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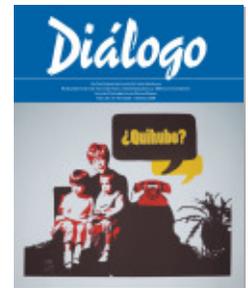
The Latina/o Midwest Reader ed. by Omar Valerio-Jiménez,
Santiago Vaquera-Vásquez, and Claire F. Fox (review)

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The Latina/o Midwest Reader

EDITED BY OMAR VALERIO-JIMÉNEZ, SANTIAGO VAQUERA-VÁSQUEZ, AND CLAIRE F. FOX.
CHAMPAIGN: U OF ILLINOIS P, 2017. 332 PP. ISBN: 9780252082771

In *The Latina/o Midwest Reader*, editors Omar Valerio-Jiménez, Santiago Vaquera-Vásquez, and Claire F. Fox provide readers with a variety of articles on Latinas/os in the Midwest. Comprising of an introduction, 18 substantive chapters, and an afterword, this book challenges views that Latinas/os are newcomers to the Midwest. Various experts apply methods ranging from ethnography and interviews to historical accounts and anecdotes of individuals and places, essays, and life histories to bring attention to the social, cultural, and economic dimensions of Latinas/os in rural and urban communities.

Through the term *Latinoization*, Louis Mendoza describes the ongoing process of demographic change over the last fifty years and its implications for society. He argues that there is a tension between resistance to the presence of Latinas/os and the need for their labor for the local economy, demonstrating how the new geography of Latina/o demographic change invites conversations about inclusion and exclusion that reflect regional histories, cultures, and social relations.

José E. Limón focuses on the internal migration of working-class Mexican Americans from Texas to the Midwest and back to Texas during the last century. Migrants journeyed from the cotton fields of South and Central Texas to the sugar beet fields of Michigan, the packinghouses of Omaha and Chicago, and the foundries of Indiana and Ohio. Many migrant workers established permanent residence in the Midwest, while others opted for working *en el norte* for periods of time and returning to Texas, often with residences in both places. His examples include religious beliefs, music, and writings—personal anecdotes and fiction, poetry, and essays.

Aidé Costa highlights the presence of Latinas/os in Lorraine, Illinois, where Mexicans have been present for over four decades and are the primary labor force that sustains the local broom industry. Costa indicates that through settlement and cultural practices, Latinos are reshaping the American heartland, a place they too call home. According to Costa, the changes in

these new places create local discomforts that become implicated in policy and public discourses.

Michael Innis-Jiménez argues that Mexicans moved to South Chicago early in the twentieth century, attracted by the economic opportunities of the city. Many did not plan to stay, expecting to return to Mexico in a better economic condition. Like other immigrants, they experienced discrimination, ethnic prejudice, nativism, and racism. Undeterred, they maintained their cultural traditions and developed a sense of community. They created businesses and formed clubs, mutual-aid societies, and community-based organizations that improved their lives and mitigated the effects of discrimination.

Lilia Fernandez focuses on Mexican and Puerto Rican migrants who settled in the Midwest during the decade following World War II. The diversity of Latino immigrants increased because of civil wars, political instability, and austere economic conditions in Mexico, Central and South America, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic. Like the early Mexican and Puerto Rican immigrants, new immigrants experienced barriers in employment, housing, and other areas. Public debates over the costs and benefits of new immigrants are echoed today in the “new” destinations in the Midwest.

Marta María Maldonado examines differences in the sense of belonging in the rural Midwest among Latinas/os in Perry, Iowa. Their views challenge dominant discourses and practices that exclude them from full participation in their communities even as they are welcomed as laborers. They see themselves as contributors to communities and the nation, and question their marginalization. Maldonado concludes that dominant notions of community and identity are likely to be challenged and reshaped through the everyday practices and perspectives of transcultural subjects.

Kim Potowski holds that continued growth of Latina/o populations and increasing diversity in ethnolinguistic groups make the Midwest a critical site for studying language and identity among Latinos.

Potowski advances three reasons why this is important: the Midwest has many Spanish-English dual-language schools and other types of heritage language education schools; it has had significant contact between dialect groups for more than half a century; and it is home to the nation's largest public-school district (Chicago).

Carolyn Colvin and colleagues examine Latina/o parent-school involvement and the myth that immigrant parents care little about their children's academic success. They argue that parent participation in schools is emblematic of unwritten educational expectations held by teachers and administrators. They endorse parent-teacher collaborations so that children experience success, but they also call for a deeper understanding of parent involvement when institutional hierarchies frame their participation in terms of power. That includes the unfamiliarity and cultural distance experienced by immigrant parents. The authors call on researchers and practitioners to develop relationships with parents as one step in dismantling the myth of uncaring.

Jane Blocker examines Iowa as a site of immigration and cultural crossings using the film *The Black Angel*, which tells a story of the life of Cuban American artist Ana Mendieta, a Cuban refugee who settled in Iowa. She argues that the film highlights immigrant trauma—the trauma of displacement, alienation, acculturation, and loss—which is experienced and expressed through an amalgam of alien languages, customs, and symbols.

Felipe Hinojosa argues that religion served as an important platform for Latina/o civil rights movements in the Midwest. He tells the stories of Latinas/os who joined the Mennonite Church in Ohio during the middle part of the twentieth century, and shows how religious activism was part of community formation for Latina/o migrants making the Midwest their new home. Fifty years after the local church was founded, it continues to be a space for longtime Latinas/os in Ohio and for Latina/o newcomers making the Midwest their new home.

Janet Weaver describes how Latinas/os in Iowa stood in solidarity with farmworkers in California and Iowa. They were inspired by La Causa and supported the rights of California farmworkers to organize a union and bargain collectively. Iowa legislators responded positively to their pressures and approved a migrant camp bill (1969) and, a year later, Governor Robert Ray signed a new Iowa child labor law that strengthened protections for migrant children on Iowa's farms.

Finally, Frances R. Aparicio focuses on Latinas/os of mixed national heritages in Chicago and examines how several of the Latinas/os she interviewed negotiate national identities and resist the dominant forces that push them to choose one national identity over others. She found that many embrace the term Latina/o as their identity, and illustrates how they resist choosing one identity over another and the creative ways by which they are rewriting the idea of "American" (p. 282).

The Latina/o Midwest Reader contributes to the field of Latina/o studies by providing a mix of readings that examine historical and contemporary Latina/o issues in the Midwest using different interdisciplinary lenses. They highlight historical, social, cultural, economic, and political dimensions associated with Latina/o issues. Like their predecessors, Latina/o migrants experience employment and housing discrimination. The readings also highlight how Latinas/os use their culture and traditions to maintain a sense of community. One issue discussed but not fully developed is how the increase of Latinas/os in the Midwest is likely to affect their integration into host communities. This reader can be useful in introductory undergraduate courses in the social sciences, history, and interdisciplinary courses focusing on Latino issues.

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