

Borders of Belonging: Struggle and Solidarity in Mixed-Status Immigrant Families. *Heide Castañeda*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2019. 334 pp.

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*Borders of Belonging: Struggle and Solidarity in Mixed-Status Immigrant Families* is a meticulously researched and deeply insightful exploration of the day-to-day lives of mixed-status families in the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas, an area in which an estimated 12 percent of the population is undocumented. Heide Castañeda draws on repeated interviews with members of a hundred mixed-status families, 62 interviews with representatives of social and community service agencies, and five years of ethnographic work to present the most thorough account to date of the challenges, opportunities, negotiations, and risks experienced by mixed-status families. Supplementing rich qualitative analysis with vivid sensory imagery, she has written a beautifully crafted and profoundly informative volume that will appeal to immigration researchers and antideportation advocates alike.

The notion of mixed-status families—families whose members have different immigration statuses, often undocumented parents of US-citizen children—has been a central theme in research for decades. However, much of this research has focused on these families' demographic characteristics rather than their nuanced and varied experiences within particular social and political moments. Castañeda's work contrasts sharply with these strictly demographic representations, as she concerns herself less with quantitative measures of

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im/migration and more with the context-specific dynamics of local immigration law enforcement and the families who experience these dynamics directly.

While Castañeda provides the necessary quantitative data to help readers better understand the book's geographical region and the scope of the issues, the core of her book considers the complex lives of mixed-status families and the ways in which local law enforcement disrupts and alters these lives. For example, in chapter 4, "*Estamos Encerrados: Im/mobilities in the Borderlands*," she describes the ways in which the immobility that stems from Immigration and Customs Enforcement checkpoints on major highways that lead in and out of the Valley traps residents within a radius of only a few miles, preventing those who are undocumented from moving about even within their own state lest they be pulled over and asked to show documents. She then extends her analytic lens outward from individuals to families, and we are reminded of those whose lives are shaped by their undocumented family members' inability to move beyond these border checkpoints. In a notable example, college-goers' willingness to attend schools outside these checkpoints is influenced by the impossibility of their undocumented parents visiting them. This kind of writing, with its rich analysis of the fallout from immigration law that is not seen at first glance, is among the book's many strengths.

In perhaps her greatest contribution to immigration literature, Castañeda solidifies the mixed-status family as a unit of analysis but does not reduce the family unit to a trope or a caricature or strip the family of voice and agency. Certainly, in an era of mass deportation, it would be easy to essentialize the family unit as a mother and a father with three children and evoke rage and sadness through descriptions of family fragmentation through deportation. But real families are more complicated than this, and the effects of deportations are more varied. Castañeda describes families as they are: straight and queer, empowered and overwhelmed, celebrating college success and coping with suicide. As described in chapter 3, family members maintain secrets from each other by telling "little lies" (70), or they negotiate who will get what medical service based on different statuses within the family. Sometimes this necessary

creativity and innovation make them stronger as a family, but at other times the tension can be too much to bear. Castañeda captures these intricate dynamics better than any authors before her, and we are left with a far better understanding of the united yet divided families who are the targets of the immigration enforcement regime.

As an immigration researcher myself, I believe *Borders of Belonging* to be an informative and a necessary read for anyone wishing to understand the reach of immigration enforcement or the lives of those who live under the threat of deportation. Yet while hers is a critical addition to immigration literature, this is not where Castañeda's work shines the brightest. As the child of an immigrant mother who grew up north of the Rio Grande Valley, I was struck by the beautiful and human portrayal of a community not far from my hometown. Castañeda's writing is steeped not only in analytic insight but in empathy, compassion, and an obvious concern for the well-being of mixed-status families throughout the Valley and beyond. I found her representations sensitive and accurate, and while the descriptions brought me back to my childhood, I also learned a great deal about the neighboring regions in my home state and the experiences of the people—and families—who live there.