Working beyond Borders:

A Handbook for Transborder Projects in Health

EL COLEGIO DE SONORA

Contenents

Working beyond Borders:
A Handbook for transborder Projects in Health

[1]Catalina Denman
[2]Jill de Zapien
[1]Elsa Cornejo
[2]Katie Careaga
[3]Diane Dodendorf

Introduction

This handbook is our way of sharing the results of "Binational Collaboration in Health on the U.S.-Mexico Border," a research project conducted by the Health and Society Program at El Colegio de Sonora, in collaboration with the Mel and Enid Zuckerman Arizona College of Public Health, with financial support from the Ford Foundation. The objective of the project was to jointly conduct research on the essential elements of binational collaboration in the border region and to identify those elements that facilitate or impede collaborative work in order to better the quality of collaborative relationships in the field of reproductive health. The project began with an extensive literature search, followed by a series of in-depth interviews, analysis of the interviews, and dissemination of the results.

Based on the results of our analysis, this handbook has been developed to be utilized by local organizations at the U.S.-Mexico border who are pursuing cooperative endeavors to improve the health and welfare of their communities. It is also useful to researchers who are interested in using it as a framework for understanding the process of transborder work. Depending on your purposes, you might find some parts of this handbook more useful than others. Together they provide a vision of the overall process of transborder work as described by the experiences of community organizations and government institutions in Mexico and the United States. In addition to a brief introduction about the background of the border and its main health issues, the handbook presents two models which describe the kinds of people and organizations working binationally in health at the Arizona-Sonora border, as well as the type of relationships they have built throughout the history of successful binational work in the area. The final sections of the book are devoted to a series of questions and observations meant to stimulate discussion among the people and organizations currently involved in, as well as those who wish to embark upon, binational work.

[1] El Colegio de Sonora

[2] University of Arizona

[3] University of Nebraska

This handbook is dedicated to all the individuals and organizations who over the years have shown an incredible commitment to binational work. We wish to thank all the interviewees who participated in the original research project, as well as the organizations and institutions which have been instrumental in supporting this work: El Colegio de Sonora, the Mel and Enid Zuckerman Arizona College of Public Health, the Ford Foundation, the Transborder Consortium for Research and Action on Gender and Health on the U.S.-Mexico Border. Furthermore, we wish to thank a core group of colleagues who participated in our earliest discussions and who were instrumental in guiding the analysis: Eva Moya, Janice Monk, and Joel Meister, Pat Manning and Fracisco Lara.

Why do we want to work together?

The question this handbook seeks to answer is a seemingly simple one: how and why do organizations and institutions which focus on health issues at the U.S. – Mexico border work together? Our reason for asking this question stemmed from a long-standing belief that health and environment do not respect national boundaries, and problems related to health and environment often require cooperation between governments, academic institutions, and community-based/non-governmental organizations on both sides of the border. Because of their geographic proximity, sister-cities on the U.S.-Mexico border share **common environmental and social problems related to health**. Simply put, cooperation cannot be avoided if either side wishes to solve these problems. Therefore, despite enormous barriers, there is general, albeit limited, recognition among health care providers and policy makers at the border that cooperation is essential in tackling certain key issues such as tuberculosis, environmental health, and prenatal care. Confronted with the daily challenges of life at the border, this recognition appears to be broader, and the understanding of the necessity for cooperation seems deeper, among those residing and/or working at the local level closer to the border.

Despite the complexity, time and resources it takes to make cooperation successful (not to mention the risk of failure), people continue to pursue it as a means of accomplishing their goals because the potential rewards are so great. The power of cooperation—understood as the sharing of resources and decision-making capabilities, more than a coming together to share perspectives—is that partners reach a new level of under-standing about each other and their common context that was not as apparent before. This new level of understanding provides a solid basis for action at the local level.

Beyond the theoretical justifications for collaboration, there is a history of binational work on the Arizona-Sonora border which substantiates the effectiveness of a

collaborative approach to solving public health problems. There are resources, networking relationships and knowledge available to any new project that make collaboration viable. In order to meet the public health challenges at the border, the governments of Mexico and the United States have historically come together to find joint solutions to common problems:

History of Binational Work on the Arizona-Sonora Border

1889 — creation of International Boundary and Water Commission

1942 — Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) opened border field office in El Paso

1943 — U.S.-Mexico Border Health Association (USMBHA) established

1959 — Arizona-Mexico Commission / Comisión Sonora-Arizona established

1991 — Binational Health Councils (COBINAS) of the USMBHA became active

1995 — creation of Border Environment Cooperation Commission (BECC) and North American Development Bank (NADB)

2000 — agreement signed by the Secretary of Health and Human Services of the United States and the Secretary of Health of Mexico to create the United States-Mexico Border Health Commission (USMBHC)

The United States-Mexico border region is characterized as interdependent. Research has shown that the political boundary complicates rather than facilitates communication and dialogue in border communities that are struggling to ameliorate environmental, economic, immigration, and drug-trafficking problems. Likewise, the federal governments in Mexico City and Washington, D.C., in their attempts to maintain sovereignty and centralize power, mandate unilateral solutions to border problems that in some cases exacerbate them. Nevertheless, in spite of federal policies, local organizations located at the border region informally create solutions and linkages that help to address local concerns. Additionally, the border regions are unlike their respective nation's center of

power, culturally, socially, and politically. The U.S.-Mexico border region has been described as a 'third country' by some scholars.

Although in this handbook we tend to use terms like "binational" and "transborder" interchangeably, it should be noted that, while "binational" refers to the involvement of two nations, "transborder" refers to the movement of people, goods and information back and forth across the dividing line in both countries, as well as the intertwined social and cultural networks that result from this movement. This handbook focuses on cooperation that takes place at the local level between organizations within a shared geographical region, the "borderlands." Local partnerships are very often characterized by informality and frequently take place among community-based/non-governmental organizations, but can also include local government. This type of local collaboration is also defined as "transborder," although the concept of "border" itself can be a very elusive concept.

The border region is usually defined as the 44 U.S. counties and 80 Mexican municipios immediately contiguous to the political boundary between both countries, or the 100-kilometer boundaries on each side immediately contiguous to the border. The 2000 censuses of Mexico and the United States indicate that there are about 13 million in-habitants in the border region, 6.4 million in Mexico and 6.6 million in the United States. Most of this population—which has more than doubled since 1970 and could reach 9.8 million on the U.S. side, and as high as 12.6 million on the Mexican side by 2020—is concentrated in the 14 pairs of sister communities along the border [SEE BORDER REGION MAP]. The rapid population growth is attributed mainly to enhanced economic development on both sides of the border which encourages continuous migratory flow, as well as a relatively young population with a high birth rate.

