Introduction

The Students We Share and the Teachers We Need

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In an era of divisive debate about immigration and uncertainty for immigrants and their children, this book organizes contributions from U.S. and Mexican scholars to improve educator preparation and teaching and learning for the 9 million "students we share" from preschool to high school, from Oaxaca to Ohio. While immigrant students in the United States emanate from all parts of the globe, the shared border between the United States and Mexico accounts by far for the largest share of children of immigrants, and so this is our greatest challenge and also our richest opportunity. The book describes the diversity of transnational[1] students in the region and their experiences, including how geopolitics have altered migration flows over the past decade, and examines teaching qualities and teacher preparation policies to meet pressing curricular, linguistic, and cultural needs of transnational students in both countries. In the spirit of fostering greater binational collaboration, contributors recommend how actors in schools, communities, and state and federal governments can improve educator preparation and support as well as educational opportunities for the students and their futures that we share. Mexican-origin students, on average, have not fared well in the U.S. education system. They are the least likely of all racial/ethnic subgroups to complete a college education, and they have only recently begun to catch up with respect to high school graduation. Some of this problem is rooted in the limited

educations they and/or their parents have received before coming to the United States. Some of it is due to the inadequacies of the U.S. education system to meet these students' needs. All of this suggests that we have a truly *binational* challenge. The challenge is becoming more complex every day with the increasing numbers of Central American children and youth arriving at the border, often with lower education levels and more interrupted schooling than their Mexican peers.

The coronavirus pandemic, moreover, has both exposed and exacerbated societal inequities in both countries, including in education. Employment pressures, lack of domestic space, limited access to devices, and faulty Wi-Fi have made distance learning from home incredibly challenging for many families, but especially in homes for the students we share. It is not clear how we will make up for lost instructional time.

Teachers are maxed out as well. Teaching virtually or in person under the pressure of safety protocols and accountability policies still in place in many schools creates tremendous stress, hardly ideal for high-quality or meaningful learning. Teachers will require a great deal of support and resources to hit the ground running to foster equitable learning opportunities for students once we resume normal school schedules.

The Students We Share focuses on teaching as a critical mechanism for change because 1) it is the most influential school factor associated with student success in the United States and in Mexico; and 2) the quality of teaching in PK-12 classrooms for students we share in both countries is woefully inadequate to meet the particular needs of these students. Highlighting the need to improve teaching is not meant to disparage U.S. and Mexican educators who work tirelessly day in and day out on behalf of the students we share. They work with limited resources and report a lack of preparation to respond to the needs, transnational experiences, and assets of students we share. Ours is a call for us all—researchers, administrators, teachers, policy makers, parents, and community members alike—to better understand the challenges and to seek more potent and durable solutions to enhance teacher preparation and teaching qualities to meet the pressing learning and developmental needs, as well as to take advantage of the assets, of the growing numbers of students we share between these two countries.

Contributors to this book summarize scholarship and provide specific and thoughtful recommendations. Our suggestions address what teachers need to know about transnational students, promising ways of forging a variety of binational education partnerships; specific policy and program

improvements within each country; revisions to educator preparation, curricula, and standards; and the need for ongoing research investments in educator preparation. Critical to all of these suggestions, though, is the imperative that both nations share responsibility for these students who belong to both. Our intended audience for this book is teachers, teacher educators, school leaders, policy makers, migration and education scholars, and others who study transborder issues.

We share more in transnational students than common origins. We also share a common destiny. The students we share do not see their personal and professional futures as rooted in one country or another, but in both. This book provides a blueprint for improving teaching and teacher learning to prepare students for this future. Authors navigate complex research and institutional dynamics in Mexico and the United States to offer compelling and actionable recommendations to prepare educators for the students—and the future—we share.

