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Crossing Borders. Changing Social Identities in Southern Mexico, by Kimberly M. Grimes. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press (1998), xiii, 191 pp.

Reviewed by Pablo Vila, University of Texas at San Antonio

Dr. Kimberly Grimes has written a very informative book about the dynamics and complexities of immigration processes between Southern Mexico and the United States. A welcome addition to the growing ethnography of Mexican immigrants in the United States, this thoughtful anthropological work analyzes the acculturation, assimilation, resistance, and social and cultural change many Putlecans undergo at both ends of their migratory journey; Putla and Oaxaca on the one hand, and their many different destinations in the United States on the other (but focusing primarily on Atlantic City, New Jersey, where most of them end up living).

The book is well organized and consists of an introduction, six thematic chapters and an appendix in which Grimes transcribes the questionnaire she applied in her fieldwork. Chapter 2, "Negotiating Borders" deals, in a concise manner, with the history of Putla, a history that clearly shows why "the town of Putla sustained its position as an important center of regional commerce, bridging the diverse ecosystems of the Mixtec region and, to varying degrees, connecting the region to national and international politics and economies" (p. 34).

Chapter 3, "Before the Road," is a description of Putla's social structure from which we learn, for instance, that "Although the elite class rarely interacted socially with the rest of the mestizo population, the two groups did share the racist belief that they were superior to the indigenous peoples of the region" (p. 44). The role of public education in promoting this racist attitude against the indigenous population is also analyzed in detail: "Even though the romanticized version of the 'Indian' was revered and praised in artistic and literary circles in Mexico and though the indigenismo-mestizaje doctrines formed a central part of the official state ideology, racist ideologies permeated and placed blame on living indigenous peoples for obstructing progress and national development" (pp. 45-46).

Chapter 4 tracks the impact of Putla's increasing integration into Mexico's national economy (and the global economy as well) that occurred after the completion, in the late 1950s, of the paved road from Putla north to the Mexico City-Oaxaca City highway and south to Pinotepa Nacional. From the point of view of the processes of identity construction that Grimes tries to understand, the new road is also essential, because as she points out: "Even though many families living in Putla today are descendants of Mixtecs and mestizos from communities outside the district who moved to Putla in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, people mark the completion of the paved road as the dividing line between those who are 'authentic' Putlecans (pre-road) and those who are 'outsiders' (post-road)" (p. 54). Those considered outsiders are blamed for all kinds of social problems such as drugs, murders and the like (p. 55).

According to Grimes, when the economic crisis hit Mexico in the 1980s, many Putlecan families could not rely any longer in agricultural production and had to develop new survival strategies. Migration was one of them:

Although Putla has had a relatively high out-migration rate since the 1960s, quantitative and qualitative change has marked migration patterns following the 1982 crisis: the number of people migrating from Putla has more than double; many wives and daughters have joined their husbands, fathers, and brothers in their journeys to the United States; young people, both male and female, have begun migrating to the United States on their own, often against the wishes of their parents; and two-thirds of migrants after crossing the border in Tijuana fly directly to the East Coast. Almost 80 percent of the families in Putla have at least one member living temporarily or permanently in the United States (p. 58).

Chapter 4 also examines the opinions Putlecans have about their lives in the United States, the importance of the dollars remittance for Putla's economy, the move of many Putlecans who live in the hometown toward an American kind of consumerism promoted by the migrant experience, the class differentials in the migration process toward the United States, the impact of mass media and other new technologies upon Putlecans, and the like. Nevertheless, the bulk of the

chapter is dedicated to analyzing the crucial role consumption plays in the everyday lives of Putlecans, and how through changing patterns of consumption Putlecans who have migrated to the U.S. maintain, redefine and/or negotiate their relationship with their hometown:

When migrants send remittances to families back home, they are helping their families materially but they are also maintaining and renewing their social relationships, their connections with their home community. Material goods are embedded in social relations . . . They speak to the social success of their kin living in new contexts and link the fabric of daily life across borders.

