In this issue... 

A Symposium on the Politics of Immigration

Irene Bloemraad
Analyzing and Affecting Immigration Politics: Can Sociologists Influence Opinions?

Robert C. Smith
How and Why We Could Do Immigration Well, But Do It Badly

Kitty Calavita
Deflecting the Immigration Debate: Globalization, Immigrant Agency, "Strange Bedfellows," and Beyond

Reviewing the following books:
Deflecting Immigration: Networks, Markets, and Regulation in Los Angeles, by Ivan Light
Immigrants and Boomers: Forging a New Social Contract for the Future of America, by Dowell Myers

Debating Immigration, edited by Carol M. Swain

Roger Waldinger
The Border Within: Citizenship Facilitated and Impeded

Becoming a Citizen: Incorporating Immigrants and Refugees in the United States and Canada, by Irene Bloemraad

Review Essays

Michael Goldman
What’s Nature Got to Do with It? The Recurring Dark Ages: Ecological Stress, Climate Changes, and System Transformation, by Sing C. Chew

Eileen M. Otis

Gary Alan Fine
Mind, Games

Games and Sport in Everyday Life: Dialogues and Narratives of the Self, by Robert Perinbanayagan

Play Reconsidered: Sociological Perspectives on Human Expression, by Thomas S. Henricks

Toolkit Essay

John R. Hipp
Counterfactuals and Causal Inference: Methods and Principles for Social Research, by Stephen L. Morgan and Christopher Winship
Contemporary Sociology
A JOURNAL OF REVIEWS

July 2008
Volume 37
Number 4

EDITORS
Valerie Jenness
David A. Smith
Judith Stepan-Norris

MANAGING EDITOR
Jenny Fan
University of California, Irvine

EDITORS
Elaine Alma Draper
The University of Akron

Katherine Faust
University of California, Irvine

Kenneth C. Land
Duke University

Jen’nan Ghazal Read
University of California, Irvine

Lauren K. Graham
University of California, Berkeley

Lauren A. Green
American University

ASA Members $40 • Student Members $25
Institutions (print/online) $185 • Institutions (online only) $170
(Add $20 for subscriptions outside the U.S. or Canada)

Eliza K. Pavalko, Editor
Quarterly, ISSN 0022-1465

The Journal of Health and Social Behavior publishes articles that apply sociological concepts and methods to the understanding of health, illness, and medicine in their social context. Its editorial policy favors those manuscripts that build and test knowledge in medical sociology, that show stimulating scholarship and clarity of expression, and that, taken together, reflect the breadth of interests of its readership.

Print subscriptions to ASA journals include online access to the current year’s issues at no additional charge through IngentaConnect (www.ingentaconnect.com).

Individual subscribers are required to be ASA members. To join ASA and subscribe at discounted member rates, see www.asanet.org.

American Sociological Association
1430 K Street NW, Suite 600
Washington, DC 20005
(202) 385-2500 • Fax (202) 638-0882
subscriptions@asanet.org • www.asanet.org
CONTENTS

vii Editors’ Note The Politics of Immigration

A Symposium on the Politics of Immigration


298 Robert C. Smith How and Why We Could Do Immigration Well, But Do It Badly Deflecting Immigration: Networks, Markets, and Regulation in Los Angeles, by Ivan Light Immigrants and Boomers: Forging a New Social Contract for the Future of America, by Dowell Myers


306 Roger Waldinger The Border Within: Citizenship Facilitated and Impeded Becoming a Citizen: Incorporating Immigrants and Refugees in the United States and Canada, by Irene Bloemraad

Review Essays


Toolkit Essay

320 John R. Hipp Counterfactuals and Causal Inference: Methods and Principles for Social Research, by Stephen L. Morgan and Christopher Winship
REVIEWS

Author and Title Reviewer

Inequalities
323 Vincent J. Roscigno
The Face of Discrimination: How Race and Gender Impact Work and Home Lives
Beth Anne Shelton
324 Karyn R. Lacy
Blue-Chip Black: Race, Class, and Status in the New Black Middle Class
Patrick Sharkey
326 Nicole P. Marwell
Bargaining for Brooklyn: Community Organizations in the Entrepreneurial City
Robert Mark Silverman
327 Duane Champagne
Social Change and Cultural Continuity among Native Nations
James V. Fenelon
329 Blaine Kaltman
Under the Heel of the Dragon: Islam, Racism, Crime, and the Uighur in China
Christopher Sullivan

Intimate Relationships, Family, and Life Course
330 Charles N. Darrah, James M. Freeman, and J.A. English-Lueck
Busier than Ever!: Why American Families Can’t Slow Down
Suzanne M. Bianchi
332 Michael J. Rosenfeld
The Age of Independence: Interracial Unions, Same-Sex Unions, and the Changing American Family
Erica Chito Childs
333 Monica T. Whitty, Andrea J. Baker, and James A. Inman, eds.
Online M@tchmaking
Carol L. Glasser
334 Lillian B. Rubin
60 On Up: The Truth about Aging in America
Melissa Hardy