Things to think about: conflicts and tensions

We consider it important to emphasize that there are conflicts and tensions particular to the U.S-Mexico border which always underlie any binational relationship or transborder process. **Migration** is one such tension: the flow of documented and undocumented workers, for example, is a constant source of debate, and crises like the soaring number of undocumented immigrants who have died attempting to cross, or the spate of killings by vigilantes on the U.S. side, only exacerbate the situation.

The historical **asymmetry** between both countries is also always a pervasive factor in any binational relationship or transborder process. This asymmetry not only refers to the economic contrast between one country and another—which affects the amount of funding available for binational health efforts, among other projects—but also the contrasts between different segments of the population, regardless of national origin. While the U.S. border counties generally have a lower level of income than the U.S. as a whole, the Mexican border municipios have historically had a higher income than the rest of Mexico. This means that, for example, migrants from the southern states of Mexico who arrive at the northern Mexican border are often at a disadvantage compared with the already estab-lished population. Economic asymmetry, which translates into a power differential which has historically benefited the U.S., also affects the historical perception—within the U.S.—of the English language and "American culture" and even pale skin color as "better," so that when the Gadsden purchase defined the international boundary as we know it today, Mexicans now living on the U.S. side were en-couraged to abandon their language and culture in favor of integration. Nowadays, this bias is manifested in the perceived supremacy of U.S. technology and its ability to solve all social ills, and in the view that the American approach is always best. On the Mexican side, this generates a number of different strategies of resistance—formal and informal—aimed at preventing binational projects from becoming one-sided in funding, scope and range. It can also generate outright hostility when an effort is not made to dispel the ster-eotype of the American always trying to impose his or her will.

Although these conflict-generating issues were not necessarily addressed explicitly in the interviews for this project, the perceptions of the people interviewed is a reflection of the consciousness of how conflict affects their context; many also refer to specific strategies for navigating successfully within this context. Likewise, although this handbook does not dwell on issues of conflict, the discussion on effective strategies for binational work considers tensions, conflict, asymmetry, and power differentials as part of the pervading environment. We need to study in depth how conflict is managed, as well as study examples of unsuccessful efforts, and efforts in other geographic areas of the border region in order to round out our observations and models.

Background of border health

In 1999, the age-adjusted death rate for the United States border region was 506 per 100,000, compared to the national rate of 570 per 100,000. In Mexico, the age-adjusted death rate for the border population was 649 per 100,000, compared to the national rate of 620. The leading causes of death at the border region are comparable for both sides, and heart disease represents the most important cause of death on both sides, which is also true at the national level for both Mexico and the U.S.

Leading Causes of Death

Mexico, 2000				United States, 1999			
Cause of Death	National	Border States	Border Municipios	Cause of Death	National	Border States	Border Counties
1. Diseases of the heart	69.0	87.5	81.3	1. Diseases of the heart	132.1	124.3	111.6
2. Diabetes mellitus	46.8	47.6	52.8	2. Malignant neoplasms	123.2	113.6	106.4
3. Accidents	35.5	39.4	47.1	3. Cerebrovascular diseases	27.9	28.3	25.7
4. Malignant neoplasms	55.2	65.3	59.3	4. Chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases	23.6	23.9	22.0
5. Cerebrovascular diseases	25.5	27.0	24.3	5. Accidents	29.1	28.2	27.6
6. Diseases originating in perinatal period	19.5	16.7	23.0	6. Diabetes mellitus	14.3	14.4	15.5
7. Chronic liver disease and cirrhosis	27.5	19.9	23.6	7. Alzheimer's disease	6.0	6.3	8.1
8. Pneumonia and influenza	12.4	10.7	11.2	8. Pneumonia and influenza	10.2	8.4	9.1
9. Chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases	11.0	11.9	8.6	9. Chronic liver disease and cirrhosis	7.1	9.0	10.2
10. Congenital anomalies	9.6	8.5	9.	10. Suicide	9.1	8.9	9.0

Source: USMBHC 2002, with data from, in Mexico: General Directorate of Epidemiology, SSA; deaths per 100,000 inhabitants, CONAPO estimates. In the United States: National Center for Health Statistics, CDC; deaths per 100,000 inhabitants. U.S. death rates are age-adjusted to the U.S. 2000 standard population.

As for communicable diseases, the migratory patterns of border residents make it difficult to implement a concerted effort to prevent their dispersal, although increased vaccination coverage (which continues to be higher on the Mexican side) has helped eradicate some diseases and decrease others.

Communicable Disease Cases and Rates

Disease	Mexico Border States		U.S. Border Counties	
	Cases	Rate*	Cases	Rate*
Dengue	3.4	572	6	0.1
Gonorrhea			3069	46.6
Hepatitis A	20.5	3411	722	11.0
Hepatitis B	1.3	216	410	6.2
HIV+	3.1	510		
AIDS			607	9.2
Malaria	4.7	784	15	0.2
Salmonellosis/Shigellosis			1880	28.6
Tuberculosis	25.7	4277	653	9.9

Source:USMBHC 2002, with data from, in Mexico: Unified Epidemiological Surveillance information System, General Directorate of Epidemiology, SSA; in the United States: State Health Departments of Arizona, California, New Mexico, Texas.

Over the past five years, the incidence of hepatitis A in the region has been declining, by 25% on the Mexican side, and by more than 60% on the U.S. side. Compared to the national rates, the border rates are as follows: in the U.S. border, the rate of hepatitis A incidence (11.0) is twice the national rate (4.8.), while in Mexico the rates are roughly the same for the border and the national level. The incidence of HIV positive cases on the Mexican border has increased by 30% since 1995 (it more than doubled nationally), while on the U.S. border the incidence rate for AIDS cases has dropped by 62% (compared to 47% nationally). The rate of pulmonary tuberculosis has also declined in both nations in recent years: by 5% in the Mexican border states (compared to 15% nationally), and by 40% in the U.S. border states (compared to 33% nationally). The border tuberculosis rate in both countries is substantially higher than at the national level: 15.7 nationally versus 25.7 at the border in Mexico, and 5.8 nationally versus 9.9 at the border in the U.S.