Chapter 5, "Constructing, Contesting, Defending Identities," offers a very good analysis of the complex processes of identity construction Putlecans undergo due to their migratory experience. As Grimes correctly points out:

Changing spaces and negotiating borders are practices that re-create forms of self-identification as well as the identities of outsiders. Migrants entering a new terrain not only encounter "others" who are strangers but begin to realize that they too are seen as strangers . . . New tools of negotiation are required as migrants learn how to represent themselves in the new context with the marketplace of consumer goods as their main guide. The constructions are contested terrain . . . The migration process is inherently political. In the course of defining and redefining their "selves," migrants compete for economic and symbolic capital, and reproduce themselves as political and social subjects (p. 83).

For Putlecans, this complex process of identity negotiation has to take into account the different ways Americans and Mexicans interpolate people to make sense of their identities. Therefore, where in Mexico the social categories most people use complexly combine class, racial heritage and regional origin, in the United States racial and ethnic categories prevail. Thus, according to Grimes, Putlecans find themselves clattered with all other Latin American peoples under the label "Hispanics," a label they reject to avoid being confused with other Latin American people they do not want to be identified with, for instance Chicanos and Puerto Ricans (pp. 83-84). Of course, other Latinos are not the only "others" in relation to whom Putlecans have to differentiate from to construct a more or less valued social identity, African Americans and Anglos have to be assessed too. In this regard, Grimes encountered in her field work a very negative attitude of Putlecans regarding Blacks and a very positive one in relation to Anglos or "gringos" (pp. 85-86).

In a very interesting analysis of the relationship between "cleanliness," "dirtiness," social development, civilization, race and the body, Grimes points out that,

Cleanliness and skin color are surface bodily traits. In an advanced capitalist society, the image of the body is manipulated to reproduce mainstream ideologies and middle-class values. In order for new immigrants to be "presentable," a multitude of consumer goods are offered to help them become "whiter." As Putlecan migrants learn to re-present themselves in the new bicultural context (often by trying to distinguish themselves from some of their neighbors), one of the first things they buy are new clothes and lociones (perfumes, lotions, after-shave). (p. 88).

If this is what occurs in the U.S., clothes and lotions are used by Putlecans back home to differentiate themselves from Putlecans who have never migrated north, "to make a statement about their success in the U.S. landscape, and to present themselves as persons who have become more 'modern' due to their migratory experience" (p. 89). Of course some Putlecans do not become "racist" because of their migratory experience, on the contrary, their exposure to the American racial and ethnic classification system and the process of stereotyping the "other" and all that it entails only reinforces a hegemonic discourse well learned while growing up in Mexico (p. 90).

A large part of Chapter 5 is dedicated to the analysis of gender relations among Putlecans and how the migration process relates to them. In this regard, Grimes points out how what Putlecans call "liberal attitudes" of female Americans represent a problem for most of them (p. 93). Grimes' description of gender relations in Putla talks about the entrenched nature of patriarchal ideals among both, male and females alike:

Husbands' reputations hinge on their ability to control their wives and children, which for

some men means physical abuse so "they know who's boss" . . . Control is exercised through control of women's bodies. Men who "lose" their control or those who do not adhere to what they consider old-fashioned ideas are the subject of jokes, even ridicule, about being mandilones (husbands who are ordered around by their wives) (p. 93).

However, according to Grimes, the macho image has been under attack lately and some Putlecan men right now deny they are "traditional Mexican machos," at the same time, the process of migration to the U.S. (along with internal changes in Mexico regarding gender roles) has resulted in a loosening of gender norms (p. 96). Therefore, it is not uncommon that male Putlecans who have migrated to the U.S. share household chores with their wives and are more involved in child rearing upon their return to Putla. In closing the chapter, Grimes states that:

The variety of critical perspectives Putlecans have about their own sense of identities and their differential experiences in particular places and times reveal how identities are grounded in the nexus of unequal relationships of class, gender, ethnicity, and sexuality. Alliances and divisions are challenged, negotiated, and defended based on the heterogeneity and the multiplicity of individual subjectivities . . . Putlecans manipulate spaces through migration in order to challenge their current social positions. They can become more "modern" and maybe "whiter" from their experiences in Mexican cities or the United States, but they can leave these places when they grow tired of the foreignness of the new setting or the control over their time exerted by foreign bosses. Returning home, they struggle with differences in how they see themselves and how family and community members now see them (p. 113).

