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Edmund T. Hamann

University of Nebraska - Lincoln, ehamann2@unl.edu

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BOOK REVIEW

On the Border of Opportunity: Education, Community, and Language at the U.S.–Mexico Line. Marleen C. Pugach. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1998. 185 pp.

Edmund T. Hamann
Brown University
edmund_hamann@brown.edu

On the Border of Opportunity is a good, important, but limited book. Marleen Pugach describes the links between school and community that she, her two school-aged children, and a graduate assistant encountered during a seven-month stint in a New Mexico border town (pseudonymously called Havens). She extensively considers how binationalism was and could have been promoted in the local schools and how such promotion could distinguish the education on offer there. Pugach seems unsure whether to characterize Havens as an exemplary binational, inclusive community or whether to present a critique of Havens by chronicling what it could be but was not yet.

Though these theses are sometimes contradictory, she makes compelling cases for both of them. Consistent with the first, she regularly positively characterizes Havens residents' "cross-border rural sensibilities" (p. 21) as successfully undergirding an informal binationalism. She celebrates Havens schools' long history of welcoming students who live nearby but in Mexico. She quotes a filmmaker from El Paso who, having just finished a documentary about the entire 2,000-mile border, said Havens was the only locale he encountered where "people aren't angry" (p. 26). Pugach's detailing of how Anglo, Mexican American, Mexican immigrant, and Mexican national interrelationships can be neighborly, sup-

portive, and nonacrimonious is a useful reminder in this post-Proposition 187 (and Proposition 227) national climate of angry and simplified conceptualizations of Mexican immigrants and of Latinos' school needs.

Yet her argument that Havens is an exemplar is undercut two ways—first by the absence of an extensive consideration of who benefits by (and would defend) the present stratified status quo, whereby Anglo norms and English are privileged and Mexican-origin norms and Spanish are tolerated, sometimes welcome, but not institutionally valued. Pugach notes that the Mexican American and bilingual teachers were concentrated in vocational and lower academic tracks at Havens High School, while most upper-division instructors were Anglo and monolingual (p. 100). She hints that such an arrangement contributed to the preponderance of Anglo students in upper tracks and the underrepresentation of Mexican origin students at the same levels, but she does not take the argument one further step. She did not investigate and does not conjecture about who would resist, say, a hypothetical requirement that all upper-division teachers be bilingual and versed in Mexican and Chicano heritages (a step that would make these classes more accessible to Mexican-origin students, perhaps displacing Anglos). The peace in Havens noted by Pugach and the filmmaker was perhaps not just because there was a legitimate and celebrated sense of community and inclusion but also because neighborliness was prioritized over challenges to the unequal hegemony.

Also undercutting the Havens as exemplar thesis is Pugach's other thesis and its supporting list of ways that Havens schools and the larger community could be different and more equitable. Though improved, Pugach clarifies that Havens still had a long way to go if it was to achieve the equitable biculturalism she endorses. Nodding approvingly at the increased hiring of Mexican-origin teachers and the tolerance of Spanish at school, Pugach recommends that Havens residents still need to stop viewing bilingual education only as a means to help Spanish-speakers learn English while ignoring the importance of English-speakers learning Spanish (e.g., p. 80). In a similar vein, she argues for having the overt purpose of Havens schools be the preparation of students for the binational, bicultural, bilingual reality of the border area that they inhabit (e.g., pp. 116, 161). At the time of her study, this occurred only incidentally. She also offers advice regarding vocational education (p. 139), parent education (p. 136), community inclusion in educational planning (p. 158), preserving the practice of educating students who live in Mexico (p. 155), and other topics.

All this advice giving reflects the thoroughness of her analysis, but it also sets up the question of who this book is for. One wonders what the response in Havens was to the book and who there would or could start implementing Pugach's suggestions. It sounds like Pugach was well-enough liked there, but it seems naive to think her advice would be locally heeded. There is little discussion in the book about who in Havens sought or followed her counsel.

There are other gaps in the book. The bibliography is wide ranging but brief. Readers see and learn little from the residents of Frontera, the Mexican settlement across the border from Havens that helps form the binational community. Teachers and students who are promoting binational/bicultural ends in Havens are prominently considered, but the bilingual/bicultural instructional aides who seem so routinely depended on as intercultural intermediaries never speak. More generally, the Havens voices remain local, never directly addressing issues from the national perspectives that Pugach often uses. While Pugach claims that Havens may offer a nationally pertinent display of peaceful, cooperative binationalism, the Havens residents depicted in the book never say whether they think Havens is nationally relevant or how national debates regarding bilingual education and culturally inclusive curricula affect local politics and decision making.

My complaints, however, are complaints about omission, not about inaccuracy or about the description that is included. Pugach takes on some vexing issues that are pertinent well beyond Havens and considers them thoughtfully. Pre-service and in-service teachers with Mexican-origin students would gain from this book and find it accessible. Scholars and policy makers concerned with diversity and equity issues or school and community issues would also learn from this text. Pugach's long list of areas that an already informally binational community needs to tend to if it is to be equitably bicultural is an insistent reminder that such a challenge is not easily or simply addressed but that it nevertheless must be tended to.