What do we want to do?

There are differences between informal relationships and formal collaboration.

The purpose of a binational project or activity—in terms of why people from either side want to work together—may be fairly straightforward, that is, the people involved know what the goal of the project or activity is and usually have an idea of why they are working together. However, when we ask "What do you want to do?" we are referring not only to specific goals and tasks, but also to the kind of relationship you want to build and the motivation behind it. What we often define broadly as "binational work" can be very diverse, and it is important to define a few key concepts to make sure we are not taking the meaning of these terms for granted.

For a variety of reasons, the most successful binational work usually takes place at the local level. Transborder cooperation often springs from informal relationships between colleagues on both sides of the border. It provides the informality necessary in the absence of a clearly defined infrastructure—i.e., cooperative agreements in document form—for more formal collaboration. This informality and smallness of scale often results in an invisibility of successful transborder cooperation efforts at the academic level. Very little is written about the day-to-day process of cooperation that takes place at the border, because writing about it could expose activities that are regulated ambiguously, that are controversial or bend the rules. Information on more formalized collaborative relationships is often more readily available. It appears that much of the local binational work takes place among non-government organizations (NGOs), although the role of NGOs may be overstated due to the fact that money is often passed through them by other types of organizations to avoid regulations limiting their own ability to use funds on the other side of the border.

One of the important aspects of border health involves the ability of different types of organizations from different sectors to enter into collaborative projects with each other.

Transborder efforts—whether they be community interventions or research projects, or both—often involve a combination of the following types of organizations: government health agencies, community-based organizations, academic institutions, direct service providers, to mention the most ubiquitous. There is a growing recognition of the value of multidisciplinary approaches to health issues. There is also a growing recognition of the value in having community representatives as active participants in research processes and community interventions, where community participation does not simply refer to community *consultation*, but where community representatives are involved in project design, analysis and implementation, and are not simply passive recipients of research results and interventions.
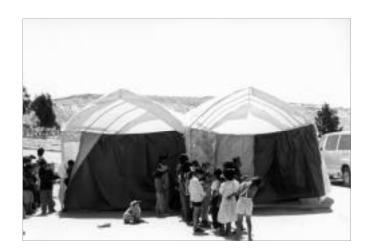
A model of successful effective transborder cooperation needs to be multi-faceted and dynamic over time and events. One of the purposes of this handbook is to explore the ways organizations can make binational work effective without the need for exorbitant amounts of added resources, time or effort.

There is a growing recognition of the value of multidisciplinary approaches to health issues.

What is (and is not) collaboration?

There is great variety in binational and inter-institutional relationships, and a variety of definitions of what "collaboration" is, as well as the difference between concepts such as "cooperation" and "collaboration." For this project we explored the definitions of several authors such as Arthur Himmelman, Francisco Lara, and Peter Senge, as well as the modifications the Good Neighbor Environmental Board has made of Himmelman's model. The results of our research have allowed us to place the concept of "collaboration" on a continuum, in order to differentiate between true collaboration and other types of partnerships.

Arthur Himmelman defines collaboration in relationship to three other types of joint work: networking, coordinating, and cooperating.

Himmelman's Collaboration Continuum	
Networking	exchanging information for mutual benefit
Coordinating	exchanging information and altering activities for mutual benefit and to achieve a common purpose
Cooperating	exchanging information, altering activities, and sharing resources for mutual benefit and to achieve a common purpose.
Collaboration	exchanging information, altering activities, sharing resources, and enhancing the capacity of another for mutual benefit and to achieve a common purpose.

According to Himmelman, the different partnerships imply growth factors and barriers specific to each type of relationship. As the working relationship becomes more collaborative, it requires a greater commitment from all participants. For example, when the objective of the relationship is to exchange information or coordinate efforts for a particular event, each organization can carry out its own activities or fulfill its own commitments without necessarily sharing power, responsibility, or a common vision with its partner organizations. True collaboration implies sharing power (in the form of resources, for example) as well as sharing responsibilities, decision-making and accountability, in order to carry out an objective based on a common vision.
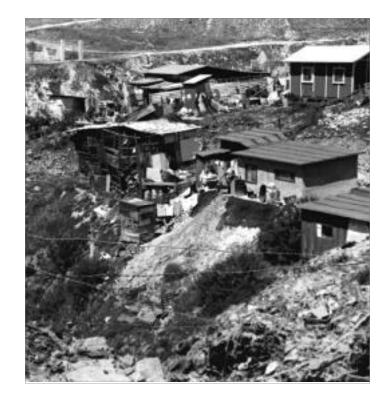
Similarly, the Good Neighbor Environmental Board defines "cooperating" as "exchanging information, altering activities, and sharing resources for mutual benefit and to achieve a common purpose," and "collaborating" as "exchanging information, altering activities, sharing resources, and enhancing the capacity of another for mutual benefit and achieve a common purpose." K. B. Johnston also contrasts "cooperation" with "collaboration": "Collaboration entails mutuality and equity throughout the project while cooperation allows for more differentiated responsibilities and roles. Collaboration requires joint decision-making while cooperation is often initiated by one party with others providing help and services as needed."

Both Himmelman and the Good Neighbor Environmental Board make a distinction between "collaborative betterment," which originates and is driven by institutions outside of the community, and "collaborative empowerment," defined as the capacity to set priorities and control resources that are essential for increasing community self-determination. Collaborative empowerment begins within the community and is brought to public, private, or nonprofit institutions.

What is the difference between betterment and empowerment?

Our research results indicate that Himmelman's concept of collaboration does not function in the border context. We have observed that collaboration at the border functions in terms of degrees, not developmental stages. It is implicit in Himmelman that collaboration is "better" and therefore all partnerships should be working towards that goal. However, our results show that the multiplicity of needs and barriers at the border—as well as the multiplicity of actors—require relationships that are tailored to specific organizations and specific results; therefore, a "network" relationship may be the best option in certain cases, depending on what needs to be accomplished in the short, medium- and long-term. Also, if we are to look at the networking-collaboration continuum in terms of degrees and without an attached judgment value, Himmelman's separation of "growth factors" and "barriers" work better to describe binational work when they are perceived simply as "factors," without a positive or negative connotation. Since true collaboration is so difficult to maintain in the binational context, many organizations use their networking relationships as a springboard for coordination and cooperation when resources for binational work become available, then return to networking until another opportunity for joint work becomes available.

