

community and urban racial and ethnic relations. It provides us with rich stories of individual daily lives in pre-1930 New York's Lower Manhattan and with various analyses of class, ethnicity, race, and gender. It would be particularly useful for an advanced undergraduate course in American studies, ethnic studies, history, or sociology, and it would also be appropriate for a graduate course.

Reference

Mills, C. Wright. 1959. *The Sociological Imagination*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Latinos in American Society: Families and Communities in Transition, by **Ruth Enid Zambrana**. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011. 292pp. \$29.95 paper. ISBN: 9780801476570.

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In *Latinos in American Society*, Ruth Enid Zambrana takes an intersectional approach to surveying and critiquing the literature on Latinos in the United States which has been produced over the last few decades. She calls for both social science and popular media to eschew cultural explanations in favor of structural explanations when addressing unequal outcomes such as persistent poverty and underachievement in education. Her consistent message is that "culture is not a principal predictor of social inequality" (p. 47), arguing instead that "historical antecedents of slavery and colonialism, segregation laws, racism, and other structural barriers" produce differential outcomes (p. 164).

A strength of the book is its fervent, critical demand for social scientists and the media—both of whom influence the American public imagination—to pay attention to how race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic position (class), national origin, and community context shape opportunities and life outcomes. Challenging cultural explanations, she argues that structural forms of inequality

produce accumulated disadvantage over the life course and even family generations. The body of the book takes a life course and community perspective, covering the adolescence-to-adulthood transition, institutional discrimination in education, unequal access to health care and welfare services, and media's negative stereotyping of Latinos that propel racial profiling.

Zambrana's goals for *Latinos in American Society* are "to make the invisible visible and to challenge the. . . claim that culture is a predictor of social inequality" (p. xvi). Dense with facts, trends, and reviews of the state of knowledge, the substantive chapters are organized around important topics, any one of which serves as a primer in that particular subfield. The question of which images, tropes, and (mis)information about Latinos are *visible* as compared to those that are *invisible* ties the chapters together. As I read it, the notions of visibility and invisibility intersect with three repeated themes: (1) social scientific methodological pitfalls, (2) institutions that structure people's lives, and (3) the media.

Critiquing past social science methodology, Zambrana contends that researchers have studied underprivileged Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans and generalized to *all* Latinos, irrespective of dimensions of difference such as race, gender, class, and national origin. This obscures heterogeneity, concealing knowledge about the middle-class, college-educated, and professional portions of the population. Additionally, the standard of using middle-class Euro-dominant culture groups as a baseline against which all others are judged serves "to maintain the unequal treatment of ethnic group families based on a superior-versus-inferior binary" (p. 38). By failing to cover all Latino subgroups equally or account for socioeconomic, gender, racial group, and color differences, the result is an incomplete, and sometimes inaccurate, portrait of Latinos in the United States. Zambrana aims to correct for the "implicit cultural lens" (p. 36) that guided past research by proposing an intersectional lens. As "an alternate mode of knowledge production" (p. 235), intersectionality allows for the deconstruction of culture and shows how social

location influences the enactment of roles and behaviors.

Institutions such as education, health care, and welfare services all produce differential outcomes. Noting that Latinos have the highest dropout rate of all racial/ethnic groups (p. 77), Zambrana counters cultural or individualistic victim-blaming discourse by offering that "inadequate school settings, inferior curriculum, and low-quality schools . . . offer clear evidence as to why Latino students underperform" (p. 61). In the two succeeding chapters on female and male transitions from adolescence to adulthood, she argues that lack of educational opportunities—as well as poverty, limited availability of quality health care, and absence of financial independence—tends to lead to early family formation (pp. 96, 105). Similarly, concerning physical and mental health, Zambrana highlights social determinants such as economic stress, low-resourced communities, and compromised access to health care (p. 161). In a tacit use of Foucault, she shows how "public systems use disciplinary power—that is, regulation and state authority—to undermine the human capital of the very individuals they were created to help" (p. 164). Examples of discriminatory treatment include employer and service-provider biases, reduced access to subsidies that aid transition to work, and the prison-industrial complex that she calls "a macro-aggression toward Latino and [non-Hispanic black] communities" (p. 196).

In an innovative addition to her argument about the power of social structure, Zambrana identifies an oppressive irony in the U.S. Census category "Hispanic/Latino." The 1980 federal recognition of a Hispanic/Latino ethnic category—won from a movement of self-determination—in effect defined Latinos as "nonnormative in the American public imagination" (p. 228). Occurring at a time of significant immigration, federal recognition led to the "trap of the aggregate," that is, perception of a group as a homogenized ethnic category devoid of internal diversity (p. 228).

Media representations are the third spoke in her argument concerning visibility and invisibility within the Latino community. Zambrana holds media responsible for perpetuating negative stereotypes of Latinos

and underreporting contributions and upward mobility. Stereotypes maintain a superior/inferior divide and reinforce cultural differences, as does ethnic-specific marketing. Media, as a socialization mechanism (p. 225), has multiple repercussions: it conveys discouraging "negative identity markers" to Latino youth, generalizes misconceptions, and disseminates stereotypic images that seemingly justify racialized policies and practices.

