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Immigrant Collective Mobilization and Belonging in Europe and the United States

Deborah Reed-Danahay and Caroline B. Brettell's edited volume *Citizenship, Political Engagement, and Belonging* comes at a time of accelerated erosion of the dominance of Europe and the United States economically and technologically. While on the one hand this erosion coincides with an increased distribution of education and wealth across countries, on the other hand, the disparities between rich and poor within countries continues to increase (see the World Bank's 2011 report, *The Changing Wealth of Nations*). These changes have led to shifts in immigrant civic engagement.

Disparities between haves and have-nots contribute to migration as victims flee political violence and social inequities. Simultaneously, the dispersion of education and wealth opens up greater potential for those fleeing to take control of their lives, collectively organize, and engage in actions to bring about change. Access to information technologies has increased dissemination and reorganization of knowledge, undermining the power of governments to dictate how those living within their borders understand their place in society. Increasing concentration of educated immigrant populations who effectively use information technologies to disseminate information allows for greater opportunities for collective action. As a result, Americans and Europeans have recently begun to perceive themselves as more vulnerable economically and culturally.

Tensions over immigration are not new for nation-states or to anthropological inquiry. Anthropologists have made important contributions to the topic of nationalism and belonging. However, they have less thoroughly investigated the politics of this relationship, particularly as it relates to immigrant experiences and new forms of citizenships.

This volume explores current forms of immigrant collective mobilization and sense of belonging. Its strength lies in the broad array of issues covered, reflecting the complexity of immigrant political and social organization today. It is a wonderful starting point for an overview of the intricacies of social mobilization among immigrants in the United States and Europe.

Three broad questions are at work in this volume: How is a sense of belonging constructed among immigrants? What are the ways that immigrants actively engage in the political process? What are some new ways of constructing citizenship? These questions lead to the exploration of such topics as the definition of citizenship, racism, hybrid and transnational identities, and the variation and evolution of immigrant associations.

The volume begins with an introduction by the editors and ends with concluding remarks by Nancy Foner, both of which frame the essays, provide context, and suggest a dialogue among the diverse arguments presented in the collection. In this regard, there is a useful comparison of the legal frameworks of citizenship in both the United States and Europe, as well as a review of literature on immigrant associations. The editors have divided the essays into three topical sections: "Inclusions and Exclusion: Discourses of Belonging," "Political Mobilization and Claims Making," and "New Spaces of Citizenship." A short introduction precedes each section.

In the first section, "Inclusions and Exclusion: Discourses of Belonging," the authors analyze immigrant negotiation of belonging in France, Italy, Ireland, and the United States. The essays touch on the "'new' racism that does not explicitly use a racial vocabulary" (p. 19). Belonging encompasses two forms: one in the formal and legal sense; the second, in terms of personal identification and sense of connectedness. It is especially this second sense of belonging that the contributions in this section address. This section includes Paul Silverstein's "Kabyle Immigration Politics and Racialized Citizenship

in France"; Flavia Stanley's "On Belonging in/to Italy and Europe: Citizenship, Race, and the 'Immigration Problem"'; Angele Smith's "The Irish Citizenship Referendum (2004): Motherhood and Belonging in Ireland"; and Reed-Danahay's "From the 'Imagined Community' to 'Communities of Practice': Immigrant Belonging among Vietnamese Americans."

Silverstein explores the performance of citizenship among Algerian immigrants in France in the context of underlying racism. Algerian immigrants are second-class citizens "who must constantly apologize for their presence." They are distinguished from the "rooted French," and as Silverstein points out citing Judith Butler, "this radicalized divide is in no way stable, but must be continuously made and remade" (p. 25). Silverstein, drawing from analysis of the media, finds that the story of Algerian immigrants' political engagement over citizenship and belonging involves the transcendence of national borders and contestation of racism and formal definitions of citizenship. Stanley, studying the immigrant services organization in Rome, addresses the topic of racial privilege implicit in the notion of Italian-ness or European-ness as the context by which immigrants negotiate belonging in Italy and Europe. Immigrants in Italy, particularly those who are physically distinct from Italians, threaten a sense of Italian-ness and Italian European-ness. Boundaries placed between Italians and the "other" exist "partly to secure and protect the identity of belonging to Europe" (p. 57). Smith, in her essay on female asylum seekers in Ireland, examines the recent contestation over parents' birthplaces as a definition of citizenship. The debate focused on pregnant women who sought political asylum and then gained citizenship through the birth of their child on Irish soil. The debate led to a referendum in 2004, which required that one parent be an Irish citizen for a child to become one. Stanley explores the feelings of belonging and exclusion experienced by these immigrant women as they negotiated the changing dynamics of Irish citizenship in the context of European citizenship. Reed-Danahay explores the processes of belonging among Vietnamese immigrants to the United States in terms of situated learning and their movement toward being "inside" the imagined community of the United States. Reed-Danahay addresses the liminality that Vietnamese students on a Texas college campus feel as a newer immigrant group, caught between being classified as representatives of Vietnam or as one of the cultural subgroups of American multicultural society. Her essay proposes a "community of practice" model in which immigrants, in their struggles with belonging, move along "a continuum of between being on the periphery or at the core to the nation itself" (p. 95).