Following from the observation mentioned above, we have also begun to recognize that the concepts of "betterment" and "empowerment" are multi-faceted and not dichotomous: in the context of the border one is not necessarily better than the other. An example of a "betterment" intervention which provides substantial benefits to the community and which would not necessarily become more effective if it received an "empow-erment" focus is the model for vaccination campaigns which originated in Mexico and is now used in many U.S. border communities. On the other hand, a good example of an "empowerment" process that has been very important to border

communities is the training of *promotoras de la salud*, members of the community who become educators and agents of sustainable change.

There are more pragmatic differences between binational relationships which imply differences in the type of personnel, resources, time, effort and other elements required, for example: a binational project that has a fixed deadline, finite resources and a set of guidelines for how the working relationship will be managed and which can "digress" into a networking relationship once the project is over; networking relationships like the COBINAS (Binational Committees) which can be the foundation for collaborative projects; institutional agreements which are cooperative, i.e. agencies which include their counterparts in certain efforts (campaigns, prevention strategies, etc.) on a "permanent" basis, or based on a permanent (even though they may be tacit) agreement to cooperate.

When discussing resources for transborder cooperation, it is essential to consider the role of **"binational actors":** the people involved in acting as conveners, catalysts and conduits for the binational process. Our research helped identify common areas of knowledge and expertise among the interviewees, from which we derived a descriptive model of what we defined as "binationalism" (different from "binationality," which commonly refers to dual citizenship). Using the bination-alism model, organizations can better identify what human resources are available for a project, as well determine whether they can foster the bicultural qualities and characteristics of its employees in order to make them better able to initiate and sustain binational relationships.

The U.S.-Mexico borderlands are usually seen as the collision between two cultures, between the "First World" and the "Third World." However, the very nature of the border—a physical border which, despite militarization efforts, remains quite porous, and a cultural border which is in a constant state of flux—provides border dwellers with the opportunity to construct their own cultural identities out of a wealth of different traditions and influences. These cultural identities may be based on ethnicity or migratory status (understood as contact with both sides of the border, not just citizenship), but both a person's ethnicity and their contact with both cultures point to broader issues of how personal identity is constructed in reference to a perception of "otherness."

The most obvious indicator of a person's cultural identity might be race or ethnicity, although the use of a person's external characteristics to assign any sort of internal value is rapidly losing credibility, especially in the border milieu, where outward appearance does not necessarily coincide with ethnic, national or cultural identification. Race as an indicator of cultural affiliation becomes more irrelevant as the people and cultures from both sides of the border begin to intermingle, as they have been doing for centuries. The

The very nature of the border provides border dwellers with the opportunity to construct their own cultural identities out of a wealth of different traditions and influences.
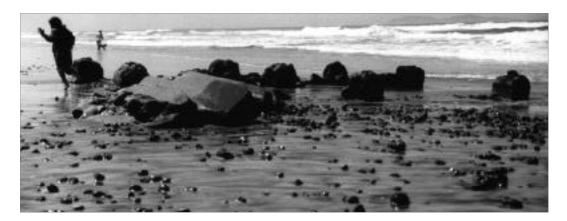
possibility of exposure to two or more cultures, then, becomes a key factor in the construction of a borderlands identity.

The process of acculturation on the border implies a flexible continuum of cultural knowledge and acceptance, not just of the national culture, but of transnational influences as well. At one extreme of this continuum are individuals who live on the border but who are largely unaffected by it, and on the other are persons whose very lives personify the borderlands milieu. The latter may be referred to as core borderlanders and the former as peripheral borderlanders. People at the core are bilingual and bicultural, and they have a high degree of contact with the opposite side of the border. Those on the periphery are monolingual and monocultural, and their ties to foreigners or to countrymen who are racially, ethnically, or culturally different from themselves are slight or non-existent. According to Oscar Martinez, in his book *Border People: Life and Society in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands*, the mass of the borderlands population moves between these two poles in a non-linear process, and their position can vary at any time in accordance with their orientation toward or away from transnational or transcultural interaction.

One of the major factors that makes transborder cooperation such a challenging endeavor is the existence of diverse and often conflicting border identities. In order for any binational project to be successful, participants must acquire a framework for dealing with, even thriving in, an environment of cultural difference. This framework is often referred to as "ethnorelativism," "biculturalism," and "multiculturalism."

Milton Bennett points out ethnorelativism is counter-intuitive and that historically people have not had the same need to interact cross-culturally as they do now. The form of cross-cultural interaction most prevalent in history is that of violence. Transborder cooperation demands a new paradigm for success: ethnorelativism. But how do people become "ethnorelative"? In the article "Towards Ethnorelativism: A Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity," Bennett outlines six stages on a continuum ranging from ethnocentrism (first three stages) to varying degrees of ethnorelativism (last three stages): Denial, Defense, Minimization, Acceptance, Adaptation, and Integration. In order to help individuals move forward in the continuum, is important to recognize what stage they are

One of the major factors that makes transborder cooperation such a challenging endeavor is the existence of diverse and often conflicting border identities.

in and what the unique dangers are that would cause him/her to move backward or stop him/her from moving forward. Bennett's model provided a good starting point from which we could begin to examine how different social actors' ethnorelativism (or lack thereof) contribute to the success or failure of binational projects. Another article, "Multicultural Minds: A Dynamic Constructivist Approach to Culture and Cognition" strengthened our understanding of what it is to be bi- or multi-cultural. Using an experimental design, Ying-yi Hong and colleagues define bicultural individuals as those "who have internalized two cultures to the extent that both cultures are alive inside of them," although they point out that this internalization of two (or more) cultures does not imply that the cultures are blended, or that acquiring a new culture implies replacing the original one. Instead, the authors explore how bicultural people maintain multiple paradigms which they are able to move between ("frame switching") according to contextual cues.

To supplement this information, we developed our model of biculturalness—the "binationalism" scale—based on a numerical ranking system. The numerical ranking system assigns points representing knowledge, experience, attitudes, and behaviors towards "other cultures." Each area has a continuum of points from 1 to 5, with 5 being the most binational/bicultural and 1 being the least. The model helps binational actors explore the relationship between their cultural awareness and their ability to function successfully in a binational project.

Level	Bilingualism
1	Speaks only English or Spanish.
2	Understands the other language but speaks little.
3	Communicates in both but prefers native language.
4	Is fluent in both but prefers native language, especially in more formal situations.
5	Is fluent in both and uses one or the other depending on the need or situation.