The Students We Share

The "students we share" from preschool to high school between Mexico and the United States are a large and heterogeneous group (Hamann & Zúñiga, 2011a; Jensen & Sawyer, 2013). They include students who themselves have emigrated and, more commonly, children with immigrant parents whose origins span Baja California to Chiapas, and beyond. The schooling experiences of students we share are as diverse as they are. Their educational opportunities—i.e., access to high-quality schools—are stratified by socioeconomic status, language proficiencies, race, region (especially *within* countries), immigrant generation, and documented status (e.g., Bean et al., 2013; Galindo, 2013; Gándara, 2017; Jensen, Giorguli, & Hernández, 2018; Treviño, 2013).

In the United States

A majority (about 4 in 5) of the students we share are in the United States. Indeed, 40% of all U.S. children of immigrants have Mexican origins—nearly a million Mexican-born children and another 6.5 million second-generation[2] students (Urban Institute, 2016). Mexican Americans are the largest and the lowest-performing group of Latino students in U.S. schools (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Reardon & Galindo, 2009).

The neighborhoods most Mexican immigrants live in are highly segregated, as are the schools that their children attend (Orfield, Kucsera, & Siegel-Hawley, 2012). These schools are underresourced, and the teachers of most Mexican American students are underprepared to meet their linguistic and academic needs (López, Scanlan, & Gundrum, 2013; Losey, 1995). The developmental assets of Mexican American children, born of family values and transnational experiences, tend to be underappreciated and largely unincorporated in U.S. classrooms (Jensen, 2013). Whereas bilingual instruction affords academic advantages (Cheung & Slavin, 2012; Gándara & Escamilla, 2017), most Mexican American students attend English-only schools and do not have access to bilingual teachers (Gándara & Hopkins, 2010).

These issues are complicated further by documentation status. More than a fourth of Mexican American children have an undocumented immigrant parent (Jensen & Bachmeier, 2015), and about half of Mexican-born children in the United States are undocumented themselves (Passel, 2011). Financial hardship, family separation, psychological distress, and the uncertainty associated with their own or a parent's undocumented status negatively affect their educational experiences and developmental outcomes (Bean et al., 2013; Yoshikawa & Kholoptseva, 2013). Growing numbers of U.S. students with origins in Central America (especially Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador, referred to as the "Northern Triangle") are affected by these matters as well. Of the nearly 2 million U.S. students with Central American origins, 40% have an undocumented parent (Jensen & Bachmeier, 2015). The analysis and recommendations that we provide in this book are relevant to these students as well, though the political and educational circumstances in the Northern Triangle are, in many ways, different and more dire than in Mexico. It is our hope that the programs and policies that are forged through this research can serve as a model for other students we share with Latin America as migration patterns evolve.

In Mexico

The fastest-growing group of "students we share" are in Mexico—U.S.-citizen children and youth with Mexican parents who, for one reason or another, find themselves living in and attending school in Mexico (Zúñiga & Giorguli, 2019). More Mexican immigrants are now leaving than coming to the United States (González-Barrera, 2015) because of deportations and

voluntary returns. Increased employment opportunities in Mexico, coupled with the effects of the Great Recession as well as anti-immigrant rhetoric in the United States, have sustained relatively large flows of return migration to Mexico over the past decade. More often than not, migrants take their (mostly U.S.-born) children with them when they return. Currently there are more than 600,000 "American Mexican" PK-12 students in Mexican schools (Jacobo-Suarez, 2017; Jensen, Mejía Arauz, & Zepeda, 2017), more than 3% of the total enrollment. American Mexican students face several challenges in Mexican schools (Zúñiga & Hamann, 2013). Many have limited proficiency in Spanish, and much of the curricular knowledge and skills they gained in U.S. schools is undervalued in Mexican classrooms. A study in Nuevo León and Zacatecas found that American Mexican students were more than three times as likely as their Mexican-born peers to be retained a grade in school (Hamann & Zúñiga, 2011b).