Silverstein, Stanley, Smith, and Reed-Danahay highlight the variation between and within countries, emphasizing the importance of considering the context of immigrant experience. In the European case, this importance lies not only in the history of individual countries but also in the relationship of these histories to the creation of a European identity. The experience of immigrants in the European countries discussed above differs from the experience of the Vietnamese immigrants in the United States. While Brettell describes Vietnamese immigrants in terms of their struggle with belonging, the essays on Europe focus on feelings of exclusion. Does this contrast say anything about the differences of immigration policy and culture? Pointing to difficulties faced especially by African immigrants in Europe, these contributions emphasize the variation in experience among immigrant groups. Finally, fraught with tension and ambivalence, the process of belonging is neither clear-cut nor easy and, as Reed-Danahay points out, is contested and constantly evolving.

In the second section, "Political Mobilization and Claims Making," the essays explore the means by which immigrants in the United Kingdom, France, and the United States organize themselves and engage in institutional politics. These essays challenge ethnicist reductionism that divides humanity into clearly defined internally coherent ethnic groups. The authors emphasize the important and active role that both the country of origin and the newly adopted home states play in immigrant organization. Included in this section are Davide Pero's "Migrants' Mobilization and Anthropology: Reflections from the Experience of Latin Americans in the United Kingdom"; Michal P. Garapich's "Odyssean Refugees, Migrants, and Power: Construction of the 'Other' and Civic Participation within the Polish Community in the United Kingdom"; Robert Gibb's "Origin Myths, Conspiracy Theories, and Antiracist Mobilizations in France"; and Karen E. Richman's "'Call Us Vote People': Citizenship, Migration, and Transnational Politics in Haitian and Mexican Locations."

Pero analyzes the case of Latin American immigrants in Britain and finds a variety of ways that these immigrants organize and engage in citizenship politics. Pero challenges the political opportunities structure (POS) model that defines immigrant political engagement as relying on the opportunities available to immigrants in the receiving country. He argues that the POS is not sufficiently sensitive to variations in immigrant experience, suggesting that there exists an ethnicist tendency in the

POS model. Furthermore, Pero contends that the model needs to give greater attention to the "migrants' movements and collective actions themselves" rather than emphasizing governments and institutions when theorizing immigrant experience. He argues for a rethinking of the POS "in more comprehensive, loose, actors-oriented and interactive terms so as to avoid monocausal institutional determinism" (p. 122). Garapich focuses on Polish immigrants in the United Kingdom and similarly finds a diversity of ways that immigrants orient themselves as political actors. Garapich highlights the contest between older and newer generations of immigrant groups. Importantly, he demonstrates, as do Silverstein and Bernard P. Wong in this volume, that the relationship to the home country plays a significant role in how immigrants conceptualize and engage in the politics of citizenship in their adopted country. Gibb tackles the topic of the role of associations in immigrant mobilizations, focusing on the organization SOS-Racisme operating in France. Of particular interest, as is true of the study of organizations by Pero and Garapich, are the discourses of authenticity and authority involved in the evolution of an organization's effort to represent immigrants. Gibb highlights an organization that presents itself as engaging in immigrant politics with no specific national or ethnic affiliation and explores the problems with this stance. Again, the role of the state becomes an important consideration. Gibb, in an endorsement to the POS model, demonstrates that SOS-Racisme benefited from opportunities afforded to them in the French political system, specifically through support of the ruling left-wing party. In the final essay of the section, Richman makes an interesting comparison between the efforts of a Haitian American, Dumarsais Mécène Siméus, and a Mexican American, known as the Tomato King, to become active in Haitian and Mexican politics respectively. Both migrants have varying yet attenuated success in being at once active in the United States while continuing to be politically involved back home in Haiti and Mexico. Richman indicates that while the efforts by the Mexican government to allow casting ballots from abroad and to recognize dual citizenship facilitate political engagement of Mexican immigrants with Mexico, the Haitian government has not given the same support to Haitian immigrants. Richman finds that for both Mexican and Haitian immigrants, active involvement in U.S. politics ultimately seems to be the most effective way to enact change at home.