The first characteristic taken into account by the model is **bilingualism**. Knowledge of a counterpart's language not only makes communication between organizations possible, it also implies knowledge of the counterpart's customs and communicative conventions, which also facilitates binational interaction. In many binational scenarios, bilingual members often act as impromptu translators, especially in more formal settings which require technical or specialized language. According to our model, a strictly monolingual person is considered level 1, while a level 5 person has complete fluency in both languages for both formal and informal situations.

Level	Border ties
1	Does not cross the border; prefers no to cross, or cannot cross.
2	Few ties and contacts with the other side.
3	Few contacts, but closer ties.
4	More contacts and various types of ties on both sides.
5	Many contacts, both personal and professional, and close ties on both sides.

Border ties, the second characteristic defined by our model, refers to the number of personal and/or professional ties each binational actor has on the other side of the border. Many interviewees reported difficulties crossing the border and consider the border a barrier to effective communication. Nevertheless, most binational actors have some sort of connection with people on the other side; many have friends and relatives on both sides of the border, others have colleagues with whom they've forged strong professional ties over the years, ties which have in turn evolved into friendships. Many of these "informal" ties are the foundation for formal collaborative work, since knowledge of both sides makes a person more likely to initiate contact with a colleague on the other side of the border, and more likely to consider the feasibility of working binationally. The concept of "border ties" as defined by our model includes a binational actor's willingness to cross the border and adapt to the different working style and cultural milieu of the other side, and therefore to adapt to the specific needs of binational work.

Another characteristic identified by the interviewees which we considered important to binational work is whether a person has **lived or worked in another country** (regardless of which one), especially if the person lived in a country which required him or her to learn a different language and adapt to a different culture. However, in order to reflect the experiences of the interviewees, levels 4 and 5 only apply to those who lived (as a foreigner) in the U.S. or Mexico for more than two years, which would provide more of an opportunity to become familiar with the language and customs of the host country. While some interviewees reported having lived in other Latin American countries, it was usually for a period of less than a year.

Level	Experience living in another country
1	No experience.
2	Experience of 1 year or less in another country (Anglo or Latin).
3	Experience of 1 to 2 years in other country (US or Mexico).
4	Experience of 2 to 5 years in other country (US or Mexico).
5	Experience of more than 5 years in other country (US or Mexico).

Level	Family member of different ethnic or national origin
1	None.
2	Father, mother or spouse of different ethnic or national origin.

On the border—and this is particularly true of the U.S. side—many families are composed of members of different ethnic backgrounds. The interviewees were asked to de-fine their own **ethnic background**, as well as that of their parents and partner. This was originally designed to provide the research team with information as to how much "cross-ethnicity" there was in a person's home life, both at present and while growing up. We hypothesized that people from "bicultural" homes would be more likely to act as cultural brokers in the process of binational work. However, it was difficult to map cross-ethnicity across a five-level continuum. For one, we did not take into account other people—such as friends, children, or other family members—of a different ethnic background who may have co-habited with the interviewee at any point in their lives other than the present. Also, and more importantly, the concept of ethnicity is hard to pin down. Interviewees were asked whether parents and partner were American, Mexican, or Mexican-American, but they were not asked to specify whether they were referring to citizenship, national origin, or cultural identification. For example, a person who was born in Mexico but has U.S. citizenship has the option of self-identifying as any of the three, depending on his or her choice of cultural identification. Similarly, many people who were born and raised in the U.S. but whose parents—or even grandparents—were of Mexican origin will self-identify as "Mexican" as opposed to "Mexican-American." Although this is not as much of an issue in Mexico, many Mexican nationals do not differentiate between "American" and "Mexican-American," using the term "American" to refer to anyone born in the U.S. For all of these reasons, the research team decided to simplify the scale of cross-ethnicity to two levels, so that Level 1 refers to someone who has no parents or partner of a different national or ethnic origin, and Level 2 refers to someone who does.

The process of **transculturation** was also deemed a factor which influences the capabilities of binational actors to act as cultural brokers in transborder relationships—and thus act as facilitators in the process of binational work. Initially, the research team considered that simply knowing how people on "the other side" work and interact would make a binational actor more likely to initiate and maintain contact. However, as discussion progressed it became clear that mere familiarity does not necessarily imply an assimilation of knowledge about "the other" into one's own value system. According to the research team, this would limit a binational relationship's ability to be truly collaborative, since a flexible framework—including the ability to assimilate both countries' work styles and cultural idiosyncrasies into the process—is essential to transborder cooperation. As reflected in the interviews, a person who has little knowledge of the other side will tend to focus on the "institutional" differences between cultures—differences in health care systems or bureaucracy, for example—or on the overt differences in interaction—lunch is earlier in Mexico than in the U.S., Mexicans kiss upon greeting, Americans are less demonstrative, etc. Furthermore, a person with little knowledge of the other side will tend to have a more general opinion of the other country, and the opinion will often be either "all good" or "all bad." Many interviewees expressed the fact that, in the beginning, people who are new to binational work believe that "all Mexico is corrupt" or "all Americans are out to impose their will on Mexicans." As knowledge of the other side and of binational counterparts increases, opinions become more complex, and a more complex understanding of both countries' and cultures' strengths and weaknesses is gained. This allows binational actors to integrate their counterparts' value system without sacrificing their own. It should be noted that the number of binational actors who are bicultural to begin with greatly facilitate this process.

Level	Transculturation
1	No knowledge of the "other," little interest.
2	Little knowledge of and no identification with "other."
3	Begins to recognize complexity of other culture.
4	Considerable knowledge motivates acceptance of differences and adaptation.
5	Knowledge of the complexities of both cultures and total adaptation.

Level	Time lived at border
1	Limited time. Few crossings to other side and only for visiting or shopping.
2	More time live in the border area, but not on the border itself.
3	More time lived on the border, more crossings for more reasons.
4	Considerable time on the border, frequent crossings for various reasons.
5	Extensive time on the border, multiple crossings for multiple reasons.

A final consideration was the amount of time a person has spent **living in a bor der town and/or living in the border area** (defined as "border state" for our model), which directly affects the transculturation process. Apart from the number of years a person has lived on the border or in the border area, the model considers the frequency of border crossings and the reasons for crossing. The most common reason border dwellers cross the border is to shop or acquire services on the other side, although many also have other reasons for crossing: to visit friends and relatives, to work, to study, etc. When crossing is more frequent, when it involves longer periods of time, or when the reasons for crossing are more varied, there is a more contact with the culture of the other country, which fosters understanding and, in turn, promotes respect for that which would otherwise remain "foreign."

