



### Reverberations from the Great Border

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## From the Editors: Reverberations from the Great Border

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*Michael Kelly, Michael Lauderdale, Noel Landuyt, Katherine Selber & Myndi Swanson*

Volume 12, Numbers 2 and 3, added a new dimension to our work on continuing education. Both issues focus on how large changes in the society and the economy, including globalization, are affecting lives and professional organizations. These are special content issues organized around a theme of examining the impact of globalization, including the freer flow of people, capital, labor, and ideas across national boundaries. While this is a worldwide phenomena we have organized our writings around an area that many know best and have the greatest immediate relevance to the United States and that is Mexico. It has, as well, great relevance to Mexico.

Volume 12, Number 2, examined broad changes in Mexico and the American southern borderlands that have begun to have many consequences in the United States and Mexico. It examined largely macro effects and provided some strong contemporary reporting of “conditions on the ground” along the American-Mexican border. Volume 12, Number 3, looks more closely at specific factors as they influence community life and all aspects of human services in the United States. These articles contribute to an examination of how changes in Mexico will affect American communities on the Mexican border, communities some many miles distant, and then communities hundreds of miles from the border. The articles use both communities and individuals as the levels of analysis and are predictive of issues that will appear in many parts of the United States in the coming years. As world economies continue at recession levels, new levels of stress appear at the border and within both countries. The stresses will reverberate hundreds of miles north and south of the contact zone.

### **Articles in Volume 12, Number 3**

The events, covered in the previous issue and this one, suggest a deepening significance for the American side of the border. This issue illustrates some of that impact. It focuses upon the early signs of these border phenomena for both individuals and communities and our writers bring us

close to some of the lives caught in these vast changes.

The areas in the United States most proximate to the border are often called the “Borderlands” and Felipe Peralta, Stephen Anderson and Martha Roditti provide specifics from communities in and near El Paso, Texas, and Las Cruces, New Mexico, in “Working in the Borderland: Implications for Social Work Education.” Living and working in this area of the largest twin cities on the border, and where much of the concept of the maquila began, provides the reader a sharp appreciation of the challenges of life there. And these challenges have become even more serious since this article was written. For the last year, Juarez, across the river from El Paso, has been ripped by violence as competing drug cartels seek to control the plazas that are the entry ways into El Paso. In the last year over 2,500 people have been killed, the entire municipal police force replaced by Mexican Army troops and Federal lawmen, and the mayor of Juarez has fled to live more safely in El Paso. Peralta, Anderson, and Roditti provide an important view into this very volatile part of the border.

There are cultural continuities across borders and persons on both sides have similarities in beliefs and attitudes. For decades Mexican women had far higher fertility rates than one would anticipate today in a society seeking to move from agrarian, peasant conditions to urban, middle class and consumerist. In the past these birth rates were due to the advantage a large family can have if the family works directly in agriculture. It also reflected high infant mortality and morbidity conditions. In recent years it has also reflected efforts by the Mexican government to expand the population as well as the religious beliefs of Catholics that serve to encourage large families. Some of those reasons are no longer operative but some of the cultural and religious patterns remain. Pittman and her collaborators look at these continuities and suggest directions in “Best Practices for Working with Pregnant Latina Adolescents along the Texas-Mexico Bor-

der" (Sharon A. Pittman, Janis B. Feldman, Noe Ramírez, Sonja Arredondo).

When tectonic plates collide, force patterns radiate for hundreds of miles, producing changes far from the epicenter. This is true as well for cultural events that begin at the Great Border and then extend toward the American heartland. The American Midwest has been an attractive area for people coming from Mexico and Latin America to relocate beyond the Border States. Two faculty from Missouri share their research on this issue in "Moving around to Get by and Try to Get Ahead: Immigration Experiences in New Settlement Communities of the Midwest" by Corinne Valdivia and Anne Dannerbeck Janku. How readily this population can find homes thousands of miles from Mexico and Central America, how they adjust, and the impact on these communities are all part of the view this essay provides.

Exploitation of persons increases in border communities as people grow desperate, and much of the reality is often opaque because of the nature of the acts and the operation of the criminal justice system. While drug-based violence has drawn great attention in Mexico and the U.S., another side to human misery is human trafficking. Lieutenant Max Westbrook of the Austin Police Department creates a fictionalized account of this process of surreptitiously bringing people into the United States. He draws from representative case data of his own experiences and that of his colleagues of how people move illegally from locations in Mexico to American communities. He sets his study in Austin, Texas, and it can be estimated that there may be one to four drop houses a month found in this city. Phoenix appears to be at the epicenter of this crime and exploitation pattern with law enforcement authorities estimating a rate of three to four a week discovered and with as many as 1,000 houses operating (WSJ, June 20, 2009).

Human services cover a wide range of professional work, such as protection, income support, employment training, individual and family assistance, community development, and public health. One of the older collaborations on the border between Mexico and the United States deals with disease prevention. Collaborations

have included control of parasitic insects afflicting cattle and humans, vaccinations for smallpox, polio, and most recently efforts to track and prevent the spread of swine flu viruses. However in recent years the border has been revisited by several communicable diseases that had previously been largely controlled. The returning disease visitors include dengue fever, cholera, malaria, and tuberculosis. Tuberculosis is particularly insidious as successful treatment requires long periods of medication and regular medical supervision. The fluidity of the border population makes that a difficult challenge. Mark Lusk and Eva Moya provide a case study of two individuals that illustrate that problem.

One perspective on the Mexican-American border is that it is a microcosm of the globalization experiment, and these two issues of the Journal are focused upon some aspects of that experiment. Michael Lauderdale in "Globalization: Unanticipated Consequences" offers a review of how this current form of globalization has occurred and then provides an analysis of unintended effects, especially for the United States.

The six articles provide contemporary data from two large cities on the border, Brownsville and El Paso. One article looks at the relative impact about 150 miles distant and another at more than a thousand miles. Collectively they provide a more nuanced view of these phenomena than we receive in media accounts and suggest urgency for both sides of the border.

### **Looking Ahead**

Future issues of the Journal, scheduled for 2010, will look at research in community development, tools in promoting organizational development, and a likely return to the topics associated with issues this year on the impact of economic dislocation and the associated growth of social problems. We think that the current economic problems will be with us for many years to come. This will force change upon communities. It will be necessary for research to provide strategies that address community development and neighborhood security, and that will assist in efforts to create more jobs, more innovations in education, and more care for the young, old, and

homeless. We will have essays next year that provide additional details on problems coming from the Border, and ones that discuss the deep economic problems and examples of successful efforts to combat the sense of confusion and helplessness that often accompany these times.

We are initiating a new activity this summer -- a survey of all continuing education programs in social work continuing education. Results from that survey will appear in the Journal next year and will provide a basis for comparing professional development topics and a venue to promote innovation in our field. The survey is a collaboration between the Institute for Organizational Excellence and The University of Texas at Austin and Fordham University's social work continuing education programs. The survey seeks to elicit feedback from social work continuing education programs nationwide regarding marketing strategies, use of technology, course offerings, and program administration. Elaine Congress, Fordham University; Jacki Englehardt, West Virginia University; Genny Dunne, University of Pennsylvania; and Noel Landuyt and Myndi Swanson from the Institute for Organizational Excellence will present early survey findings in the program "Using Evidence to Develop Continuing Education Programs" at the Council on Social Work Education 2009 conference.