


2015

Book Review: Women Who Stay Behind: Pedagogies of Survival in Rural Transmigrant Mexico by Ruth Trinidad Galván

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Recommended Citation

Kalinic, Ariana (2015) "Book Review: Women Who Stay Behind: Pedagogies of Survival in Rural Transmigrant Mexico by Ruth Trinidad Galván," *International Social Science Review*: Vol. 91: Iss. 2, Article 9.
Available at: <http://digitalcommons.northgeorgia.edu/issr/vol91/iss2/9>

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Trinidad Galván, Ruth. *Women Who Stay Behind: Pedagogies of Survival in Rural Transmigrant Mexico*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2015. xvi + 184 pages. Hardcover, \$50.00.

Women Who Stay Behind: Pedagogies of Survival in Rural Transmigrant Mexico is an ethnography written by Ruth Trinidad Galván, associate professor at the University of New Mexico in the Department of Language, Literacy, and Sociocultural Studies. The book addresses questions about how migration affects community and family dynamics while also exploring the women-centered pedagogies, social relations and cultural knowledge that sustain the survival of the women (primarily wives and mothers) "left behind" by men's migration to the United States.

The book emerges out of Trinidad Galván's ten year *convivencia* ("living together") with women in the rural communities in the city of Sierra Linda in the state of Guanajuato. Trinidad Galván devotes much of the Methods section of the book, as well as the data chapters, to the invocation of the term *convivencia*. Ethnographers might question how Trinidad Galván's operational definition of *convivencia* differs from any good ethnography which depends on the researcher's engagement in the day to day lives of participants through the sharing of time, space and life experiences. Nonetheless Trinidad Galván's own commitment to learning about and sharing in the lives of the four women profiled in the book shines in each respective chapter devoted to the stories of the women's lives and survival strategies.

While each chapter focuses on the life and experiences of the woman each chapter is named after (including brief oversimplified descriptors, for example "Jovita: Caring and Humble Woman"), the common thread Trinidad Galván follows in her analysis of each woman's story is about survival tactics, or as Trinidad Galván calls them, pedagogies of survival. These pedagogies of survival include leading and attending to community and home responsibilities and needs, participating in community activism, and using their own cultural knowledge. Trinidad Galván beautifully illustrates the range of efforts to employ these strategies but does not make as clear of a case for the use of the term pedagogies. How is participating in an NGO program or savings group a pedagogy and not a strategy? How are these experiences explicitly related to teaching and learning? Further explanation of how pedagogies best explain these practices would be helpful for the reader.

Trinidad Galván insightfully documents the women's experiences. However, a question the reader might ask is how are these poor rural women's survival strategies unique to their experiences of being "left behind" by migrating men? It appears that all of the activities highlighted by Trinidad Galván can also be seen in poor rural communities of Mexico that have not experienced widespread migration, for example, women's savings groups (*cajas de ahorro*), women centered NGOs, and strong social networks among women in communities affected by poverty. More specific examples of the effects of men's migration on already present survival strategies would be helpful.

The writing is very clear – simple even with respect to vocabulary, syntax and sentence structure – and thus *Women Who Stay Behind: Pedagogies of Survival in Rural Transmigrant Mexico* would provide an accessible and productive read for undergraduate students learning

about women's lives in rural Mexico, ethnography and/or migration studies. Trinidad Galván's respect and even admiration for the myriad ways in which these women survive in difficult circumstances shines through the pages, offering an inspirational glimpse into a complex transnational configuration of the lives of those "left behind."

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