Although this description is not a recipe, and no single factor will determine the success of a transborder project, an analysis of these factors can give you an idea of the strengths and challenges of your binational team. The myriad of difficulties involved can make transborder cooperation a very frustrating endeavor. It has been our experience that people working binationally must be very patient with the process and recognize the value and complexity of the work, understanding that it is worth the trouble.

How are we going to work together?

Model of fire building for transborder work

Fire—in any one of a number of manifestations—has always been essential to the evolution of humankind. Different types of fires, depending on the task at hand, have been used for centuries for cooking, illumination, security, warmth, toolmaking, even communication. In terms of transborder cooperation, thinking of building a fire as an analogy to building a collaborative binational relationship allowed the research team to explore how it is often necessary to consider the suitability of individual elements (wood, tinder, ground) before they can be combined to perform a more complex task. Binational work is like building a fire in that different elements (the right people, the right environment, the right organizational structure) must coincide if it is to be successful [SEE MODEL OF FIRE BUILDING FOR TRANSBORDER WORK]. Previous work done on binational programs are essentially descriptive and in a list form. For example, the Swiss Commission for Research Partnership with Developing Countries (KFPE 1998) lists 11 principles that researchers believe critical to research partnerships between industrialized nations and developing nations. These 11 principles explained in the Swiss model present a one-dimensional view, and the various dimensions are not weighed in terms of either importance nor in terms of historical value. We believe that our model accounts not only for the essential elements for binational work but also portrays the dynamic interactions between organizations and people that happen with transborder cooperation. The other construct considered in our model is Himmelman's (2001) developmental model of networking, coordination, cooperation, and collaboration. This feature is used to differenti-ate between the quality of the interaction based on the model element, such as wood.

The organizations that carry out binational work as represented in our model as the ground a fire is built on. In order to determine what would be the best ground for a binational fire, we took into account elements such as decision-making, common vision, resource sharing, power structure, accountability, information flow, and communication.

The organizations that carry out binational work as represented in our model as the ground a fire is built on.

Binational actors working within a transborder project are represented as wood, the basic component of a fire.

The oxygen needed to maintain the fire represents the elements needed to maintain binational work over time.

One of the important observations of this research project was that true collaboration (as defined by Himmelman) is not possible, since issues of national sovereignty make it almost impossible to share resources or power equitably. The physical border also acts as an impediment to communication. This means that organizations involved in binational work must often work within their capabilities and limitations to design projects according to the particular goals of their communities, meaning that the work structure for binational projects is influenced by whether a betterment effect or an empowerment effect is desired.

Binational actors working within a transborder project are represented as wood, the basic component of a fire. A fire can be built with any type of wood, if the wood is dry. In order to keep a fire going, a steady supply of adequate wood is needed. We consider that binational actors with a high rank in our binationalism model make the ideal "wood" for a transborder "fire." In order to move from a networking relationship to true collaboration (and from a betterment process to an empowerment process), binational actors must identify with constituents on both sides of the border, and must work to empower their binational "community" through projects with funding for both sides.

The oxygen needed to maintain the fire represents the elements needed to maintain binational work over time. Oxygen controls the size of the fire and the consistency of the fire; it is THE sustaining quality for a fire other than wood and kindling. Binational "oxygen" includes a commitment to binational work, even when there is no steady funding source, a consistent sharing of expectations and evaluations on both parts, strategies for fostering trust and respect, resources (monetary or otherwise) specifically pegged for binational work, and mechanisms for dealing with conflict.

Kindling represents the trigger that helps a binational project or relationship begin. Our interviewees identified the following catalysts for their binational work: a critical issue, such as an epidemic; planning grant money specifically for binational work; regular meetings of binational councils or other groups which provide opportunities to network; a workplan or strategies for incorporating binational work into regular activities; a common vision of the whole border area as one community; the need to produce epidemiological and other data which is useful to both sides; endorsement from the public and from visible leaders which encourages organizations to engage in binational work, and the perception that this work is effective.

Kindling represents the trigger that helps a binational project or relationship begin.

The weather which affects our binational fire represents the border context and general global issues.

A final consideration was the weather which affects our binational fire. Weather—which surrounds the models elements—represents the global, overarching features of the border context and general global issues. These features are beyond the control of the people and organizations working on binational projects. A rainstorm can drench your fire, but the rainstorm as an obstacle can be overcome by constructing a shelter for the fire. One needs to know the weather conditions and plan for anticipated adverse weather conditions. Federal, state, and county political processes are an example of weather conditions that can positively or adversely affect a fire.

The type of fire needed, the ground available, the quality and quantity of wood, the kindling, the amount of oxygen and the weather will all determine what kind of fire can actually be built. A networking fire, as part of a betterment process, will be a fire around which people can gather to prepare food and keep warm, to tell stories and build culture, to learn more about the world and about each other, to share ideas. Then it be-comes a community fire, which requires cooperation for its maintenance. It can be used to make tools as well as food preparation. As part of the betterment process, it will allow its users to eat better food and add to diversity of food ingested. Fire as part of an empow-erment process is a dream of an eternal flame—a fire that is built and maintained by all and will always be available as a resource for people. In the border context, there is currently no ground that supports a collaborative fire. A truly collaborative fire would have to exist on both sides of the border, on ground that encompasses both countries and is accessible to all.

For practical purposes, this model is useful when considering the available elements you have to work with and how they can interact. By encouraging all counterparts to identify themselves and each other based on the model, we hope to stimulate discussions which will help you strengthen the relationship and carry out your goals successfully.

The essential elements of binational work

There are certain elements mentioned in much of the literature on collaboration, as well as in the interviews we carried out, which function as key concerns, or even principles, for what is considered successful binational work. The following is a list of topics which can stimulate discussion between counterparts and people involved in transborder relationships. They reflect issues related to **motivation**, **trust** and **respect**, and **cultural issues** which affect binational work. Although there are many other factors which binational partners must address in order to carry out their activities successfully, we believe discussion of these three provide a solid groundwork which fosters discussion of other topics, including power asymmetries and accountability.