There are another 650,000 or so Mexican children and youth with at least one emigrant parent in the United States.[3] These students "remaining behind" are often torn between schooling and their own migratory futures (Zenteno, Giorguli, & Gutiérrez, 2013). Parent migration exposure has led many Mexican adolescents to aspire to emigrate themselves, and more immediate plans to do so negatively affect their academic performance in school (Jensen, Giorguli, & Hernández, 2018). The situation for students remaining behind—as well as for American Mexicans, for that matter—is complicated further by the fact that migration disproportionately impacts rural and semi-rural communities in Mexico, where the quality of schools is markedly lower than in urban communities. Students in rural and semi-rural schools perform significantly lower (more than a full standard deviation) than their urban counterparts in Mexico (INEE, 2016). They have shorter school days, fewer resources, and less-prepared teachers than in urban schools (Schiefelbein & McGinn, 2008).

Teaching and Teacher Preparation

Among enrolled students,[4] teaching quality is the single most important school factor associated with the academic success of students we share (INEE, 2015; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2015). The act of teaching involves not only what teachers do, but also what they know and who they are in terms of dispositions, identities, and backgrounds (e.g., Ball, Thames,

& Phelps, 2008; Borko, Liston, & Whitcomb, 2007). The role of teacher dispositions (e.g., social awareness, care, advocacy for students) for equitable schooling has become especially apparent during the coronavirus pandemic and the challenges of teaching virtually or hybrid. Teaching is "outrageously complex" (Shulman, 1987, p. 11). It includes daily lesson planning, organizing rich instructional activities, assessing students, fostering warm and respectful relationships, sustaining student interest, supporting socioemotional growth, and in some cases partnering with parents—all in ways that promote engaged learning for diverse students, including those with transnational lives.

A critical challenge in both countries is to prepare teachers (as well as school administrators and para-educators) to meet the teaching needs of transnational students in ways that respond rather than add to teachers' already-long list of demands, and to do so equitably. Equitable teaching not only provides students with adequate time and support for deliberate practice of academic knowledge and skills (Pianta & Hamre, 2009; Levin, 1984; Schiefelbein & McGinn, 2008), but does so in ways that connect with all students' everyday lives. Equitable educators seek to understand and incorporate the lived experiences, values, and practices of their students (see Chapter 6 in this volume). They embed instructional activity in the context of local community values and practices (Jensen, Pérez Martínez, & Aguilar Escobar, 2016).

This raises several questions about educator preparation in the United States and in Mexico for the students we share. What should educators know about the migrant experiences of students and their families? How does this knowledge enhance their instructional work? What should U.S. educators know about Mexican curriculum, and what should Mexican educators know about curricula in the United States? How do current policies in Mexico and in the United States address educator preparation for diverse learners like transnational children and youth? How do these policies vary within and across countries? What have we learned from successful bilingual educator preparation in the United States, and how might this be relevant to Mexican schoolteachers? How have Mexican and U.S. education institutions partnered in the past to meet the needs of students we share, and how can we build on these collaborations to improve students' opportunities for the present and the future? How can we design and implement curricular and instructional materials to enhance teaching and learning experiences for students we share, across institutional, linguistic, cultural, and political borders?

Purpose of *The Students We Share*

The purpose of this book is to provide critical knowledge that can help foster collaborations between U.S. and Mexican education institutions to improve educator preparation and teaching and learning for the 9 million and counting PK-12 students we share. Contributors include researchers and teacher educators from both countries who summarize what we know from extant research and binational experiences about teaching and preparing educators for students we share. The authors discuss how we should act on this knowledge to better prepare U.S. and Mexican educators for complex and expanding transnational realities. The book is also a call for creating truly binational teachers who understand and respond to the needs of those students who live at the border between these two nations, both literally and figuratively. Many of these students' futures will be in both countries.