Work, Organizations, and Markets
335 Victor Nee and Richard Swedberg, eds.
On Capitalism
Greta R. Krippner
337 Charles Perrow
The Next Catastrophe: Reducing our Vulnerabilities to Natural, Industrial, and Terrorist Disasters
Harvey Molotch
338 Kathleen M. Shaw, Sara Goldrick-Rab, Christopher Mazzeo, and Jerry A. Jacobs
Putting Poor People to Work: How the Work-First Idea Eroded College Access for the Poor
Julia Wrigley
339 Carolyn L. Hsu
Creating Market Socialism: How Ordinary People are Shaping Class and Status in China
Lu Zheng
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author and Title</th>
<th>Reviewer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cognitions, Emotions, and Identities</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>341 Doreen Anderson-Facile</td>
<td>Robert M. Carrothers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Dueling Identities: The Christian Biker</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>342 Pawan Dhingra</td>
<td>Miliann Kang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Managing Multicultural Lives: Asian American Professionals and the Challenge of</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>344 Susie Scott</td>
<td>Linda P. Rouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Shyness and Society: The Illusion of Competence</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ideology and Cultural Production</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>345 E. Burke Rochford, Jr.</td>
<td>Eileen Barker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Hare Krishna Transformed</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>346 David Smilde</td>
<td>R. Andrew Chesnut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Reason to Believe: Cultural Agency in Latin American Evangelicalism</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>348 Tamir Sorek</td>
<td>Mike Cronin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Arab Soccer in a Jewish State: The Integrative Enclave</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>349 Joseph M. Palacios</td>
<td>Marco Marzano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Catholic Social Imagination: Activism and the Just Society in Mexico and the</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>350 Sara L. Crawley, Lara J. Foley, and Constance L. Shehan</td>
<td>Lisa Jean Moore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Gendering Bodies</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Population, Communities, and the Environment</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>351 Robert D. Bullard, ed.</td>
<td>John Iceland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Black Metropolis in the Twenty-First Century: Race, Power, and Politics of Place</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>353 Andrew L. Barlow, ed.</td>
<td>Edward T. Walker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Collaborations for Social Justice: Professionals, Publics, and Policy Change</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Politics and the State</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>354 Berch Berberoglu</td>
<td>Jack A. Goldstone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The State and Revolution in the Twentieth Century: Major Social Transformations of Our Time</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>355 Ralf Rogowski and Charles Turner, eds.</td>
<td>Glyn Morgan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Shape of the New Europe</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>356 Jack Nusan Porter</td>
<td>Mark P. Worrell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Genocidal Mind: Sociological and Sexual Perspectives</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author and Title</td>
<td>Reviewer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Control, Deviance, and Law</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>357  Avelardo Valdez</td>
<td>Scott A. Desmond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Mexican American Girls and Gang Violence: Beyond Risk</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>358  Tony Waters</td>
<td>Simon I. Singer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>When Killing is a Crime</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Movements</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>360  Stuart A. Wright</td>
<td>Joshua D. Freilich</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Patriots, Politics, and the Oklahoma City Bombing</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>361  Kimberly McClain DaCosta</td>
<td>Kathleen E. Hull</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Making Multiracial States, Family, and Market in the Redrawing of the Color Line</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Health, Illness, and Medicine</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>362  Anne Murcott, ed.</td>
<td>Pamela Behan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sociology and Medicine: Selected Essays by P.M. Strong</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>363  Laura Mamo</td>
<td>Kathleen E. Hull</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Queering Reproduction: Achieving Pregnancy in the Age of Technoscience</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>365  Alan Petersen</td>
<td>Darin Weinberg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Body in Question: A Socio-Cultural Approach</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theory, Epistemology, and Methodology</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>366  Robert E. Goodin and Charles Tilly, eds.</td>
<td>Elisabeth S. Clemens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>367  Albert Hunter and Carl Milofsky</td>
<td>Edward W. Lehman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Pragmatic Liberalism: Constructing a Civil Society</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>369  Talcott Parsons, edited by Giuseppe Sciortino</td>
<td>Jonathan H. Turner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>American Society: A Theory of the Societal Community</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Global Dynamics and Social Change</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>370  Mike Davis</td>
<td>Cedric de Leon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>In Praise of Barbarians: Essays Against Empire</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>372  Catherine Ziegler</td>
<td>W. L. Goldfrank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Favored Flowers: Culture and Economy in a Global System</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>373  Judith Blau and Alberto Moncada</td>
<td>Shehzad Nadeem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Freedoms and Solidarities: In Pursuit of Human Rights</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>374  Patrice Flichy, translated by Liz Carey-Libbrecht</td>
<td>Dianne S. Stalker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Internet Imaginaire</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author and Title</td>
<td>Reviewer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 376 Fred Kniss and Paul D. Numrich  
  Sacred Assemblies and Civic Engagement: How Religion Matters for America's Newest Immigrants | Sarah Stohlman    |
| **Education**                                                                  |                   |
| 377 Emily Hannum and Albert Park, eds.  
  Education and Reform in China                                                   | Feinian Chen      |
| 379 Carrie Freie  
  Class Construction: White Working-Class Student Identity in the New Millennium | Allison L. Hurst  |
| 380 Christina Chavez  
  Five Generations of a Mexican American Family in Los Angeles: The Fuentes Story | Angelica Rivera   |
| 381 Michael DeCesare  
  A Discipline Divided: Sociology in American High Schools                      | Melissa Weiner    |

**TAKE NOTE**

**COMMENT AND REPLY**

**PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED**
Immigration to the United States—particularly “illegal” or “unauthorized” entry—is a truly “hot button” issue in 2008. Many citizens feel very passionately about the economic and cultural “threat” of immigration and the candidates in the current political season are increasingly being pressed to take positions on this contentious issue. The immigration debate is never far from national consciousness. Cable news pundits take public outrage at immigration and immigrants as a given and rail against the government’s inability to control entry, restrict access to public services, and deport the undocumented. More moderate voices acknowledge that our immigration policies are not working, but nonetheless are overwhelmed by the complexity of the situation and despair at the prospect of attempting to locate and deport millions of people living in the United States without state authorization. And some disparate voices, including those representing the downtrodden immigrants and business groups who benefit from (or even “need”) low-wage labor, point to the positive economic impact of the demographic flows. Debates rage about the wisdom of building a fence along the entire length of the U.S.-Mexico border, whether people without documents should be able to get driver’s licenses, and whether and how to enforce sanctions against employers who hire undocumented immigrants. As Roger Waldinger succinctly puts it in his essay in this volume, “Immigration is roiling American politics, with controversy continuing and no clear solution in sight.”

One of the most vexing aspects of the immigration debate is its tendency to shed more heat than light. While there is a tremendous amount of controversy about immigration and immigrants, there is considerably less in the way of clear empirical analyses. Even the most basic facts are in dispute. For example, estimates of the number of undocumented or illegal immigrants in the United States vary from 7 to 20 million (with most scholars of the phenomena settling on about 12 million). What is the net positive or negative impact of immigrants in the United States? How likely are these newcomers able to assimilate to the dominant language and culture?

