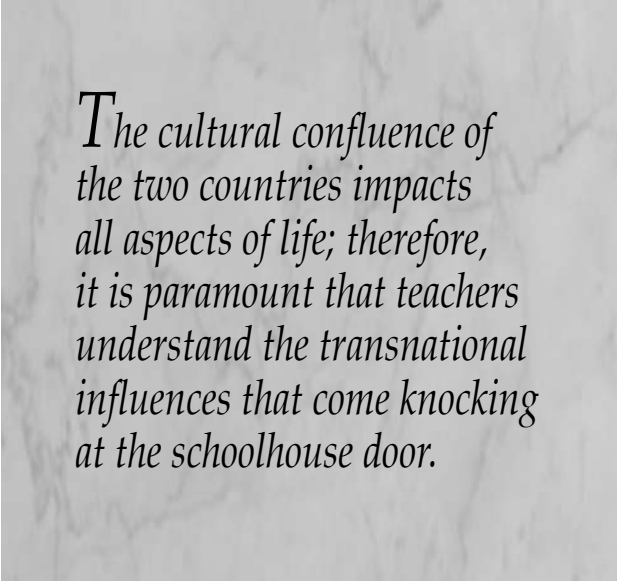
In dialogues with teachers from the Tijuana and San Diego area who participated in the Border Pedagogy Biliteracy Institute (Cline and Necochea 2002, 2004a; Cline et al. 2003; Necochea and Cline 2003), critical elements that are related to effective teacher dispositions and help to make a difference in student effectiveness in the border region were gleaned. The Border Pedagogy Biliteracy Institute brought together teachers from both sides of the border for face-to-face dialogues to deconstruct what borderland education involves

or should involve. During the exchanges, these educators shared ideas, strategies, and knowledge about one another's educational systems.

Methodology

This exploratory study, conducted during the 2003–2004 school year, addressed the question, What are the characteristics of effective teachers in the borderlands? This question emerged from transnational professional development activities connected to border pedagogy and previous research that examined the phenomenon of border education and its transborder influences (Cline and Necochea 2002, 2004a; Necochea and Cline 2003).

Participants. The study involved 40 teachers (20 from the San Diego area and 20 from Tijuana) from both public and private schools who attended the Border Pedagogy Bilingual Institute, a series of 10 professional development sessions, during the 2003–2004 academic year. The teachers self-selected into this professional development course, and all participants were involved in the study. Sixteen of the U.S. participants were bilingual teachers with varying degrees of Spanish proficiency, and four were monolingual (English only). Among the Mexican participants, the degree of bilingualism was limited, with only a few who spoke English proficiently. The majority of the Mexican participants considered themselves as Spanish-only speakers. The participants met approximately once a month, in alternating countries, to discuss how to work with students in the border region. Mixed transnational groups of approximately eight participants each were formed, with proficient bilingual individuals placed in each group to facilitate and translate the conversations. These facilitators ensured full participation and understanding of the discussions that transpired.



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Data collection. Throughout the training sessions, extant data was collected on a regular basis. Extant data resulted from participants' reflections, evaluations, feedback, and the instructional artifacts they produced. Prompts often were used to generate reflections on a specific topic. For example, for the purposes of this study, during the seventh session, participants were asked to produce a 10-minute essay on the prompt: What are the characteristics of effective teachers in the borderlands?

The responses were compiled and analyzed for emerging themes and patterns following a comparative-contrastive analytical procedure (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss and Corbin 1998). The themes and patterns that emerged illustrated the strong

views and passions the participants had about effective teachers in the borderlands. Though each response was coded as being made by a Mexican or U.S. participant, nationality did not appear to make a difference because both groups of participants exhibited the same emerging themes and patterns.

Analysis. This study used grounded theory analytical procedures in which theory emerged from the data collected through participant interactions and reflections (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss and Corbin 1998). Preliminary findings on emerging themes and patterns were distributed to the participants for reaction and critique. As a result, the teachers attending the Bilingual Institute became coresearchers in developing the process that was used in theory creation. This type of methodology was consistent with that of Webber and Robertson (2004, 267), who found that “students became coresearchers when data were gathered daily from the participants and then offered to them for comment and critique of the emerging findings.” Simultaneously, participants in the Bilingual Institute gained firsthand experience in conducting qualitative research, which enabled them to see how they could apply similar inquiry methods in their own classrooms.