We organize the book into three parts: 1) Teacher Preparation Across Borders, 2) Transnational Teaching, and 3) Bridging Policies. In the first section, we address institutional affordances and constraints in preparing U.S. and Mexican educators for the students we share. Contributors discuss teacher education policy contexts within and between countries, including the roles of Mexican normal schools and the teachers' labor union (*El Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educacion*), as well as how U.S. states vary in their approach to preparing educators for culturally and linguistically diverse students. We review binational programs (Gándara, 2008; Martínez-Wenzl, 2013) that among other things seek to help prepare educators for transnational realities and provide policy recommendations to navigate the political terrain in both countries to improve educator preparation for the students we share. In Chapter 1, Santibañez describes the history and ongoing challenges of teacher education policy in Mexico, with a focus on preparing educators to teach transnational students. She begins with an overview of the education system in Mexico—how its history and operation affect the ways teachers are selected, prepared, and trained on the job and how Mexico has struggled recently to reform its teacher preparation and selection procedures. In Chapter 2, Alfaro and Gándara share long-standing experiences preparing bilingual teachers in California and Baja California that have resulted in a new effort to create a binational teacher workforce that is truly reciprocal, one in which teacher educators on both sides of the border teach each other. In Chapter 3, Bybee, Jensen, and Johnstun study *normalista* educators and students

to examine how teacher education curricula in Central Mexico prepare teachers to meet the needs of the growing numbers of American Mexican children and youth arriving in that part of Mexico.

In the second section, we analyze what teachers should know and be able to do to meet the needs of transnational students in both countries, from preschool to high school. Authors address bilingual instruction, knowledge about migration, asset-based teaching, and student achievement opportunity within diverse classroom settings. They address implications for improving teaching for transnational students for a binational audience. In Chapter 4, Hamann and Zúñiga summarize research on transnational student experiences to specify what educators should know and acknowledge to meet the needs of students we share. They illustrate the complexity of circulatory migration of elementary and middle school students between countries, and argue that new challenges are emerging with the politics of U.S. immigrant expulsion. In Chapter 5, Gallo shares findings from a year-long ethnographic study of recently arrived American Mexican students in rural Mexican classrooms. She illustrates the advantages of asset-based pedagogies to teach Spanish literacy to these students, from elementary to high school in the state of Puebla. In Chapter 6, Jensen reviews research on the academic achievement of students we share between the United States and Mexico and advocates for "equitable teaching," a combination of generic and culturally situated classroom practices, to enhance their opportunities. Finally, in Chapter 7, Román González and Sánchez García contrast the perspectives of Mexican teachers with those of their American Mexican students on the challenges of transnationalism in classrooms.

The last section of the book addresses policy solutions to bridge teaching quality and learning opportunities for transnational students between both countries. In Chapter 8, López and Santibañez examine how well policies in Arizona, California, and Texas support the preparation of teachers to meet the developmental needs of emergent bilingual students, most of whom are of Mexican origin. They find marked differences in how well teacher education policies among states address the knowledge teachers need to support emergent bilingual students' development. In Chapter 9, Sugarman reviews the 1982 *Plyler v. Doe* Supreme Court ruling to clarify the legal requirements of schools and implications for educators to provide all students, regardless of immigration status, with a free and appropriate public elementary and secondary education. Finally, in

Chapter 10, Gándara and Jensen summarize the policy landscape during the pandemic as well as post-COVID to recommend ways of navigating the testy waters of immigration, language, and politics in both countries to achieve rational agreements to prepare the teachers we need for the students we share. They underscore lessons from past bilateral partnerships in education and emphasize mutual reasons for ongoing collaborations, not the least of which are the enormous assets that children of migration represent and the extent to which our futures are in their hands.

Notes

1. We use "transnational students" and "students we share" interchangeably throughout the book. Other labels (e.g., emergent bilinguals, Mexican American, American Mexican) are used by book contributors as well for particular reasons which they describe.

2. First-generation immigrant students refer to those who are foreign-born themselves (in Mexico, in this case), and second-generation immigrants are those with at least one Mexican-born parent. We do not include third-generation students—those with at least one Mexican-born grandparent—in our analysis and discussion in this book, though many of the issues we address are relevant to them as well.

3. The number is harder to estimate because the Mexican Census tracks family migration experiences "within the previous five years."

4. Equitable access to school is another problem for transnational students on both sides of the border. Only half of adolescents in general graduate from high school in Mexico (INEE, 2015). The high school graduation rate for Latinos in the United States is 81% (NCES, 2020).

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