

JOANNA DREBY: *Divided By Borders: Mexican Migrants and Their Children*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010.

While it is not uncommon to hear about Mexican migrant workers in the U.S. through print and television news outlets, it is rather uncommon to hear about what is at the center of that migration: children. Joanna Dreby's *Divided by Borders: Mexican Migrants and Their Children* carefully analyzes the price that Mexican children pay when one or both parents embark on a journey to *el norte* in search of a job that will enable them to provide a better life for the children they leave behind. Dreby also examines how reunification is usually articulated as an end to a finite process when, in fact, it often becomes a mirage that is ever on the horizon. The author does an excellent job of presenting several families' nuanced migratory experiences as well as exploring the ramifications of these migrations and the impact they have on their children.

Dreby's analysis centers on the manner in which parenthood and parenting necessarily evolve due to the pressures of living far away from one's children. And while this is certainly the most difficult of pressures on families, it is certainly not the only one she explores. Outlined in her book are a number of other conflicts that migrant families might encounter, among them infidelities that arise when spouses live in different countries for years at a time or the impact that the sudden return of a parent has on children who have become accustomed to living with only the specter of that parent. It is in this vein that I found her work most useful. She studies a myriad of family structures, each with different sets of dynamics: single mothers who leave their children with cousins, grandparents, or siblings; mothers who stay home when fathers migrate only to follow them soon after; parents who migrate together only to separate in the U.S.; parents who start new families away from home, etc. Her work shows how given the fluidity of these family structures, established gender roles are negotiated and become fluid when mothers and fathers parent from a great distance and are influenced by American familial norms.

In regard to family reunification, Dreby takes the position that time is as fluid as gender and parenting roles. Thus she provides a real insight into the tensions experienced by families divided by borders. She contends that "Conflicting emotions that result from the passage of time at different paces in different places often prolong periods of separation" (p. 54). It is these types of observation that make this work interesting. Dreby structures her book so that each chapter introduces a series of family histories. Woven throughout is her commentary concerning the difficulties experienced by these families and the way they cope. Though at times her interjections border on the romantic – she writes, for example, that "Fathers also often had romantic relationships in the

United States without disrupting their relationships with their wife and children in Mexico” (p. 70) without considering that the infidelity might not well be an isolated incident that only occurs in the United States – the concluding sections of each chapter offer a series of critical, poignant, and keen observations.

Still, it must be noted that as interesting as this work is, it nonetheless lacks context. As I read *Divided by Borders*, I could not help asking myself why the author chose to focus on families that migrated to New Jersey. Would a study of families that had migrated to Los Angeles or Chicago not provide a more complete portrait of the impact migration has on Mexican children? Do migrations to these locales result in longer or shorter stays than do those to New Jersey? Do people from the Mixteca region of Mexico only migrate to New Jersey or can they also be found in other parts of the U.S. in greater numbers? I do not have the answer to these questions nor are they provided in the work. The author mentions why she chose to focus on families from New Jersey but fails to provide an adequate context for this decision in the Research Design section of the book. When describing Ofelia’s experience, for example, she writes that “She explained that her husband was the first to leave. He worked in Los Angeles for about a year, and Ofelia stayed with her own mother and newborn son in Las Cruces” (p. 39-40). Why did he go to Los Angeles? How did they come to be in New Jersey? These are questions that needed to be addressed in order to properly locate the impact of her analysis.

Lastly, the text would have been richer had it provided a deeper theoretical framework. Through the use of end notes, the author takes great care to point the reader to the sources where that framework can be found but I was left to wonder why she did not incorporate it into the fabric of her text. Ultimately, I found this work to be compelling in subject matter while at the same time frustrating because the material was not organically incorporated with other scholarship.

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ERICK D. LANGER: *Expecting Pears from an Elm Tree: Franciscan Missions on the Chiriguano Frontier in the Heart of South America, 1830-1949*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2009.

“[W]hoever undertakes to interpret the forces by which Spain extended her rule, her language, her law and her traditions, over the frontier of her vast American possessions, must give close attention to the missions, for in that work they constituted a primary agency.” Writing in 1917, Prof. Herbert Bolton was one of the first to point out the pivotal role that religious missions played