The above essays highlight the discourse over authenticity and the challenges that individuals and organizations face as they claim to represent an ethnic group. Involved in these claims is the search for belonging through collective identification and discourses over the power to define it. As Gibb and Richman demonstrate, the opportunities afforded to immigrants in the adopted country are significant, but as Garapich and Pero demonstrate they are not the only factors that support immigrant political and collective engagement.

The authors in the final section, "New Spaces of Citizenship," direct our attention to the possibility of transcending geographic and national barriers and overcoming the challenge of being from two places at once. This section includes Wong's "Globalization and Citizenship: The Chinese in Silicon Valley"; Nina Glick Schiller and Ayse Caglar's "'And Ye Shall Possess It, and Dwell Therein': Social Citizenship, Global Christianity and Nonethnic Immigrant Incorporation"; and Brettell's "Immigrants as Netizens: Political Mobilization in Cyberspace."

Wong argues that Chinese immigrants to Silicon Valley who take up jobs (especially in the technology sector) continue to be active in their country of origin particularly through the avenues of global commerce involving a significant amount of travel back and forth between the United States and China. At the same time, they are actively involved in local American politics and in fact make significant contributions. The Chinese immigrants in Silicon Valley that Wong interviews "have accepted the ideology of '*luo di sheng gen*' (literally means: when one reaches the destination, one must grow root)" (p. 194). Wong argues that this is a demonstration of how globalization and localization can coexist. Schiller and Caglar offer one of the few cross-continental analyses in the volume, comparing the organization of born-again Christian migrants in Germany and the United States. Schiller and Caglar's work challenges traditional conceptions of citizenship, demonstrating that born-again Christian migrants place secondary importance on ethnicity and nationality, instead focusing on their engagement and advocacy with the larger society as Christians. Through their focus on cross-national evangelism and advocacy, these Christian immigrants act as social citizens and "assert rights to citizenship substantively through social practice rather than law" (p. 205). Brettell offers a fascinating study of how Unitefamilies, a group predominantly made up of green card holders, relied on the Internet to organize, disseminate information, and engage in advocacy to garner support for new legislation in the U.S. Congress. These "netizens" sought legislation that would do away with the more than five-year separation imposed on newly married green card holders while awaiting the processing of a foreign-born spouse's application for legal immigration. Through interaction over the Internet,

these netizens educate each other in U.S. civics and organize to enact change.

These essays significantly challenge the narrow definitions of citizenship that focus specifically on legal rights and responsibilities to a single state. Greater mobility and ease of communication have made it possible for immigrants to live beyond traditional definitions of community. Notably, they are able to be citizens of multiple communities across geographic divides and through membership in these communities become politically active.

This volume broadly touches on three topics essential to understanding immigrant political engagement in Europe and the United States: belonging, political mobilization, and challenges to the traditional definition of citizenship. It offers engaging analyses of these topics. While the power of an edited volume is its ability to bring a diversity of voices around a common topic or themes, ultimately, the ability to bring new insight relies on the editors to facilitate this conversation.

The burning question implicit in the organization of this volume is what role does place have on how immigrants negotiate belonging in relation to these various communities of practice? How do they mobilize for change? With the exception of Schiller and Caglar's fascinating piece on immigrant involvement in Christian groups in Germany and the United States, none of the essays make a cross-continental comparison. While the editors only claim to be bringing together a group of diverse voices to explore "common themes in experiences of immigrants" in Europe and the United States, I had hoped for more (p. 2). The opening paragraph of the introduction and the title suggest a more engaged comparison between Europe and the United States. Besides some helpful contextual information and analysis by the editors and Foner, there is not an explicit conversation among the essays on the similarities and differences on the two continents.

As Foner suggests in her concluding remarks, future comparative work on the politics of immigration in the United States and Europe might build on what the authors offer here on the topics of racism/religious intolerance, transnational ties, the role of the welfare state, immigrant associations, and new information technologies. Furthermore, Foner usefully points out that there are many issues of comparison not engaged in these essays. Issues not touched on that are ripe for comparison include immigrant involvement in electoral politics, efforts by the governments to instill common civic values, and the "impact of national integration models, paradigms, and discourses" (p.251).

This volume engages in a wide-ranging conversation on the politics of immigration from the immigrant's perspective. It challenges researchers of immigration to begin from the "ground" to understand the ways that immigrants are actively negotiating exclusion and engaging in defining and shaping the nature of citizenship and political mobilization. The volume provides an excellent overview for anyone interested in exploring the variety of challenges immigrants in Europe and the United States face as they collectively negotiate citizenship, political engagement, and belonging.

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