In Chapter 6, "Putla, the State, and the International Economy," Grimes focuses on the relationship between Putlecans' survival strategies (of which migration to the U.S. is one of the most important) and the neo-liberal economic adjustment plans the Mexican state has implemented since the early 1980s. What Grimes finds most striking is that:

few, if any, of the coping strategies people have devised attack the validity of the austerity program imposed by the government in accordance with international financial institutions' interests. For the most part, their strategies represent personal "adjustments" to the austerity measures (pp. 117-118).

Within this general framework Grimes analyzes how the PRI (Revolutionary Institutional Party) tried to regain some of its popular support through the implementation of the self-help "Solidaridad Project" (pp. 121-124). Nevertheless, Grimes devotes the bulk of the chapter to one of her most important concerns of the book: why Putlecans are so absorbed by the ideology of consumerism. Her answer in this chapter craftily knits issues of ideology, class, race, identity and the body, in which an equation is made by Putlecans, according to the author, between being white, American, belonging to a first world country, being civilized and the consumption of goods (p. 125).

In the chapter's conclusion, Grimes deals with the issue of contradictions in Putlecan's relation to the migration process, to the point that many "Putlecans believe that migration is beneficial to individuals but detrimental to the community" (p. 126). According to the author:

Putlecan's mixed feelings toward migration are just one example of how Putlecans live with contradictory ideals and practices. They want the town and its people to "progress," yet they want things to be as they were in the past. They strive to increase prestige by buying more material goods yet disapprove of conspicuous consumption . . . They compete with neighbors in their local business but share resources in community fiestas . . . They use birth control and identify themselves as devoted Catholics. Their full range of beliefs and practices at any one time includes what Raymond Williams . . . calls "oppositional" or "alternative" forms as well as the dominant and effectual . . . Putlecans are neither passive pawns nor revolutionaries. They think and act within the field of constructed possibilities, accommodating, modifying, or rejecting meanings and practices as their needs and perceptions change (p. 127).

Chapter 7, "Transnational Migration and Social Identities," works as a brief conclusion of the book. In this chapter Grimes advocates for a change in migration studies, from dealing mostly

with economic factors to understand migration processes, to "include other social variables, such as gender, 'race' and ethnicity, age, family, sexuality, and religion, which also directly and indirectly affect migration experiences and the changes these experiences bring" (p. 132). At the same time she asks for an additional move in migration studies in order to recognize the U.S. "role in the migration trend • and to show how our ideologies, consumptive practices, and immigration policies stimulate migration" (p. 136).

In relation to identity formation processes, Grimes concludes her important book stressing that:

People negotiate constructed political, economic, and social borders of self-identification throughout their life cycle. I titled this study Crossing Borders in order to underscore that the boundaries we create are not fixed and closed but, rather, flexible and fluid. Putlecans develop and sustain multiple social relations as they cross political borders. They negotiate new forms of self-identification, as well as of identifying others, within a multinational context (p. 137).

In light of my own work, a few additional comments are in order. The first thing that surprised me reading the book was the striking similarities between Grimes findings in Southern Mexico and my own work on the US-Mexico border (Crossing Borders. Reinforcing Borders. Social Categories, Metaphors and Narrative Identities on the U.S.-Mexico Frontier. University of Texas Press, 2000). My surprise was not only related to the fact that her work was done in Southern Mexico and mine in Northern Mexico, but also because we have used very different ethnographic methods in our endeavors (she used interviews and questionnaires; I used group discussions around everyday life photographs); we occupy different subject positions in life (she is a married female without children; I am a single parent of two); and we were influenced by the linguistic turn in the social sciences quite differently. Interestingly enough, despite all those differences in our "encounter with the Other," some common themes appeared: the "anti-Chilango" stance of many Mexicans from provincial Mexico; the racist attitudes toward "real Indians" many white and mestizo Mexicans uphold; the "before" and "after" (where always the "before" was much better than the "after") in the history of the city linked to the arrival of some "undesirable" newcomer (more Indian-like people from the surrounding areas in the case of Putla; people from Southern Mexico in my field work); how those who stay home sometimes criticize the bragging attitude of those who have migrated and attained a better standard of living; the complex process of identity negotiation that Mexicans undergo when they discover that their way to classify people (usually based on a complex mixture of class, racial heritage and region) does not coincide with the American one (usually based on race and ethnicity almost exclusively); the resentment that often surfaces when Mexicans interact with Mexican Americans; the difference between "cleanliness" (the U.S.) versus "dirtiness" (Mexico) as metaphors for development and under-development; and so forth.