Findings

Teachers must have the right disposition for educating transnational students within the current educational climate. The right disposition, however, is elusive to define (Rodrigues 2003). Certain variables emerged from the data, which allowed for an analysis of patterns and themes to help delineate what successful teachers have in common when educating students in the border region. Perkins, Jay, and Tishman (1993, 75) defined disposition as “people’s tendencies to put their capabilities into action.” After seven sessions about border issues, participants were able to construe notions about effective teacher dispositions for borderland schools.

The five themes on teacher disposition that emerged from the data were:

- open-mindedness and flexibility;
- passion for borderland education;
- ongoing professional development;
- culturally sensitive; and
- pluralistic language orientation.

These characteristics were consistent with those identified by Major and Brock (2003), who saw empathy, attitudes, insights, and pedagogical strategies as essential traits when teaching diverse students.

These five characteristics are interrelated, overlapping, and interdependent in producing a profile of teachers who are likely to be effective in borderland schools. These themes are not stand-alones, but are part of a systemic whole that teachers need to have a significant influence on schools and schooling in the border region. The themes are artificially separated here for the purpose of analysis and discussion. From a systems thinking perspective (Senge et al. 2000), the greater the presence of the themes, the more likely teachers will be able to put their abilities into action.

Open-mindedness and Flexibility

Borderland schools frequently must address the unexpected, e.g., the sudden arrival of Mixtecos from Oaxaca. Therefore, teachers must be open-minded and flexible regarding the students in their care and the curriculum they design and implement. Traditional structures and instructional practices often are ineffective with students who reside in the borderlands (Flores and Clark 2002; Cline and Necochea 2002). Therefore, teachers need to contemplate more effective schooling—at times without a blueprint to follow. One U.S. participant stated:

For schools to successfully educate transnational children, teachers must possess certain dispositions that allow them to incorporate students' needs into the educational setting.

Un maestro/maestra eficaz debe de tener una mente abierta y respetar a sus estudiantes, sin importar la raza, religión, o posición socio-económica de éstos. En la región fronteriza, la mayoría de los estudiantes son hispanos. (An effective teacher should have an open mind and respect for students, without caring about their race, religion, or socioeconomic status. In the border region, the majority of students are Hispanic.)

Effective teachers in the border region are adept at implementing flexible programs, learning schedules, and curriculum. They do not try to follow a program lockstep, but instead evaluate what is working with the students and plan accordingly. Effective teachers take linguistic needs into account, but also understand the importance of honoring the primary language—even if it means that students take longer to understand a concept well.

Teachers who are open-minded and flexible also are more adept at working with parents who may define their role differently and are not aware of the expectations that schools and educational systems hold for them. An educational plan must take into account what the students' schooling has been in the past. Open-minded and flexible teachers will design curriculum creatively to incorporate the students' backgrounds and ways of knowing the world. Effective teachers realize the imperative of making students feel that their communities are valued. One Mexican participant, who learned the importance of being open-minded and flexible when assessing what works for students, said:

Una maestra eficaz para la región fronteriza tiene características tales como: está abierta de recibir todos los estudiantes en su aula. (An effective teacher in the border region has the following characteristic: being open to receiving all students in his or her classroom.)

Open-mindedness and flexibility are essential because schools often must address unexpected phenomena for which no structures or programs are in place, notwithstanding the centralized curriculum in Mexico and the centralization effects of the standards-based movement in the United States. The prescribed official curriculum on both sides of the border often is ineffective when addressing needs of students, particularly those who speak nonmainstream languages and come from nonmainstream cultural groups. The ability to adapt is foremost in being an effective teacher in the border region. A U.S. participant explained:

An effective teacher must be open-minded and willing to work with people (students and their families) of different cultural backgrounds.