An excellent way to begin to address these questions is via sociological examination of some key books on immigration written by sociologists and those in cognate fields. Our symposium in this issue of *CS* focuses on three recent books: Ivan Light’s *Deflecting Immigration: Networks, Markets, and Regulation in Los Angeles*, Dowell Myers’s *Immigrants and Boomers: Forging a New Social Contract for the Future of America*, and Carol Swain’s edited collection *Debating Immigration*. We asked leading sociologists of immigration (Irene Bloemraad, Robert Smith, and Kitty Calavita) to each pick two of these books to discuss and each of them selected different combinations. Bloemraad frames her opening essay in terms of the 2008 presidential election and asks whether sociologists can influence public opinion on immigration. She contrasts Myers’s claims that there are good economic reasons to support and invest in recent immigrants with some vociferous criticism of immigration in the Swain volume. Myers’s argument is based on the idea of a “demographic lag”: as citizen “baby boomers” age, the United States will need the economically active younger population that recent immigrants provide to keep the economy going, buy homes, and pay for things like Social Security and Medicare. While Bloemraad praises Myers’s thesis as “nuanced, well-reasoned, and accessible to the lay reader,” she nonetheless wonders if his economic argument ignores too much, including worries about immigrants’ race, politics, and culture. The essays in the Swain col-

---

lection include a communitarian defense of immigration by Amitai Etzioni and an analytically sophisticated summary of two decades of sociological research on the topic by Douglas Massey. But Bloemraad sees many of the Swain chapters, including one by the editor herself, which claim that immigration to the United States is detrimental to our less affluent fellow citizens, damages our common culture, etc., as strong counterpoints to Myers’s position. Smith’s essay also discusses the Myers book. However, he contrasts it with the argument of Ivan Light who argues that, while Los Angeles was once the primary destination for undocumented immigrants, a variety of social forces in southern California now “deflect” these flows away from LA and toward other parts of the United States. Smith believes that Light’s focus on the growing power of localities to influence international migration is important, but he would like the author to provide more direct data on immigrant decision-making to make a convincing case for deflection. Kitty Calavita’s essay examines the Light and Swain volumes. Calavita persuasively argues that immigration needs to be contextualized in terms of global economic forces, and immigration policy should explicitly address issues of labor, free trade, etc. She sees insufficient attention to these factors in the two books. While she praises the Light book as an empirical “gem,” she believes he is wrong to dismiss the “demand-driven theory of third-world immigration as a consequence of globalization.” Moreover, while she finds the Swain volume provocative (and singles out Massey’s chapter for special praise), she claims it is tilted toward anti-immigrant positions, several of which she finds quite untenable.

In addition to the paired essays on these three books, our symposium also includes an essay by leading immigration scholar Roger Waldinger on Irene Bloemraad’s Becoming a Citizen: Incorporating Immigrants and Refugees in the United States and Canada. He points out that beyond border enforcement, immigration policy also involves creating in-groups and out-groups of citizens and others in order to exclude the undocumented from the political process and limit their unauthorized access to public services. Bloemraad’s research compares low-income immigrants to the United States and Canada and finds vast differences between our laissez-faire exclusionary policies and the inclusionary “multicultural” approach taken by our neighbors to the north. Waldinger has some quibbles with her argument. For example, is the crucial difference in Canadian policy really multiculturalism or a more generic government facilitation of citizenship? But he sees this book as a rich sociological contribution to the current political debates about immigration to the United States.

We also include four other featured essays in this volume. Michael Goldman discusses how two recent books on environmental issues might begin public debate on this topic, Eileen Otis reviews three volumes on “reform” in China and notes that they all point toward growing inequality, and Gary Alan Fine argues that two new books on sports and play remind us that these are not trifling topics for sociologists. Finally, John Hipp’s essay on Counterfactuals and Causal Inference: Methods and Principles for Social Research is out latest addition to our methodological “toolkit” series.

Valerie Jenness
David A. Smith
Judith Stepan-Norris
University of California, Irvine
csoc@uci.edu
The 2008 race for the White House has been one of the most exciting in recent memory, with immigration a hot button issue. Immigration platforms differentiated primary candidates and continue to fuel debate across and within parties. Two recent books, *Immigrants and Boomers* by Dowell Myers and *Debating Immigration* edited by Carol W. Swain, explicitly seek to engage such political debates. Myers announces, “This book is for the citizen-voter and taxpayers of the United States, who have a right to demand usable information that provides a realistic guide to the future of their country” (p. 2). Swain’s collection of academics, journalists, and pundits aims to give voice to “voids in public debate as well as in the scholarly literature and the popular press” (p. 5).

But how does one get a handle on the “strange bedfellows” of immigration politics? Free market conservatives team up with pro-immigrant liberals and ethnic advocacy groups to support expansionist policies. They are opposed by cultural conservatives, who were partnered, until recently, with unions, and perhaps increasingly, a small group of progressives worried about the native-born poor. The politics of immigration are centered on material stakes—who wins and loses in the labor market and in the fiscal tally between taxes paid and social benefits received—and on non-material consequences: its effects on social cohesion, common culture, inter-ethnic relations, national security, political vitality, and the like. The books by Myers and Swain highlight the very different ways such economic and non-economic debates play out, and they raise important questions over how sociologists can (or cannot) further immigration debates.

Myers takes an economic tact. He argues that aging, largely white baby boomers must enter into a new inter-generational social contract with young, minority immigrants and their children. Aiming to transcend sharp polarization around social issues, Myers contends that “[n]eitither class nor values gives us a basis for agreement on the problem to be solved. Instead the new challenge we all face is life in a nation undergoing demographic transition. And the solution to many of the problems we face is commonality based on age” (p. 176). Put simply, in two decades, baby boomer retirees will need an educated, laboring workforce to buy their houses and pay for Social Security and Medicare. Consequently, older Americans must invest in the education and success of younger residents, many of whom are immigrants or the children of immigrants, “not only for its own sake, or to avoid conflict, but because of self-interest rightly understood by the older generation” (p. 195).

To a certain extent, Myers is merely transferring the well-known demographic argument for immigration used in other industrialized countries to the United States. The argument is newer in the United States because the country does not face the steep
fertility declines found in most other developed nations. His argument also differs a bit since he does not advocate increasing migration, but instead building “homegrown” resources of youth already in the United States. Indeed, Myers explicitly states that his proposed social contract rests on “stabilizing” the flow of new immigrants.

Myers’s economic argument is nuanced, well-reasoned, and accessible to the lay reader. Particularly useful, he gives a clear-headed overview of the complicated, unequal political terrain. Using California as a case study, Myers points to a demographic “political lag”: while the resident population of California was just under 47% non-Hispanic white in 2000, whites made up about 71% of those who voted. Conversely, Hispanics made up 32% of the population, but they only accounted for 14% of voters, in part due to different age structures and citizenship statuses. Because the mismatch between residential and electoral demographics hurts those without political voice, and demographic analysis shows that whites will lose their political majority, at the earliest, in 2024, Myers argues that we must change older citizens’ understanding of their self-interest today to avoid future fiscal ruin and social problems.