There is no definitive answer for any of the questions or topics presented; rather, the discussion carried out by every set of counterparts or team members, depending on their particular needs and context, will be the basis for establishing the parameters of that particular relationship.

Things to think about: motivation

1. What problems do you share with your counterpart?
2. Why do you want to work together?
3. Do your objectives and planned activities reflect a betterment process or an empowerment process?
4. What kind of relationship is most effective for the kind of goals you have set (networking, coordination, cooperation, collaboration)?
5. Have you discussed your goals and expectations with all participants:
    a. on a personal level?
    b. on an organizational level?
    c. on a community level?
6. What resources are available for this particular binational project or activity (economic resources, human resources, infrastructure)?
7. How will the resources be shared?

Notes:

Notes:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Things to think about: trust and respect

1. How do you define trust and respect? Can you give examples of what you consider to be sensitive, courteous and friendly behavior?
2. How does the issue of respect affect other factors in a transborder relationship?
3. How does credibility affect respect? Have you and your counterparts established mutual credibility?
4. Do you believe that personal relationships are more often the basis for binational rapport, or do you value institutional connections more?
5. Is there a difference between trust and respect on an institutional level and on a personal level?
6. How does ethnicity affect a binational relationship? Is there an essence of implicit trust among those that consider themselves Mexican? Is there any tension between Mexican nationals and Mexican-Americans? Do all Hispanics have shared values and beliefs?
7. How much time does it take to build respect and trust? What can you do to foster trust and respect right now? How will you establish trust and respect over time?
8. What are the power issues involved in building trust and respect for your particular relationship? Are there differences in resources or other power asymmetries that need to be addressed?
9. Have you established mechanisms through which you can maintain an open dialogue based on constant and honest communication, within your organization as well as among binational counterparts?
10. Are there any policies (national, organizational) and/or traditions which must be stated so that they will be respected by all counterparts?
11. Are language differences a barrier to personal and professional transborder relationships? If so, how do you plan to accommodate for these differences in order to build trust and respect?
12. Is there a difference between respect and tolerance?
13. How important is it to have credibility within the community? How can you foster trust within your community?
14. Can there be respect without trust? Which comes first?

Things to think about: cultural issues

1. Define your concept of difference, or "otherness."
2. How do cultural issues permeate all other aspects of binational work?
3. Are there differences in disciplinary and professional backgrounds within your group?
   Have you anticipated how this will affect expectations, discussions and day-to-day activities?
4. Are there differences in work styles in Mexico and the US? Is this reflected in your team?
   a. What are the administrative and bureaucratic differences between your organizations?
   b. Are your priorities different?
   c. Do you work at the same pace? (For example, do you always schedule lunch and other breaks at the same time during joint meetings?)
5. Do the differences in technology and access to resources between Mexico and the US affect your work?
6. How does having a different health care system in each country affect your work?
7. Do you define key terms the same way? Are you using the same diagnostic tools?
8. Would you say your organization has a vertical or a horizontal structure? Your counterpart's organization? Does this affect your binational work?

Notes:

Considerations and strategies for binational problem-solving

There is a range of different strategies that people use to solve problems when they're committed to a project. There are also certain elements that projects seem to share when they're successful despite a diversity of other strategies and efforts. Some specific considerations which may help you reach your objectives:

- Within and among the participating organizations, it is necessary to have a separate **structure for binational work** which considers and is inclusive of each counterpart, as well as identify the key players in a particular thematic area or community, and determine whether a counterpart is the right one for what needs to be accomplished.

- Although the importance of **communication** in the binational process is often considered, it is usually discussed in terms of language differences, that is, the difficulty of accommodating to the use of both Spanish and English. Groups committed to a long-term project find that **regular meetings** make a difference in establishing effective communication. If regular, face-to-face meetings are not possible, **conference calls** were suggested as an alternative. Many people are also beginning to utilize the internet to a much greater degree. Interviewees on both sides suggested that increasing **access to internet connections** —especially on the Mexican side—would enhance binational communication and, consequently, binational work.

- In terms of **logistics**, figuring out when and where to meet is perhaps the most important way to make sure all participants are able to continue with the project. Meeting location affects who can attend (visas, crossing, customs, etc.). Having a set meeting structure that is inclusive of the culture of both sides is also important. When translation is involved, things like speaking slowly and using audiovisual material (in both languages) is important.

- Consider that **crossing the border** can be difficult and entail a lot of wasted time. Many Mexicans cannot cross at all for lack of a visitor visa or other immigration documentation, and some Americans prefer not to cross for various reasons: they perceive Mexico to be dangerous, bureaucracy at the border to be a hassle, etc. Nevertheless, face-to-face contact is often preferred because it is perceived to make interaction easier, although in practical terms the telephone is the most common means of communication.

- In our original discussions, we believed that one **language** tends to dominate over the other in the binational process, and our original hypothesis was that English dominated because much of the funding and initiative for binational work comes from the U.S. However, we now realize that, although English is preferred in some specific scenarios, Spanish dominates in day-to-day activities and meetings of binational working groups on the Arizona-Sonora border. The most obvious reason is that there are more people of Hispanic origin (who often speak Spanish) in the U.S. than there are English speakers in Mexico. Most groups make an effort to learn each others' language and accommodate for monolinguals, and often it is non-Spanish speakers from the US that make the effort to learn Spanish, since they are aware of the power differentials between the US and Mexico and are sensitive to trying to decrease them.

- One interesting aspect of communication which we did not anticipate prior to beginning the research was the fact that people **collaborating within the same sector** find it easier to communicate among themselves than with others outside their sector. This means that, for example, an epidemiologist might find it easier to communicate with a colleague from the other side than with, say, an anthropologist from the same side of the border. This issue is especially important when government agencies or research institutions work with community organizations, since "professionals" in the academic and health fields have different backgrounds, presumptions and expectations than lay health workers or activists. In this case, "speaking the same language" takes on a whole new connotation which is not limited to Spanish or English.

- Some interviewees reported **difficulties communicating between Mexicans and Mexican-Americans** (even when they spoke the same language), because cultural competency and affinity are more often taken for granted among people who perceive themselves to be from a similar background, which can lead to false expectations and misinterpretations of behavior, speech, etc.

- **Bureaucracy** on both sides was also considered an obstacle to effective communication, especially when the partners involved do not know or understand the bureaucratic structure their colleagues, and often they themselves, must operate within. Overall, the interviewees agreed that having a long-term working relationship minimizes this and other obstacles, both structural and linguistic.