A participant from Mexico also emphasized the importance of adapting:

Un docente eficaz para la región fronteriza utiliza su sabiduría en tratar a los estudiantes de diferentes culturas. El sabe que tiene que valorizar las diferentes costumbres de cada niño y apoyar a los niños en la clase. Sabe como apreciar estas diferencias. Las diferencias en nosotros son oportunidades para aprender acerca de un mundo más grande. (An effective teacher for the border region uses his or her knowledge to work with students of different cultures. He or she realizes the need to value the different customs of each child and support the children in class, and knows how to appreciate these differences. The differences between us are an opportunity to learn about a much bigger world.)

Apparent from participants' comments was that having a disposition toward new ideas and ways of approaching curriculum and educational design is very important for border communities. Participants defined effective borderland educators as those who understand the students and the community and make adaptations accordingly. Because the cultural and linguistic landscape of the borderlands is dynamic, fluid, and ever-changing, teachers must address the social and academic needs of the *crisol de culturas* (collection of cultures) (Oppenheimer 1998; Martínez 1994; Flores and Clark 2002).

Being open-minded and flexible allows educators to deal with the unexpected and see the promise each child brings to the classroom setting. This disposition allows teachers to develop an instructional program "grounded in the lives of students" (Peterson 1994, 30) by making their voices and stories an integral part of the curriculum.

Passion for Borderland Education

A second, closely related characteristic identified by the study is having a passion for borderland education. Effective teachers in the borderlands are passionate about the work they do, and do whatever it takes to help transnational students succeed. They have a positive attitude about working with border communities and seek instructional practices that are effective for students. These Mexican participants explained:

Los maestros necesitan tener actitudes positivas para servir a la comunidad estudiantil y al padre de familia. (Teachers need to have positive attitudes to serve the student and parent community.)

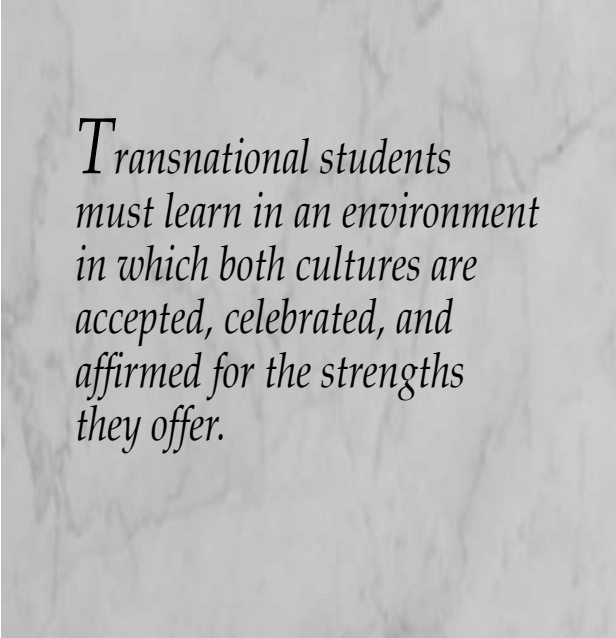
Cline and Necochea

Los niños de la frontera son un crisol de culturas. Por esta razón, una/o maestra/o debe de disfrutar y aceptar la diversidad de culturas, idiomas, y regiones. (The children in the border are a collection of cultures. For this reason, a teacher needs to enjoy and accept the diversity of cultures, languages, and regions.)

Effective educators in the borderlands creatively look for ways to help students access the core curriculum and learn the skills necessary for success. They meet the needs of students by familiarizing themselves with and understanding the students' families and community. Participants in this study described successful teaching in the border region as a calling with a quest for excellent teaching. A Mexican participant stated:

Una maestra efectiva debe mirar a su corazón y reflejar en quién es ella o él y que parte de su vida necesita mejorar como ser humano. Después hacer lo posible para vivir su vida con amor, corazón, especialmente desarrollar la paciencia y el espíritu para educar a los niños. En esta región tan diversa una maestra debe incluir la comunidad en la clase, hacer lo más posible para conocer profundamente otras culturas. Como maestra es importante seguir desarrollando el espíritu y

la mente. (An effective teacher needs to look in his or her heart and reflect on 'who am I?' and 'what part of my life do I need to improve to be more human?' Then, do what is possible to live life with love, heart, and especially to develop patience and the spirit to educate students. In this region that is so diverse, the teacher should include the community in the class and do whatever is necessary to deeply understand other cultures. As a teacher, it is important to continue developing the spirit and the mind.)