At this point, skeptics may well ask whether such a reformulation of interests is possible. Myers argues that Californians’ backlash against immigration in the late 1980s and 1990s stemmed from economic recession and natural disasters coupled with rapid demographic change. Those still mired in politics of despair have missed, according to Myers, important indicators of optimism: public opinion over immigration has improved, economic conditions are better, and immigrants show real signs of economic advancement. In an uncanny foreshadowing of the 2008 presidential campaign, Myers urges readers to instead embrace a “future of hope.”

Myers’s economic argument is impressive, but what of the political one? Are those opposed to immigration primarily acting from material concerns, and can these concerns be allayed with statistical evidence and logic? Myers clearly thinks the answer is “yes.” At various points he calls the generational inequity favoring seniors “unintentional” and he suggests that older Americans “are not informed and would be shocked if they learned the score” (p. 193). He is not blind to the racial dimensions of the inequity, but he largely dismisses racial intolerance as a root cause of anti-immigrant sentiment. In a brief passage, Myers claims increased ethnic diversity does not correlate with greater apprehension over immigration while economic conditions do. Cultural worries over immigration are dismissed by noting that many immigrants learn English over their lifetime, and virtually all children of immigrants know English.

Carol Swain’s collection of essays offers a stark contrast to Myers’s book, not only in its conclusions, but also in the very understanding of what is at stake. A few essays echo Myers’s approach in the use of statistics and economic reasoning, though the conclusions are diametrically opposed. Steven Camarota, research director for the non-partisan, restrictionist Center for Immigration Studies, contends that immigrant employment gains between 2000 and 2004 have come at the expense of natives’ employment. Peter Brimelow, pundit and journalist, concludes that available economic evidence reveals no aggregate economic benefit from immigration—so that “the United States is being transformed for nothing” (p. 158)—but that some redistribution of income from labor to capital is occurring. In a brief demographic analysis, Charles Westoff links continued migration to significant increases in the U.S. population, but he concludes that any hope of easing the fiscal burden of retirement through immigration is “overwhelmed by the overall aging of the population” (p. 169). This is the closest we get to a direct challenge to Myers’s argument, but Westoff does not sufficiently spell out his reasoning to know whether his analysis undermines Myers’s proposed social contract.

It would be easy to dismiss some chapters in Debating Immigration as partisan defenses of immigrant restrictions, and some scholars will do so. Yet Swain’s collection provides a window on the deeply held, often principled objections of many Americans. A number of contributors in the volume argue that the expansionist views of many elites, and I would include most sociologists here, stand at odds with the ambivalent attitudes of ordinary Americans. Legal scholar Peter Schuck claims that the politics of immigration expansion comes from agricultural growers, busi-

Contemporary Sociology 37, 4
ness groups, universities, ethnic lobbies, and asylum advocates, a coalition that overpowers a diffuse opposition. In Swain's words, the volume arose because "an open debate was suppressed by many people in the mainstream who feared being dismissed as racist. . . . Presently, elites in both major political parties have largely ignored the concerns of the people" (pp. 5, 11).

As its title suggests, *Debating Immigration* showcases a range of opinions, including notable scholars such as sociologist Douglas Massey, political scientist Rogers Smith, and legal scholar Linda Bosniak. Yet Swain also has a clear agenda to problematize large-scale immigration, legal or unauthorized. Disconcerting to the rational economic arguments advanced by Myers, Swain includes a contribution by political staffer James R. Edwards, who offers a conservative Protestant defense of immigration restriction rooted in the bible. Can demographic analysis undermine arguments based on interpretation of God's word? Coming to a similar conclusion to Edwards, but from principles of secular liberal political theory, Stephen Macedo argues that basic justice must lead us to favor current members of our polity over others, "if high levels of immigration have a detrimental impact on our least well-off fellow citizens, that is a reason to limit immigration, even if those who seek admission seem to be poorer than our own poor" (p. 64).

Macedo provides an opening for academic discussion with the conditional "if." Does immigration hurt the native born? Myers suggests the opposite: Brimelow (at most) concedes a draw, while Macedo and various contributors to *Debating Immigration* argue that the aggregate benefits of immigration do not matter if a minority of native-born citizens is hurt. Those most at risk, many of the contributors agree, are African Americans and other long-standing poor Americans. This is a point ignored by Myers, whose argument over self-interest is largely focused on older white Americans.

One of the most provocative sections in *Debating Immigration* addresses the topic of differential harm and race. Carol Swain attacks the Congressional Black Caucus for not confronting the problem of immigration from the perspective of African Americans. She claims that immigration disproportionately hurts less educated blacks in the labor force, and it creates tensions around affirmative action and political power. In a passage sure to raise eyebrows, she suggests that blacks might be better served by "the Republican side of the aisle, where a number of legislators have staked out positions conducive to the interests of working people" (p. 188). Swain's general point is then taken up and argued even more forcefully, and colorfully, by Jonathan Tilove. Tilove echoes the fears of economic and political displacement, and identifies an insidious process of black marginalization among those championing immigrants: "The problem here is that while blacks are losing this high-stakes competition, there is very little attention paid to the ways in which the competition is stacked against them. . . . because immigrants who are hired instead are also not white, employers run little risk of running afoul of antidiscrimination laws or their own sense of shame" (pp. 214, 215).

Communitarian and sociologist Amitai Etzioni is placed as counterweight to Swain and Tilove. Etzioni claims that immigrants benefit the United States because they strengthen communitarian bonds through their commitment to family, community, and nation, as well as their respect for authority and "moderate religious-moral values" (p. 189). He maintains that immigrants share values of democracy, the Constitution, universal law, mutual respect and tolerance with Americans and, echoing Myers, that they largely embrace English as a common language. In a final section that particularly enrages Tilove, Etzioni suggests that the multi-ethnic and multi-racial backgrounds of new immigrants, combined with intermarriage, will undermine traditional black/white identity politics, thereby "normalizing" American politics.