- There was a perception among our interviewees that there is more **commonality among sister cities** than among cities separated by geographic space, regardless of national boundaries. This affects the way in which decisions on public health policy are made. Often there are also more commonalities between people in the same sector (i.e., government, community organizations, academic, etc.) than between people of the same national origin.

- Binational actors need to be aware of the **political context and climate changes** —as well as changes in health policy—at the border and must try to incorporate mechanisms within the binational work structure which allow all partners to respond effectively to these changes without compromising the team's goals and/or the relationship itself. One concrete example is the way in which increased border security after September 11 affected funding priorities and day-to-day activities for transborder projects.

- The issue of **employee tur nover** needs to be addressed: the people who participate in binational projects need not only technical training, but also training in cultural competency issues, etc. The areas of knowledge identified by our binationalism scale may be inherent to what we are defining as binational actors, but organizations need to foster continuous training and development in these areas so that binational work does not depend on key people who act as facilitators for the work and who can't easily be replaced.

- Binational work usually takes more **time** to carry out than regular work, due to many of the issues already mentioned. Time is an element that permeates most other consideration and should be an issue during the discussion of all topics, even if at first it might seem irrelevant. Among the activities which take more time when working binationally, to give only a few examples: establishing trust and respect; crossing the border for meetings; translating materials and reports.

- When speaking of **binational resources** and how they are to be shared, it is important to define "resources" to include not just monetary funds but personnel, organizational capacity, proven strategies, etc.

Conclusions

Every binational relationship is unique in many aspects and changes over time, and this handbook is an attempt to put together a framework which will stimulate binational actors to think about the process of their work and improve the quality of the final outcome. Recognizing that nothing is ever set in stone, we have tried to include specific information and examples which could be helpful to you in your continuing collaborative efforts.

The presence of bilateral commissions is important to binational work primarily in that they are structurally designed to work binationally and are able to share resources across the border. However, it is the day-to-day cooperation of local actors and organizations that will, in the end, make a significant difference for border communities. Therefore, it is also important to continue to strengthen the role and capacity of local actors to share resources, conduct joint trainings and binational prevention campaigns, etc. as well as to encourage them to continue to establish their own collaborative relationships without having to depend on the larger binational agencies. We salute these local efforts and hope this handbook contributes to their endeavors!

Bibliography

Baker, E. A. *et al.* (1999), "Principles of Practice for Academic/Practice/Community Research Partnerships,"
    American Journal of Preventive Medicine, vol. 16, no. 3S, pp. 86-93.

Bennett, M. J. (1993), "Towards Ethnorelativism: A Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity", in R. M. Paige (ed.),
    Education for the Intercultural Experience, Yarmouth, Maine, Intercultural Press.

Coronado, I. (1998), *Who Governs in a Binational Context?. The Role of Transnational Political Elites*, Tucson, University of Arizona Press.

Denman, C. A., M. C. Castro and G. Salazar (eds.) (1998), "Salud reproductiva y cáncer cérvico uterino. Elementos básicos para una discusión", *Cuaderno de
    Trabajo II del Consorcio Transfronterizo para la Investigación y Acción en Género y Salud Reproductiva en la Frontera México-Estados Unidos*, Southwest
    Institute for Research on Women-University of Arizona, El Colegio de Sonora, El Colegio de la Frontera Norte.

Good Neighbor Environmental Board (1995), *First Annual Report*, [Report of the Presidential and Congressional Advisory Committee on
    U.S.-Mexico Border Environmental and Infrastructure Issues].

Himmelman, A. (2001), "Collaboration for Change: Definitions, Models, Roles, and a Guide to Collaborative Processes" [web article],
    updated November 2001, consulted August 2002, available at URL: http://www.bigpictureassociates.com/product/himmelman_article.pdf

Homedes, N. and A. Ugalde (2001), "Constraints to Binational US-Mexico Border Health Cooperation," paper presented at the
    9o *Congreso de Investigación en Salud Pública,* Cuernavaca, Morelos, March 4-7, 2001.

Johnston, K. B. (1996), "This Issue," *Theory into Practice*, vol. 35, no. 3, pp. 146-148.

Jones, E. and J. Nimmo (1999), "Collaboration, Conflict, and Change: Thoughts on Education as Provocation," *Young Children*, vol. 54, no. 1, pp. 5-10.

KFPE (1998), *Guidelines for Research in Partnership with Developing Countries*, Berne, Swiss Commission for Research Partnership with Developing
Countries, available at URL: http://www.kfpe.ch/about/guidelines.html

Lara, F. (2000), "Transboundary Networks for Environmental Management in the San Diego-Tijuana Border Region," in L. A. Herzog (ed.),
    Shared Space: Rethinking the U.S.-Mexico Border Environment, La Jolla, Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California, San Diego, pp. 155-181.

Lara-Valencia, F. (2002), "Institutional Reform and Transboundary Cooperation for Environmental Planning along the United States-Mexican Border," disser-
    tation submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Urban, Technological and Environmental Planning), University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Martínez, O. J. (1994), *Border People: Life and Society in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands*, Tucson, University of Arizona Press.

Mendoza, G. and J. R. Leus (n.d.), *Bi-Border Cooperation in Public Health U.S.-Mexico Border*, draft document.

Monk, J., P. Manning, and C. Denman (2002), "Working Together: Feminist Perspective on Collaborative Research and Action,"
    ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies, http://www.acme-journal.org/index.html

Ojeda, N. (1998), "Investigación social interdisciplinaria y comunitaria en el contexto fronterizo: Implicaciones para la investigación y acción sobre género
    y salud reproductiva", *Cuaderno de Trabajo III del Consorcio transfronterizo para la investigación y acción en género y salud reproductiva en la frontera
    México-E.U.*, Southwest Institute for Research on Women-University of Arizona, El Colegio de Sonora, El Colegio de la Frontera Norte.

Senge, P. *et al.* (1999), *The Dance of Change: The Challenges to Sustaining Momentum in Learning Organizations*, New York, Doubleday.

United States–Mexico Border Health Commission (2002), *Healthy Border 2010: An Agenda for Improving Health on the United States – Mexico Border*,
    El Paso, United States–Mexico Border Health Commission.

Vila, P. (2000), *Crossing Borders, Reinforcing Borders: Categories, Metaphors, and Narrative Identities on the U.S.-Mexico Frontier*,
    Austin, University of Texas Press.