Transnational students must learn in an environment in which both cultures are accepted, celebrated, and affirmed for the strengths they offer.

The sentiment that effective teachers in the border region are passionate about their work was strong among the participants. They expressed that to be effective, teachers must love what they are doing and be willing to do what it takes to help all students succeed. Participants often viewed their profession as a spiritual calling—one in which they can make a difference, through their dedication and commitment, in the lives of students and in the community as a whole. One U.S. participant commented:

A borderland teacher needs to have passion, understanding for each individual student. This means getting to know every student through his or her family life, past experiences, language abilities, and education level. An effective teacher must have the ability to help all students at different levels. He or she needs to bring students who are shy into the class group by raising their self-esteem, making them feel important. The teacher needs to provide support and validation for students' primary language.

Effective teachers in the border region are adept at implementing flexible programs, learning schedules, and curriculum.

Borderland educators often channel their energy into addressing the complex social and academic needs of a diverse student population. Passion for the borderlands takes teachers on an ongoing journey to discover the unofficial curriculum and instructional practices that are grounded in

students' lives. These teachers see a natural beauty in the *crisol de culturas* that enriches their classrooms and view the differences in student cultural and linguistic background as tremendous assets rather than liabilities (Major and Brock 2003).

The powerful personal narratives that students bring to the classroom become *el corazón* (the heart) that provides the *pulso* (pulse) for designing more effective borderland curriculum—one that incorporates the rich tapestry of personal stories, accounts, and legends that make up the fabric of the students' experiences (Christensen 1994; Peterson 1994). These narratives could help teachers understand the intricacies and complexities of the borderlands, and thus serve as the pillars of professional development programs and curricular designs for the border region.

Ongoing Professional Development

Though passion is the energy that sustains many borderland teachers, ongoing professional development is a critical component for effective instruction. Teachers need professional growth activities that will provide them with the instructional practices necessary for the diverse students in their classrooms. Two Mexican participants shared:

Los docentes que se preparan constantemente estarán obteniendo aquellos métodos de enseñanza que serán necesarios para entender o resolver distintas situaciones de cada alumno de la región fronteriza. (Teachers who prepare themselves continuously will obtain those teaching methods necessary to understand or resolve the different situations of each student in the border region.)

El docente debe tener dominio de la materia y constantemente deberá estarse preparando y revisando su programa de enseñanza de la cátedra que imparte.

Cline and Necochea

Deberá recibir cursos que le ayuden a actualizarse en la cátedra. (The teacher should be competent in the content area and should be preparing and modifying the instructional program of the subjects that are taught. He or she should receive coursework in the content area to actualize his or her knowledge base.)

Comprehending the experiences that transnational students have when they cross the border is tantamount to bringing new dimensions to educational practice. Staff development can lead to increased familiarity with the schooling experiences that counterparts encounter on the other side of the border. For borderland educators, specialized training in understanding border phenomena is extremely important if they are to meet the academic and social needs of all students. A participant from the United States said:

El maestro fronterizo deberá recibir entrenamiento especial para entender los asuntos de la región fronteriza. Yo creo, en un mundo perfecto, que este maestro

tendrá experiencia personal viviendo, o, por lo menos visitando, lugares de los dos lados de la frontera. Debe tener un conocimiento profundo que una región fronteriza es diferente a las otras regiones. (The borderland teacher should have special training to understand the issues that pertain to his or her region. I believe that, in a perfect world, this teacher would have experiences personally living, or at least visiting places, on both sides of the border. The teacher should have a deep understanding of the border region and the differences from other regions.)

Reformers must gain an understanding of the complex social, cultural, and economic dynamics of transnational students by listening to those individuals who have the pulse of transnational students.