The clashing views of Tilove and Etzioni showcase the promise of *Debating Immigration*. Readers enlarge their understanding of the stakes in placing these two chapters side-by-side, making the volume particularly useful in the classroom. Yet the collection also falls short, since most chapters do not directly engage each other, or allow opponents to dispute the "facts." A number of the contributors who claim immigration hurts (some) Americans' material interests almost exclusively cite the work of economist George Borjas. But various labor economists and many sociologists disagree with Borjas's con-
Upon first reading of these two excellent new books on immigration by Dowell Myers and Ivan Light, I felt that these two scholars—who teach within a few miles of each other in Los Angeles—must inhabit different countries. Where Myers sees the potential for intergenerational cooperation and progress between immigrants and natives, Light sees a future wherein locals use their power to discourage and deflect immigrants who see destroying their quality of life. Where Myers sketches out the analytical and policy basis for resolving the shrill standoff that passes for debate on immigration issues today, Light analyzes how the failure of national immigration has yielded a strident set of haphazard, de facto local policies of sequential absorption and deflection. Yet it is not different countries that these scholars inhabit, but different, though complementary, analytical and political perspectives. While I have more bones to pick with Light than with Myers, both books make important contributions to our understanding of immigration. I also use the review to discuss important, related issues in immigration.

These books have several virtues. Both offer serious scholarly analysis engaged with...
political debate on immigration. Both are works of synthesis, drawing on a wide base of knowledge and sources. Both are well written—Myers is folksy in his erudition, the Garrison Keillor of the immigration debates, while Light is an incisive logician. And neither is partisan pro- or anti-immigrant. They offer sober, but different views of our current reality. Myers’s book is tighter in argumentation, and more persuasive. Light is theoretically ambitious and innovative, even if he stumbles at times. Both take California as a harbinger.

Dowell Myers challenges the assumptions and arguments in the dominant public discourse on immigration today. To wit, today’s immigrants, especially Latinos, are of lower quality, and threaten to undermine the American way of life, and even pose the threat of a Quebec-like separatist movement. Samuel Huntington and George Borjas are mentioned by name. Myers argues that the immigration debate today has led to political positions that undermine everyone’s self-interest in our common American future. The conflict of interest between older, more affluent and educated whites, and younger, less affluent and educated Latinos and Asians is seen and conducted as a zero-sum game. Refreshingly, Myers appeals not to our altruism, but—like the Federalist Papers—to our baser side. He argues for public policies that pursue our enlightened self-interest.

Myers dissects how our enlightened self-interest is not served by current debates and policies. Myers uses what might be clumsily called “life course demographic public policy analysis.” By tracing how immigrants and their children change over the life course—using such techniques as cohort analysis—he is able to see things that cross-sectional data cannot show. He then applies these insights to policy.

A primary target of Myers’s analysis is what he calls the “Peter Pan” assumption underlying most contemporary debate on immigration—that is, the assumption that poorly paid, poorly educated immigrants will remain so for the rest of their lives. This assumption underpins the vision of a bleak future, because such persons could not support our American ways of life. Yet Myers argues, using the Census and other data, that the Peter Pan assumption is wrong. In category after category, he shows how earlier migrants are both moving ahead socioeconomically, and becoming more behaviorally American. For Myers, a positive assimilation is very much alive and well in California.

Measures of housing, education, and income figure prominently in Myers’s analysis. Myers shows that earlier migrants, on average, increased both their levels of education and their incomes over time. This makes sense. Even those with low initial levels of education tend to translate their time on the job into higher incomes. Myers also shows that Latino immigrants increase their level of formal education over time. Myers’s moving picture offers a better read on the condition of Latinos than the snapshot of cross-sectional data. Myers also shows how these higher incomes and education levels also convert into higher rates of homeownership for immigrants. Hence, Latino names now account for six and Asian names two of the top ten names for new homebuyers in California, while names like Smith and Johnson have slipped down the list. The use of such simple, yet persuasive, data, helps make Myers’s case convincing.

Myers uses this base of actual and potential upward mobility to make the case for enlightened self-interest in the form of a new intergenerational social contract. One key example is the baby boomer housing bubble. Boomers have increased their wealth through an unprecedented boom in housing prices over the last twenty years. But to keep this bubble from bursting when boomers sell those houses—and enable them to live out their lives drawing on that wealth, and pass some of it on to their offspring—they will need buyers for their homes. Without buyers, prices will plummet. How to fix the issue? We need a new intergenerational social contract. The key, for Myers, is to invest more in public education, especially, and related public services, to recognize “how much the generations depend on one another” (p. 245). The “one action tool within our grasp is to promote the educational preparation of the next generation . . . and elevate the earnings potential of grown children, and thereby enhance their home buying potential” (p. 245). It is a simple, feasible contract, but could fix many problems in American society.

There are two caveats for Myers’s analysis. In discussing the book, Luis Guarnizo’s asks
a well-put question: What will happen if the social supports for this slow climb into the middle class are further eroded, rather than strengthened? I ask a similar question—what will be the effects of a more than twenty-year period in which undocumented immigrants have been unable to legalize their status, resulting in 12–14 million of them now growing up or growing old as undocumented people? Both these conditions will make the upward mobility Myers seeks to promote more difficult, but no less worthy.

If Dowell Myers is trying to illuminate the policy path to enlightened self-interest, Ivan Light sheds light on how and why Americans will not take that path. His answer is “sequential absorption and deflection” (p. 164). Light argues that the failure of national immigration policy to stop undocumented immigration has dumped the problem in the laps of regional and local actors, whose combined actions drive immigrants out of Los Angeles and cities like it throughout the United States. This is Light’s explanation for why immigrants, especially Mexicans, have dispersed throughout the United States since the 1990s.

Light argues that a “poverty intolerant growth regime” emerged over three decades in response to the “ever-intensifying problems that arose from the influx of low-wage Latinos from Mexico and Central America.” This “muddling through . . . brought together four linked but independent contributors: homeowners, social justice movements, housing and labor markets, and local governments” (p. xii). He summarizes his argument neatly:

First, selfish homeowners were partly successful in defending Los Angeles suburbs against affordable housing. Second, the actions of caring and humane citizens of the Los Angeles region reduced the supply of slum housing and sweatshop jobs. Third, in conjunction with housing and labor markets, immigrants’ social networks effectively related the bad news to new immigrants still in Mexico, thus discouraging their intention to settle in Los Angeles. Finally, Los Angeles regional government became increasingly intolerant of immigrant poverty, and so began to enforce previously ignored laws and ordinances that restricted the ability of poor people to live in the area. (P. xii)

Light’s argument is provocative and innovative. He makes a valuable contribution by examining the political reality of migration at the state and local level, where increasingly important action is taking place, while most scholarship focuses on national policy. His framework looks at apparently unrelated arenas of action, and draws on and critiques corresponding theory, for example, of migration and of urban growth regimes. His analysis of how local actors combined actions led to a less hospitable environment for new immigrants deepens our understanding in ways impossible for nationally focused research. Such creative theorizing helps open a new approach to studying migration and local politics at a time when such issues are heating up. While I don’t agree with all he says, scholars should pursue explanations for new problems using the tools that illuminate various dimensions of it. If they are wrong, wholly or partly, they will be challenged and hopefully, our collective knowledge advanced. This “glass half full stance” may be at odds with much American academic culture, but it is good for it.

