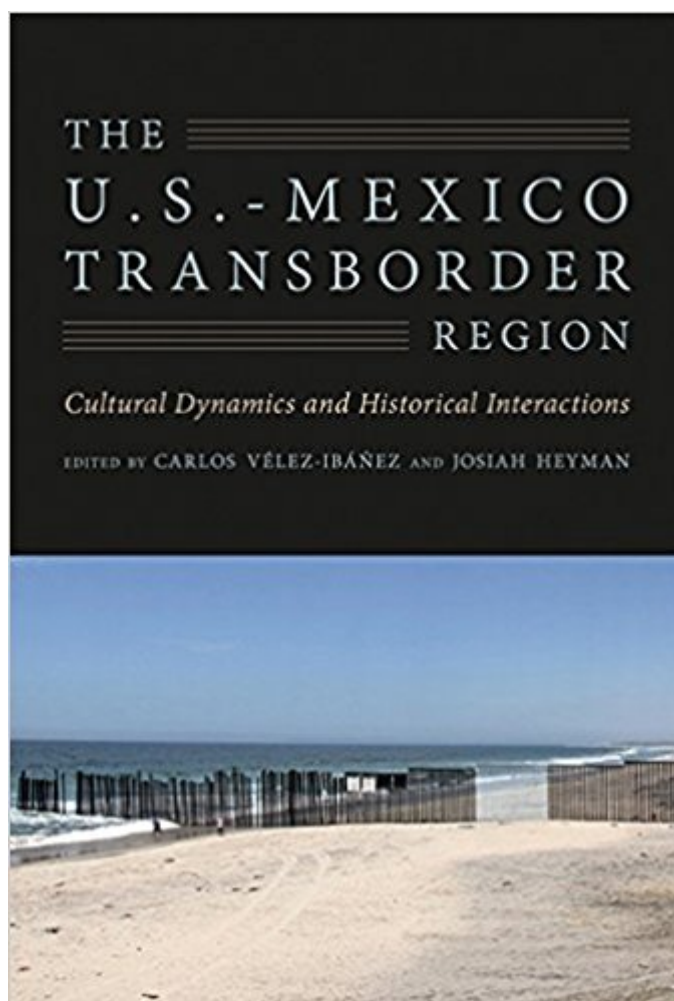


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# The U.S.-Mexico Transborder Region: Cultural Dynamics And Historical Interactions



## Synopsis

The U.S.-Mexico Transborder Region presents advanced anthropological theorizing of culture in an important regional setting. Not a static entity, the transborder region is peopled by ever-changing groups who face the challenges of social inequality: political enforcement of privilege, economic subordination of indigenous communities, and organized resistance to domination. The book, influenced by the work of Eric Wolf and senior editor Carlos G. Vázquez-López, centers on the greater Mexican North/U.S. Southwest, although the geographic range extends farther. This tradition, like other transborder approaches, attends to complex and fluid cultural and linguistic processes, going beyond the classical modern anthropological vision of one people, one culture, one language. With respect to recent approaches, however, it is more deeply social, focusing on vertical relations of power and horizontal bonds of mutuality. Vázquez-López and Heyman envision this region as involving diverse and unequal social groups in dynamic motion over thousands of years. Thus the historical interaction of the U.S.-Mexico border, however massively unequal and powerful, is only the most recent manifestation of this longer history and common ecology. Contributors emphasize the dynamic "transborder" quality "conflicts, resistance, slanting, displacements, and persistence" in order to combine a critical perspective on unequal power relations with a questioning perspective on claims to bounded simplicity and perfection. The book is notable for its high degree of connection across the various chapters, strengthened by internal syntheses from notable border scholars, including Robert R. Alvarez and Alejandro Lugo. In the final section, Judith Freidenberg draws general lessons from particular case studies, summarizing that "access to valued scarce resources prompts the erection of human differences that get solidified into borders, dividing and limiting, engendering vulnerabilities and marginalizing some people. At a time when understanding the U.S.-Mexico border is more important than ever, this volume offers a critical anthropological and historical approach to working in transborder regions. Contributors: Amado Alarcón Robert R. Álvarez Miguel Díaz-Barriga Margaret E. Dorsey Judith Freidenberg Ruth Gomberg-Muñoz James Greenberg Josiah Heyman Jane H. Hill Sarah Horton Alejandro Lugo Luminita-Anda Mandache Corina Marrufo Guillermina Gina Nájera-Mchiri Anna Ochoa O'Leary Luis F. B. Plascencia Lucero Radonic Diana Riviera Thomas E. Sheridan Kathleen Staudt Carlos G. Vázquez-López

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## Customer Reviews

Carlos G. Vázquez-Ibáñez is Regents<sup>™</sup> Professor and Motorola Presidential Professor of Neighborhood Revitalization in the School of Transborder Studies and Professor of Human Evolution and Social Change at Arizona State University. His numerous honors include the 2004 Robert B. Textor and Family Prize for Excellence in Anticipatory Anthropology and the 2003 Bronislaw Malinowski Medal. Vázquez-Ibáñez was named as corresponding member of the Mexican Academy of Sciences (Miembro Correspondiente de la Academia Mexicana de Ciencias) in 2015, and he is author of *An Impossible Living in a Transborder World: Culture, Confianza, and Economy of Mexican-Origin Populations*. Josiah Heyman is a professor of anthropology, Endowed Professor of Border Trade Issues, and director of the Center for Interamerican and Border Studies at the University of Texas at El Paso. He is the editor of *States and Illegal Practices* and author of *Life and Labor on the Border: Working People of Northeastern Sonora, 1886–1986* and *Finding a Moral Heart for U.S. Immigration Policy: An Anthropological Perspective*. He has published more than one hundred scholarly articles and book chapters, and in 1999 received the Curl Essay Prize of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland for “Respect for Outsiders? Respect for Law? The Moral Evaluation of High-Scale Issues by U.S. Immigration Officers.”

This book is a monumental collection of papers, ranging from short thought-pieces to long analytical and ethnographic studies, concerning the US-Mexico border, especially the Arizona-Mexico border. The papers range over a wide variety of topics, making summary of the book impossible; suffice it to say that this is absolutely necessary reading for anyone concerned with modern problems of life along the border, with or without a huge wall. (There already is a wall along much of the AZ line.). The border has been increasingly militarized and policed, disrupting what was once an easy, casual

movement back and forth. Inequalities increase, both within and between the nations and states. The poor are desperate; the rich are sucking money from the region and banking or investing it elsewhere. Among particularly interesting studies--singled out here partly for discussing unusual topics for such books--are Jane Hill's argument for a southern origin for the Uto-Aztekan languages (I'm convinced); James Greenberg and Luminita Anda Mandache's incisive revelation of neoliberalism (in the strict, narrow sense of the term) in Arizona; Kathleen Staudt's further analysis of the effects of that neoliberalism on medical care; and Gina Nunez and collaborators' superb ethnography of food in the colonias north of El Paso. One point to emphasize about this book is that it is valuable far beyond the US-Mexico border. I am already using it to understand the China-Mongol frontier in the Mongol Empire period. Anyone interested in borders as cultural phenomena needs this book.

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