A Mexican participant added:

El maestro tiene que ser comprometido y tener visión de la misión que tiene como docente. (The teacher needs to be committed and needs to have a vision for the mission of what it means to be an educator.)

Lifelong learning through professional development activities is extremely important for teachers in the borderlands because of the constantly changing and complex nature of the work environment. Professional development which focuses on understanding the transnational influences that impact students, families, and communities is especially important because it provides borderland educators with the knowledge and skills to design effective instructional practices. Those who are

passionate about teaching in the border region are open to new ideas and have a greater chance of being successful in implementing effective strategies. Educators who teach *del corazón* (from the heart) will inspire students to become lifelong learners as passions are shared and discovered. The best teachers are those who not only inspire students to share their powerful narratives, but also use those narratives as a regular part of their instructional strategies to bridge the students' two worlds (Christensen 1994; Peterson 1994).

Culturally Sensitive

Teachers who are effective in the borderlands appear to be culturally sensitive to students who have a background different from their own. This sensitivity allows a teacher to work with a multitude of students without passing judgment on cultural differences (Christensen 1994; Peterson 1994; Major and Brock 2003). A deep understanding of other cultures is necessary for success, according to one U.S. participant:

An effective borderland teacher has to understand the dynamics of how the communities in the border area work and the needs they have. The teacher needs to understand the acquisition of languages and the language used by these communities. This understanding will allow him or her to give the students what they need to be successful. Teachers in the borderland also are unique because they find themselves interacting with the diverse population that makes teaching a challenging and rewarding profession. They learn about different cultures and customs that make it possible to value each student for what he or she brings to the classroom.

In an effective borderland school, a climate of cultural acceptance that is respectful of all members is critical. Because the borderlands are a magnet for immigrants from Mexico, Latin America, and Asia—who often are in a period of transition—effective teachers must create a classroom environment where all students feel accepted and respected for who they are. This culturally sensitive classroom environment exudes acceptance of differences, affirms diversity, and understands other ways of knowing. A Mexican participant stated:

Por esta razón, una característica muy importante de un maestro en la región fronteriza es que éste tenga conocimiento de la cultura, idioma y costumbres Latino-Americanos. En esta región fronteriza, no nada más tenemos gente Hispana y Anglosajona. Tenemos gente de todas partes del mundo: somos un crisol de culturas. (For this reason, a very important characteristic of a teacher in the border region is to have knowledge of the Latin-American culture, the language, and the customs. In the border region, we don't just have people who are Hispanic and Anglo. We have people from all parts of the world: We are a collection of cultures.)

The cultural sensitivity expressed by the study's participants went beyond teachers' superficial knowledge base of diverse cultures. The participants discussed a deep understanding of culture that included not only knowing the families, the communities, and

Cline and Necochea

the students in their classes, but also accepting and affirming their culture and ways of knowing and understanding the world. Participants valued those who are different and worked toward a greater unity of all cultures, socioeconomic groups, and classes. This cultural sensitivity disposition is reflected in one Mexican participant's statement:

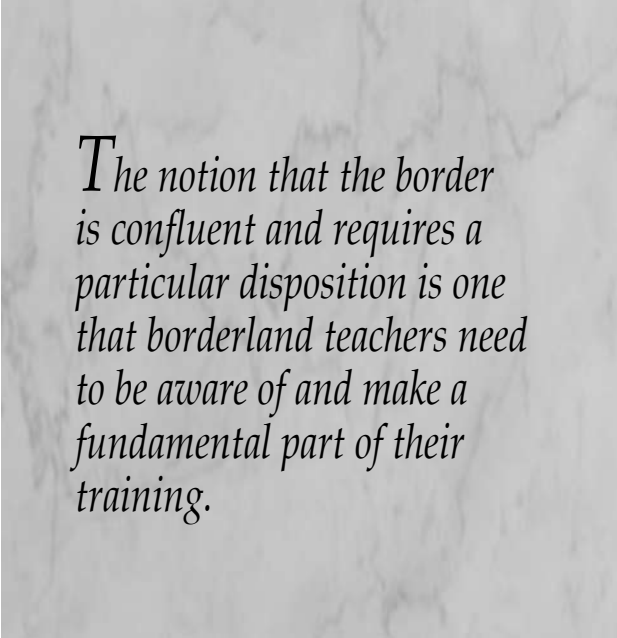
Un docente eficaz para la región fronteriza debe de tener roce con personas de distintas clases socioeconómicas, con personas de distintas culturas e idioma, y de preferencia una experiencia personal viviendo en otro país para entender mejor valores culturales diferentes a los suyos. (An effective teacher for the border region needs to have contact with people of different socioeconomic classes, with people from distinct cultures and languages, and preferably to have an experience personally living in another country to better understand cultural values different from his or her own.)