Light’s complex argument does not fully satisfy in analyzing racial discrimination as a cause of this Latino immigrant dispersal during the 1990s. Light argues that racism clearly exists in California, but was not a significant cause of outmigration of Latinos. He says that fear of “squalor” (p. 151) and not racism motivated harsh public rhetoric in California, and that being “anti-immigrant is not the same as anti-Latino,” and being “anti-illegal immigrant is not the same as anti-immigrant” (p. 151). But these semantic distinctions belie the way that more publicly acceptable labels can be used to mask or legitimate less acceptable sentiments, or how these can be bundled together and mobilized by rhetoric which does not speak race’s name, but sends the same message by proxy. In a book on politics and immigration in California in the 1990s, I would have liked more discussion of this issue.

Light asserts that deflection caused migration networks to disperse throughout the country. I like his use of wage to rent ratios to partly explain the dispersal of Latino immigrants, and the two-step model by which migrant networks can be established and reoriented towards better conditions. Yet as others (Bloemraad 2007) have noted, this
central assertion should be backed up by direct data, for example, from migrants on reasons for dispersal. Another plausible explanation, drawing on my own research on the East Coast and in Kentucky, is that these migrant networks were not mainly “deflected,” but rather were established by pioneers legalized in the amnesty of the late 1980s. These pioneers traveled the United States to find better opportunities in new places, and then brought friends (legal and undocumented). Los Angeles’s deteriorating conditions are a push factor here, but migrant agency, enabled by the national policy (amnesty) also matter. I also think that magnitude of migration directly from new origins in Mexico to new origins in the United States is too great to be understood as deflected from Los Angeles. Huge numbers of these immigrants would have had no information about conditions in Los Angeles or other destinations that their immediate networks could not take them. Finally, as Jackie Hagan observed in a conversation about the book, demand for migrant labor in other places in the United States must play a more prominent theoretical role in explaining this dispersal.

I really like Light’s analysis of how the urban growth regime limited immigrant expansion beyond the metropolitan core. However, Light’s focus on how Los Angeles has deflected migration overlooks the effects of inclusive measures in Los Angeles and other cities, and fails to consider the larger political framework within which local power seeks to regulate immigration. Going forward, analysis of these political processes should include the issue of federalism, and consider how the power to regulate immigration is a federal power, but the states, and hence localities, use their “police powers” under the Constitution to also include immigrants. Hence, many localities during the 1980s and 1990s passed laws forbidding the sharing of information about immigrants’ legal status, except in connection with a criminal investigation. Similarly, some states passed laws giving all poor youth, including undocumented ones, access to medical care, even as the federal government withdrew such support. The policies sought to ensure that immigrants and their children could go to the doctor if sick, seek police protection, and send their children to school. These are modest goals in wealthy society, but put these states and localities at odds with federal tendencies.

What Light is picking up, and what seems new, is that localities are now using such policies to control the effects of immigration or indirectly dissuade immigrants from coming to their towns. The deputizing of local police departments as ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) agents bolsters his argument. Other cases show how federalism or anti-discrimination provisions can limit localities power to deflect. Hence, in 2007, a court ruled unconstitutional the Hazleton, PA ordinances forbidding the renting of housing or employment of undocumented immigrants. Mamaroneck, NY, was told in 2007 to discontinue its discriminatory enforcement of traffic and loitering laws, which had targeted “illegal immigrants.” In both cases, public officials had, without evidence, blamed recent and illegal immigrants for public problems, including increased crime. Finally, Riverside, NJ passed and then repealed similar ordinances a year later, because the resulting immigrant exodus was hobbling its economy.

Both books use California as a harbinger of America’s future. While California’s demographic changes are ahead of most of the rest of the United States, it is not clear that California’s present is the United States’s future. California has hosted perhaps the largest, sustained immigration of one ethnic group in U.S. history, and at a time when aging baby boomers see themselves in competition for resources with younger, less well-educated, largely Mexican origin, descendents of immigrants. Yet as migration patterns change (as migration from Mexico decreases, in about twenty years), and the nation’s and California’s Mexican population ages and increases its middle class, I bet the dynamics of race, ethnicity, and intergenerational relations will change too. Future newcomers in new destinations, or descendents of today’s newcomers, may be aided in their upward mobility as they move into job markets where record numbers of white boomers will be retiring, as Richard Alba points out in a talk he gave at the Russell Sage Foundation this year. In other places, such as New York, the mechanisms of political power and inclusion are more sympathetic to immigrants than in California. California is thus instructive, but not necessarily predictive, in looking into the future.
In sum, both books are worth reading. Where Myers analyzes our current intergenerational impasse, and suggests a way out of it, Light analyzes how this impasse is being lived out at the local level, and why it will endure. *Immigrants and Boomers* and *Deflecting Immigration* contribute significantly to our understanding of contemporary immigration, and should open new roads for research and inform current policy debates.

**Reference**


---

**Deflecting the Immigration Debate:**

Globalization, Immigrant Agency, “Strange Bedfellows,” and Beyond

**Kitty Calavita**

*Department of Criminology, Law & Society*  
*University of California, Irvine*  
kccalavi@uci.edu

One thing I still remember from an otherwise unmemorable undergraduate methods course is that just because the number of fire trucks on the scene of a fire is positively related to the extent of the fire’s damage, does not mean the fire trucks cause the damage. They’re probably both related to something else—like, of course, the severity of the fire.

Sometimes scholarship on immigration reminds me of this cautionary tale of fire trucks and fires. Many immigration scholars give at least lip service to the ways globalization, economic transformation, and restructuring (the fire) in advanced countries have contributed to immigration on one hand and the disappearance of living-wage jobs on the other; but, the same scholars often then lapse into what is akin to blaming the fire trucks (immigration) for the damage. Granted, the analogy is not perfect. All else being equal, injecting a labor market with additional lower-wage workers can depress wages, in a way that adding more fire trucks to the scene of a fire will probably never produce more damage. But, as is well known by now, wage levels in the U.S. began collapsing with deindustrialization, capital flight, economic restructuring, and the evisceration of labor unions in the late 1970s and early 1980s, that is, just before the current massive increase in immigration. So, while immigration can sometimes have a negative effect on wages, it’s far more likely in this case that declining wages and (later) rising immigration levels were each related to a broader set of forces.