Zambrana rectifies the state of knowledge and knowledge production by appealing for careful attention to the limits of research findings and media portrayals, an intersectional approach which acknowledges variation along axes of difference, and attention to history and social structure, both of which are more powerful explanations for contemporary inequality than culture.

Recounting and critiquing scholarly work on Latinos in the United States requires drawing limits. Aiming to "represent the breadth though not the depth of the knowledge base on Latino families in the United States" (p. 226), some topics are not substantially covered. While Zambrana does not discuss in depth the emerging literature on the rising Latino middle class, she recognizes the need for studies on upward mobility. In fact, scholarship on the Latino middle class and entrepreneurs is developing, showing that some of the holes Zambrana identifies are being filled. Similarly, she nods to transnationalism as an important influence on communities and families. Yet transnationalism is not the core to her book despite having garnered substantial attention recently. Further, throughout the book she asks, "what is being studied and why" (p. 90). She answers the "what" portion of the question more thoroughly than the "why" component. She hints at an answer in the conclusion where she notes that academic articles that reinforce hegemonic thinking are published in mainstream journals whereas counter-hegemonic pieces are published in nonmainstream outlets (p. 245), yet she leaves it to her readers to infer that connection.

A dense survey of literature with an emphasis on social determinants of inequality, this book will require some heavy-lifting by undergraduates but is suitable for graduate classes and researchers. *Latinos in*

American Society concatenates Latino family and community scholarship of the last few decades, offering sturdy, thematically organized reviews of the state of knowledge as well as incisive critiques of social scientific and popular omissions, misrepresentations, and over-generalizations. Anyone in need of information on Latinos, along with lessons on epistemology and the influence of social structure on social location and inequality, will acquire both useful facts and compelling insights from this book.

Ancestors and Relatives: Genealogy, Identity, and Community, by **Eviatar Zerubavel**. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012. 226pp. \$24.95 cloth. ISBN: 9780199773954.

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Ancestors and Relatives is, by my count, Eviatar Zerubavel's eleventh book. All eleven have a great deal in common. They are all short. (*Ancestors* is a mere 131 pages of text, and that with close to two dozen figures, supplemented with another eighty pages of footnotes, bibliography and index. I count this a virtue.) They are clever, often very clever, and range over a remarkable breadth of examples. *Ancestors*, for example, includes observations about Cyrus the Great, the 2000 U.S. Census, and the relationship among gorillas, chimpanzees, and humans (which is, by the way, not at all what I would have expected). And—because they are short, because they are clever, because they are filled with surprising observations—they are a great deal of fun to read. But they are also a good deal more than that.

At one level, the central argument of *Ancestors* is so straight forward as to flirt with the banal: the ways in which we figure descent are not simple reflections of genetic descent or "records of history" so much as social constructs, derived as much, or more, from culture as from nature. What makes *Ancestors* fascinating is not that simple observation, but what Zerubavel does with it.

Zerubavel's starting point is what we might think of as the elemental form of descent, that of parent to child, which he

then extends in two directions. The first extension is an extension of scale. He shows that the ways in which we think of descent within families also apply to the ways we think about descent among ethnicities and races, among nations, and even among species. His second extension is across the "tactics" of reckoning descent. In addition to the straight forward, single step descent of parent to child, we may as Zerubavel shows, "stretch" our genealogies, reaching back farther in time to make our lineages more venerable. Or we may "clip" them (as in changing names) to sever symbolic relations with the past. We may cut and paste genealogies, leaving out an embarrassing connection yet still maintaining continuity. Or we may "braid," weaving together several strands of descent to acknowledge (and claim) multiple origins. We may "lump"—the Noah's Ark version of shared co-descent—in a spirit of inclusiveness. Or we may "split" or "prune" (a particularly apt metaphor for those who think of descent as a tree), excluding entire branches.

Ironically, Zerubavel's own method is far more phenotypic than genealogical. He figures his own intellectual descent not to Foucault but from Simmel and Goffman (by way of Park and Hughes). But this is a lineage that, with remarkable consistency across generations, has avoided the sort of historical explanation that stresses processes of descent. Rather, like Simmel and Goffman (and Park and Hughes), Zerubavel is at his very best when he leaps across huge gaps of time and field—from Cyrus the Great to chimpanzees—to show how similar classificatory processes operate in realms without a common history of any sort, braided, stretched or pruned. (The joined phrases "on the one hand" and "on the other hand" never appear but the phrase, "by the same token," appears perhaps a half dozen times; it is the verbal tic of a scholar who sees connections where the rest of us would not.) It may be precisely his own distance from genealogical thinking that allows him to see so clearly how others deploy it.

The spirit of *Ancestors* is relentlessly generalizing, both transcultural and transhistorical. Yet, it is often at its most interesting when Zerubavel engages with the historically specific—for example, his observation that we have switched from an ancestor-centric image of descent (emphasizing the