At the same time some differences between my own field work in Northern Mexico and Grimes' in Putla are also worth mentioning: Grimes has found a very positive attitude of Putlecans regarding gringos, while I have found many negative portrayals of white North Americans; she found a very negative attitude of Putlecans regarding African Americans, something that was not so widespread in my sample; and the like.

The second thing that caught my attention reading the book was how "traditional" her ethnography was. What do I mean by "traditional?" I mean an ethnography that does not seem influenced by the crisis of representation that struck anthropology in the mid-1980s. While in page 5 Grimes acknowledges that "(r)ecognizing past errors of asserting authoritative claims about the 'other' has led to a questioning of the anthropologist's role and goals in anthropological research," she does not explain how she avoided, circumvented, or relativized her own "authoritative claims" that what she is describing in the book is what "really happens" with Putlecans. In other words, while recognizing that she does not want to "silence other voices" (p. 5), she nevertheless preserves her voice as the one omnipresent throughout the text, and the voice of the "other" only appears here and there to "confirm" what the anthropologist is claiming "happens to the people." Basically, she has written a "realist" account of Putlecans' processes of migration without any

reflexivity about how she is "constructing" what she supposedly is "discovering."

On the other hand, Grimes seems to be in touch with the last developments in anthropology that ask for "multi-sited" ethnographies to account for the complex postmodern world characterized by multiple diasporas, exiles and the like. Therefore, if Grimes wisely describes the contradictions many Putlecans undergo in their everyday experiences, I am here pointing out what surprised me as a contradiction in Grimes ethnography: a recognition of the problems involved in "representing the other," an awareness that the uni-site traditional ethnography cannot account for the postmodern situation in which "traditional" societies like Putla are involved, but a "realist" account of Putlecans migration processes in which she always has the authorial voice.

Despite this unresolved contradiction, this is a very informative book about the migration processes of people who live in a small town in Southern Mexico and who modify, negotiate and articulate their identities in very complex ways due to their relationship with "el otro lado." If Grimes' account is somehow contradictory, it is because that seems to be the postmodern condition, not only for our "subject of study" as she so well proves, but also for us, those who want to understand them.

International Management of the Environment: Pollution Control in North America, by Emmett N. Lombard. Westport, CT: Praeger (1999), x, 198 pp.

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Professor Lombard tells the reader, in considerable detail, that the emerging global economy is changing the nature of the regulatory process, and this change will create losers as well as winners. Though he includes the effects of the emerging global economy on environmental regulation, Lombard narrows his focus from the global economy to the three NAFTA participants, Canada, Mexico, and the United States. The emphasis is not on the policies of the NAFTA, but on the evolution of pollution controls of these three nations. This work will help the reader to understand the background for integrating environmental policies in the global economy as well as NAFTA.

Three forces are identified in this book that are driving the reform of environmental regulation in North America. First, each country is relying less on government standards, shifting instead to self-regulation and voluntary standards. ãSelf,ä in this case, refers to corporations and industrial organizations, not individual persons. Second, devolution of regulatory authority from central governments to state-local governments is occurring in each country. Third, because of the first two forces, public participation is becoming more limited in the discussion to establish pollution standards.

The emergence of global markets means that corporations must deal in a host of regulatory systems. This could increase the cost of doing business, so firms have an interest in rationalizing