The works reviewed here provide us with reams of useful data on demographics, housing trends, immigrant geographic distribution, public opinion about immigration, economic mobility among immigrants, and many other issues, and contribute much to our empirical store of knowledge. But, in reading them I was often frustrated by the lack of attention to the vast restructuring of the global economy that arguably has been one trigger for rapidly rising levels of immigration, not just in the U.S. but in all advanced capitalist countries. Despite the dramatic differences between these two books and among the edited chapters of *Debating Immigration*, they tend to share this inattention to the fire of global economic forces.

In the case of Ivan Light’s *Deflecting Immigration*, this is no oversight. His central empirical argument is that when low-skilled immigrants from Mexico and Central America arrived in Los Angeles in significant numbers in the 1980s, the effect was to drive wages down, to reduce the housing supply relative to demand and push housing prices up, and to trigger “poverty intolerance” by the local populace. This latter phenomenon, according

---

*Contemporary Sociology* 37, 4
to Light, included such things as increased municipal regulations and labor-law enforcement, which in turn made housing and low-wage jobs even more scarce. Cumulatively, Light argues, these trends had the consequence of “deflecting” Latino immigrants away from LA and toward destinations that offered higher wages, more job opportunities, and, presumably, greater poverty tolerance on the part of locals. Light’s topical focus is on the expansion and contraction of the LA garment industry, the disappearance of affordable housing, the penetration of Latinos into LA suburbs and the subsequent “antislum crusades” and NIMBYism of native suburban homeowners.

As a descriptive chronicle of these developments, the book is a gem. But, Light has a much broader agenda in mind. His purpose is to use this story to debunk the “demand-driven explanation” (p. 2) of immigration. As Saskia Sassen (2007:189) has said in a recent review of Light’s book, she is “exhibit number one.” Light claims that Sassen’s and others’ demand-driven theory of third-world immigration as a consequence of globalization and economic structure is undermined by his documentation of the power of immigrants’ agency and networks in determining their destinations, by LA’s “poverty intolerance,” and by immigrants’ low wages relative to non-immigrants.

But, I see nothing here that is inconsistent with demand theory. No one pretends that immigration is only and entirely driven by the demand for cheap labor, regardless of the potential supply of immigrants willing to move or networks to facilitate it. In fact, from the point of view of demand theory, it makes sense that immigrants would move to secondary destinations once the demand for labor there had become apparent and networks established. Witness the influx of Latino workers into New Orleans in the post-Katrina reconstruction.

Other problems surface in Light’s attempt to displace the labor-demand theory. It’s somewhat mystifying that he would point to declining wages as an indication of lack of immigrant labor demand. In the theory of immigration, it’s not a demand for labor in the absolute that helps trigger immigration, but the demand for ever cheaper labor. Far from debunking demand theory, the association of massive immigration with declining wages—even declining wages for immigrants—is consistent with it. In post-Fordist Italy, where unemployment among locals reaches double digits, Italian sociologist Maurizio Ambrosini (1999) calls immigrant workers “useful invaders,” much as Zolberg (1987) once described immigrants in the U.S. as “wanted but not welcome.”

And, this brings me to a third limitation of Light’s attack on demand theory. Evidence of a backlash against the poverty of immigrants—such as he marshalls for the LA case and which he suggests points to a falling demand for immigrants—neither is new (at least since the mid-nineteenth century Irish influx, anti-immigrant sentiment has been triggered in part by immigrants’ impoverished conditions), nor does it upset demand theory as he contends. As Zolberg, Sassen, and many others have argued, immigration is replete with contradictions, not the least of which is that the poverty wages that make immigrant labor so desirable also unleash anti-immigrant backlash. Underlying the stubborn policy issues surrounding immigration is this fundamental catch-22 comprised of the simultaneous demand for cheap labor and the fiscal and social repercussions of the poverty that predictably ensues.

Further, it is difficult to sustain the “poverty intolerance” argument that this backlash is about the desire to uphold a “standard of human decency” or locals’ “humane interest in decent living conditions among their immigrants” (Light, p. 17); if this were the case, locals would push for affordable housing to minimize the poverty of those who now spend up to half their income on shelter, rather than mobilizing for municipal codes that restrict the supply of affordable housing and result in evictions and homelessness of immigrants and citizens alike. To this reader, locals’ anger is more likely about their own “perceived economic and social self-interest” (p. 144), as Light sometimes concedes.

While Deflecting Immigration stakes out a position and sticks to it, Carol Swain’s Debating Immigration appears, at first glance, to be far more modest. This edited volume mostly addresses the issue of what should be done about immigration, and Swain tells us early on that she and the contributors “do not pretend to have definitive answers to the questions [they] raise”; instead, she wants to stimulate debate (p. 5). Comprised of sixteen
chapters plus an introduction by Swain and concluding remarks by Nathan Glazer, the book provides a wealth of information.

The chapters are uneven though, perhaps because the editor was so intent on including a diverse range of views. In “A Biblical Perspective on Immigration Policy,” James Edwards of the Hudson Institute argues that although the Bible directs us to treat foreigners in our midst well, nonetheless God created “different nationalities of the earth and the places to which God has assigned them to reside,” and that each should stay in their assigned places, according to “providential plan” (p. 54). This chapter and a few others do little to advance the debate. Indeed, overall the authors mostly talk past each other rather than engaging in any sustained dialogue. And, despite the apparent effort to include non-conventional entries and the inclusion of some partisan authors known for their anti-immigration positions, there is a conspicuous absence of comparable immigrant advocates represented.

But, there are many interesting chapters here, several written by such renowned scholars as Amitai Etzioni, Peter Schuck, Doug Massey, Linda Bosniak, Rogers Smith, and Randall Hansen. The most substantial chapters focus less on advocating for a particular immigration policy than on exploring the underlying socio-political dynamics of the immigration phenomenon. One theme that is touched on is that of the overlap of “immigration questions” and “alienage questions” (Bosniak, p. 86). With characteristic eloquence, Bosniak reveals the ways in which border enforcement is complicated by personhood rights, and how in turn the personhood rights of immigrants “are always held in the long shadow of the government’s immigration enforcement power” (p. 87).