Culture clearly plays a role in border communities because of the constant flux and fluidity of people from different nations. Educators must be able to create learning environments that are culturally compatible with the students in their classrooms (Christensen 1994; Peterson 1994; Nieto 1996; Major and Brock 2003).

A special sensitivity toward other cultures is inherent in the design of learning environments that are culturally inclusive. As teachers work to build community within their schools, the *crisol de culturas* in the classroom becomes the cornerstone of the curriculum, enabling students to see, feel, and understand the world through their own eyes, their own personal experiences, and their own cultural stories, thus creating a classroom community that is reflective of the diverse ethno-linguistic backgrounds of the students.

Pluralistic Language Orientation

A pluralistic language orientation is another critical component of teacher dispositions in border communities. Teachers encourage students to speak multiple languages, value every language spoken in their classroom, and frequently and openly express the advantages of speaking multiple languages in a world economy, but especially in the complex and amalgamated border region (Cline and Necochea 2004b). This language orientation reflects the lived reality of the students, who often are bilingual and bicultural due to the dynamic nature of their transnational experiences. A Mexican participant shared this perspective:



The notion that the border is confluent and requires a particular disposition is one that borderland teachers need to be aware of and make a fundamental part of their training.

Las características de una maestra eficaz para la región fronteriza son: Tener conocimiento del Español y el Inglés porque al ser bilingüe, puede comunicarse en los 2 idiomas. (The characteristic of an effective teacher for the border region is to have knowledge of Spanish and English, because to be bilingual means you can communicate in two languages.)

Effective teachers foster the incorporation of multiple primary languages into the classroom and implement innovative instructional strategies to honor and value the mother tongue of each child (Nieto 1996; Major and Brock 2003; Cline and Necochea 2004b). They often use primary language support to ensure that students have access to the core curriculum and are able to master difficult concepts. In some cases, they even attempt to learn words and phrases in various languages to help students feel accepted and valued as integral members of the classroom community. One U.S. participant stated:

Un maestro de la frontera debe hablar los dos idiomas para ayudar a los padres y estudiantes con instrucciones. No tiene que ser bilingüe pero tiene que saber bastante para dar confianza a los padres. (A teacher in the border should speak two languages to help the parents and the students with instructions. The teacher does not need to be bilingual, but needs to have enough fluency to give confidence to the parents.)

For these teachers, language issues allow them to approach the curriculum creatively to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed within the school system. They do not see a second language as a liability or as something to be fixed, but as an incredible asset that needs to be nurtured and fostered—even to the point of learning the language themselves.

Overall, many participants felt that acquiring some level of competency in the mother tongue of binational students is a necessary skill for effective teachers in the borderlands. The issue of language, however, is complex and controversial, and often mired in political and social debates (Nieto 1996; Major and Brock 2003; Cline and Necochea 2004b). When meeting students' needs is the focus, it becomes evident that bilingualism for borderland teachers is clearly a necessity for effective instructional programs. Though it is unlikely that teachers will be proficient in all the languages spoken in the borderlands, at a minimum they should be competent in English and Spanish—the dominant languages of the region.

Language is the heart and soul of the individual and, as such, needs to be honored and respected in any educational environment. According to Anzaldúa (1987), humans are their language, and their language reflects who they are at the most basic human level. People cannot achieve the essence of their souls, and they cannot foster their fundamental rights as humans when their language—their way of communicating with the world—is not valued and cherished. These teachers understand, at the most basic human level, that the language of the students and their families reflects the spiritual core of the cultures they bring to the classroom.

