

Voices of Border Crossings: Learning, Teaching, and Expanding Visions

Barbara Garii

State University of New York at Oswego

Candace Schlein

University of Missouri-Kansas City

Cross-cultural movement is increasingly impacting school environments and classroom practice, mainly as a result of rising and more varied rates of culturally pluralistic populations than previously recorded (Statistics Canada, 2007; United States Census Bureau, 2003). Consequently, teachers and allied professionals are facing growing expectations to develop themselves more explicitly for work with culturally diverse learners (Nieto, 2002) and to establish culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1992) and culturally sensitive (Gay, 2000) curricula and practices. This is further reflected in national standards related to diversity and globalization for teaching, teacher education, and the preparation of education professionals (e.g., National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2008).

In spite of many attempts to expand the pool of educator candidates to better reflect these changing demographics (Irizarry, 2007), the majority of preservice educators in the U.S. and Canada are native language English speakers, White, and middle-class, who possesses a lack of in-depth knowledge of other cultures (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner,

Barbara Garii is an associate professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction and associate dean of the School of Education at the State University of New York at Oswego, Oswego, New York. Candace Schlein is an assistant professor of curriculum studies in the School of Education at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, Kansas City, Missouri. Their e-mail addresses are barbara.garii@oswego.edu and schleinc@umkc.edu

2005). Therefore, it is crucial for all educators to undertake professional development endeavors aimed at the acquisition of knowledge about multiple cultures and culturally related models for teaching and learning. Pre-service and in-service programs for new and experienced educators that incorporate cross-cultural experiences are significant because they encourage participants to move beyond superficial or transitory cultural introductions and bring educators into immersion experiences in novel cultural settings. (Cushner & Brennan, 2007; Hermes, 2005). In this way, cross-cultural teacher education endeavors provide concrete experiences that facilitate the grounding of theoretical knowledge of schools and cultures into applied reality. This may be the first time that these educators are in a professional situation in which they are expected to participate effectively while not understanding the cultural cues and expectations. Thus, such cross-cultural experiences help educators better recognize some of the challenges that some of their own students may have.

In this issue of *Issues in Teacher Education*, we explore the use of the metaphor of border crossings to depict cultural immersion activities that are developed globally and across different cultural groups within North America. The thematic articles consider how border crossings influence professional reflection, curricular understandings, classroom pedagogies, and teacher practices. Together, the articles in this issue represent an overlapping thematic approach to our vision of border crossings in educational practice with respect to globalized education through the lenses of preservice teacher preparation, professional development activities, and practice within cultural and professional immersions. Thus, the authors bring together a variety of voices of border crossings that interpret, question, and challenge education in cross-cultural societies.

Suniti Sharma, JoAnn Phillion, and Erik Malewski discuss the experiences of U.S.-based pre-service teachers who study abroad in Honduras and participate in local schools. The authors present a multilayered understanding of critical pedagogy that is embedded in cross-cultural curricular encounters and they denote linkages between critical praxis and broader multicultural competencies among these new teachers. Correspondingly, Jennifer Waddell positions her work within an urban immersion teacher preparation program. Significantly, she draws on her students' experiences within the program to display the effects of cross-cultural and cross-communal interactions on the dispositions of student teachers regarding their future work as urban educators in diverse settings. These articles consider how we encourage pre-service teachers to stretch their cultural comfort zones to better interact with and support the students they will serve while challenging teacher educators to embrace new ways of supporting and

retaining student teachers from both mainstream and culturally under-represented backgrounds.

Furthermore, Lynne M. Walters, Martha R. Green, Liangyan Wang, and Timothy Walters describe the professional development experiences of in-service educators within a Fulbright-sponsored extended stay in China. The authors shed light on the value of cross-cultural and international exchanges for reflection on culture and the reevaluation of pedagogical practices. Moreover, in this article, Walters, Green, Wang, and Walters bring to the forefront the medium of digital storytelling as a method of experiential voicing. As such, their piece opens up new lines of inquiry regarding the place of technology in cross-cultural communication, educational globalization, and modes of storying. Ervin F. Sparapani, Byung-In Seo, and Deborah L. Smith, however, present a model for informal, loosely structured professional development in which educators are encouraged to become ethnographers and “walk around” in the neighborhoods and communities that house their students. In conjunction with Sharma, Phillion, and Melewski’s discussion of pre-service opportunities in Honduras and Waddell’s encouragement of preservice teacher outreach in urban communities, we are able to see how pre-service preparation and professional development activities can and should mirror each other to engage new and experienced teachers in ongoing, globalized dialogue to enhance practice and to encourage teachers to explore ways of reframing curricula and practice in diverse classrooms.

The final two articles invite us to consider how the accretion of individual border crossing events during early-career professionalization may refocus our understanding of self-as-professional-educator. Barbara Faye Streets identifies herself as an African-American licensed psychologist raised in both the U.S. and Japan who trains school counselors. She traces her multicultural development during her doctoral training in the United States and internationally and reflects on how these experiences continue to influence her teaching. Candace Schlein and Barbara Garii discuss the storied trajectories of two North American teachers’ early career experiences in Japan and Mexico and recover meaning from the resultant reframing of their understanding of teaching and learning along the borders of mainstream and marginalized sections of local and foreign societies. Importantly, these articles provide narratives of border crossing as enduring experiences of wide personal and professional impact.

The sum of the articles in this themed collection bring together voices of educators involved in crossing tangible and implicit, national and international borders with the overarching aim of improving cross-cultural educational discourse. Consequently, each of the articles calls into question extant borders and generates deliberations over how we might

recognize and dismantle practices that might unknowingly strengthen tensions along physical or metaphorical borders. We anticipate that these articles shed light on new visions for educating students from diverse backgrounds and stimulate dialogue among curriculum stakeholders.

References

- Cochran-Smith, M., & Zeichner, K. M. (2005). Executive summary: The report of the AERA panel on research and teacher education. In M. Cochran-Smith & K. M. Zeichner (Eds.), *Studying teacher education: The report of the AERA panel on research and teacher education* (pp. 1-36). Washington, DC & Mahwah, NJ: American Educational Research Association & Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Cushner, K., & Brennan, S. (2007). The value of learning to teach in another culture. In K. Cushner & S. Brennan (Eds.), *Intercultural student teaching: A bridge to global competence* (pp. 1-11). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education.
- Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Hermes, M. (2005). White teachers, native students: Rethinking culture-based education. In J. Phillion, M. F. He, & F. M. Connelly (Eds.), *Narrative & experience in multicultural education* (pp. 95-115). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Irizarry, J. G. (2007). "Home-growing" teachers of color: Lessons learned from a town-gown partnership. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 34(4), 87-102.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1992). Culturally relevant teaching: The key to making multicultural education work. In C. A. Grant (Ed.), *Research and multicultural education: From the margins to the mainstream* (pp. 106-121). London, UK: Falmer Press.
- National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education. (2008). *Professional standards for the accreditation of teacher education*. Retrieved September 1, 2009, from <http://www.ncate.org/documents/standards/NCATE%202008.pdf>
- Nieto, S. (2002). *Language, culture, and teaching: Critical perspectives for a new century*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Statistics Canada. (2007). *Immigration in Canada: A portrait of the foreign-born population, 2006 Census*. Retrieved June 1 2008, from <http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census06/analysis/immcit/pdf/97-557-XIE2006001.pdf>
- United States Census Bureau. (2003). *The foreign-born population: 2003*. Retrieved July 11 2007, from <http://www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/c2kbr-34.pdf>