Conclusion

One of the goals of school reform should be to incorporate the lived experiences of borderland communities into the curriculum and, thus, prepare future citizens for a more complex multilingual and multicultural world that transcends national and cultural borders (Christensen 1994; Peterson 1994; Cline and Necochea 2002, 2004a).

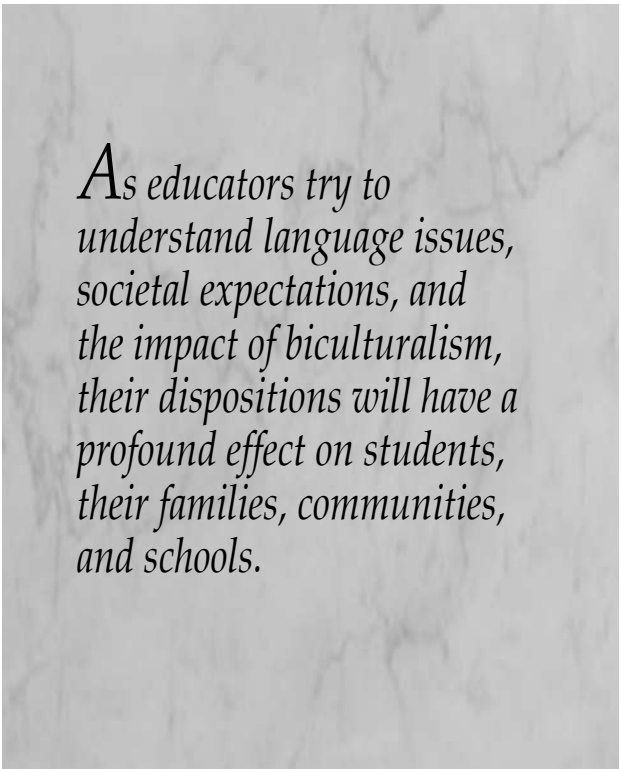
Teachers must have the dispositions to acquire the knowledge base and skills to design and implement effective programs for the students. Major and Brock (2003, 7) asserted that dispositions are extremely important because “while the numbers of students from diverse backgrounds are increasing, the U.S. teaching force consists

primarily of monolingual middle- to lower-middle-class European-American women who may lack the requisite background knowledge . . . to teach effectively children from sociolinguistically diverse backgrounds.” The likelihood of a mismatch between the backgrounds of students and those of the teacher often is greatest in the borderlands.

Educators and policy makers must engage in a concerted effort to reform public education in border communities while being mindful of the rich cultural experiences and linguistic gifts that children bring to our schools. The separate worlds of students in the borderlands must be bridged by a reform agenda that integrates their transborder experiences into the official school curriculum. Reformers

must gain an understanding of the complex social, cultural, and economic dynamics of transnational students by listening to those individuals who have the pulse of transnational students.

Current teacher preparation programs are not designed to help teachers develop the instructional programs needed when students’ language and cultural needs are the nucleus of effective educational practices. The monumental task of substantive change in public education with borderland communities perhaps could begin by creating Colleges of Education that are responsive to the growing number of transnational students’ needs. Culturally sensitive teachers who work closely with borderland students and their communities have intimate knowledge of the issues



As educators try to understand language issues, societal expectations, and the impact of biculturalism, their dispositions will have a profound effect on students, their families, communities, and schools.

and are often the voice of reason in the elusive and complex world of school reform. Their voices must be heard. Teacher educators must listen to these voices as they design contextually based preparation programs to give teacher candidates the dispositions and skills they will need to design and implement effective programs in the borderlands.

This exploratory study was an important step in understanding the issues faced by border community schools. Further systemic research is needed to fully understand the unique border pedagogy phenomenon to address the complex transnational world of so many students. To achieve effective schools in this region, educators and policy makers must heed the voices of those who have *el pulso de la frontera* (the pulse of the border) as they strive to design programs that are responsive to local needs. After all, *educación sin fronteras* (education without borders) should be the quintessential goal of school reform.

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