Perhaps the most consistent theme is the gap between public opinion and official rhetoric which is often restrictionist on one hand, and a relatively laissez-faire policy on the other. Thus, Schuck discusses the “disconnect” between a restrictionist public and an “expansive policy”—a disconnect that he relates to “the immigration-specific political economy” (p. 17). This political economy, Schuck argues, is defined in large part by a set of expansionist interests that not only include growers and other employers, but also ethnic and immigrant advocacy groups who hold far more political sway than the fractured and often ambivalent array of restrictionists. (Swain’s chapter on the discrepancy between the relative inaction of the Congressional Black Caucus on issues of immigration and the restrictionist interests of its constituency which, she contends, stands to lose most from immigration, is another twist on this disconnect). Rogers Smith picks up this theme as well, arguing that historically the result of the clash of economic interests in a plentiful workforce and public demands for restrictions has been symbolic policies that appear to be aimed at restriction but that don’t interrupt the labor flow.

A third theme that surfaces regularly is that of the “strange bedfellows” of immigration politics, arguably because of the contradictions permeating immigration which are then embodied in convoluted alliances. In “Strange Bedfellows, Unintended Consequences, and the Curious Contours of the Immigration Debate,” Jonathan Tilove points out that the “pro-immigration coalition” brings together the National Restaurant Association, the National Association of Manufacturers, and the National Council of La Raza under the same umbrella group. “National Immigration Forum dinners,” he says, “are events where those who exploit immigrant labor break bread with those who labor against that exploitation” (p. 209).

There is much to admire in Tilove’s chapter, particularly because he tackles difficult questions of race. But, he sometimes gets tangled up in his own rhetorical efforts to skewer political correctness. Tilove contends that a conspiracy of silence prevents Americans from questioning the negative effects of immigrants because they—unlike “white” European immigrants of the past—are often racial minorities. He makes the curious statement: “Were most immigrants white, the various guardians of social justice in academia, in the press, in the realms of government and advocacy, and in the black community itself would be on alert as to how these new arrivals were affecting the fortunes of America’s native-born minorities . . . ” (pp. 208–209).

One problem with this is its historical myopia and overly simplistic view of race, ignoring the longstanding interplay of racialization and concerns about immigrant competitiveness. So powerful is this interplay historically that even Irish immigrants were cast as non-
white, in part because of their extreme destitution and fears about their depressive effect on wages. A few decades later, Chinese immigrants were thought to be racially inferior and unfair competitors because, it was alleged, they could survive on less food than white people required. For more than 150 years, Americans have complained about competition from immigrants who were seen as racially other, and the fears of competitiveness and the racial othering were integrally connected.

Peculiar too is the awesome power Tilove ascribes to the (presumably multitudinous) “guardians of social justice” who now shield immigrants from blame. Given the current political and media climate, worries about any inordinate influence of social justice advocates seem strangely misplaced. And, the idea that immigrants are effectively shielded is particularly unconvincing in light of the Southern Poverty Law Center's report, cited by Swain (p. 8), that hate crimes have increased by 33 percent over the last five years and that Hispanic immigrants are the targets of most of the increased violence.

Tilove mentions in passing the disruptive aspects of the current economic transformation, but focuses his energies on blaming immigrants themselves for reducing wages. Pickus and Skerry go one step further in “Good Neighbors and Good Citizens.” While noting that “. . . immigrants have become the human face of two sweeping forces: the fraying of local community ties and the decline of national sovereignty” (p. 204) that are both products of globalization, they take a sharp reductionist turn, worrying about whether immigrants are good enough neighbors. In their rendition, it’s not just the fire trucks but the ill-mannered fire fighters who do all the damage.

Douglas Massey’s chapter stands out as both analytically sophisticated and policy oriented. He summarizes his extensive empirical findings over the course of at least two decades—findings which should be the starting point for any serious policy discussion. Presenting powerful evidence that neither border blockades, nor substantially increasing Border Patrol budgets and personnel, nor employer sanctions, have worked to stop undocumented immigration to the U.S., and that they have all had disastrous, unintended (but predictable) consequences, Massey rules that with regard to U.S. immigration policy, “We have the worst of all possible worlds” (p. 138).

In the absence of any broader changes it’s hard to conjure up an immigration policy—round-ups, guestworker programs, open borders, barricades—that might lead us to a better world. The solution arguably lies in “deflecting” the debate—that is, thinking outside the narrow confines of “immigration policy.” Immigration is essentially an economic phenomenon, triggered by economic forces (as many of the authors here imply), so it follows that it can and should be treated as part of economic policy more broadly construed. This opens up a range of options that at least stand a chance of reducing undocumented immigration and at the same time would benefit all workers. Economic and labor policies such as the enforcement of existing labor laws, the enactment of a living wage, invigorating unions, and encouraging fair trade, would be far more effective at suppressing the demand for undocumented workers and limiting their immigration than the current approach, the failures of which Massey and others have so persuasively exposed. Not to overwork an imperfect analogy, but we need to stop counting the trucks and contain the fire.

References
Immigration is roiling American politics, with controversy continuing and no clear solution in sight. As all parties concur, the system is broken, frustrating the new, would-be, and established Americans, while yielding substantial social costs and tensions from the Mexican to the Canadian border, and just about everywhere in between. Beyond this point of agreement, however, dissonance is all that can be heard. Many voices are shouting; no one knows where to go.

Uncertainty reigns as to how best to control the borders. Meanwhile, there is another option which governments in the United States have decided to avidly pursue: namely, create differences between the people of the state and all other people in the state. Hence, expanding immigrant numbers have gone hand in hand, both with a restriction on immigrants’ rights and with a growing divergence between demography and democracy.

While unable to prevent unauthorized immigrants from crossing the border, governments have found it much easier to prevent the illegal immigrants residing on U.S. soil from obtaining public services. As a driver’s license is too fine a privilege to be granted to the country’s 12 million undocumented immigrants—let them take the bus!—an everyday illegality involved in living in the United States without authorization has become a tool for deporting the unwanted. Likewise, the divide between citizens and permanent residents, which had narrowed in the aftermath of the civil rights era, has once again begun to widen, with legally resident non-citizens no longer eligible for benefits that are now available to citizens alone, and at risk of deportation should they be convicted of a felony. Though not voiceless, non-citizens are voteless, at little cost to those Americans enjoying the vote. The damage, rather, is to the American democracy, decreasingly a government of and for the people, when barely a third of all foreign-born persons living on U.S. soil are eligible to vote.

America’s resistance to integration with the world and those of its people that have moved to U.S. soil is often hard to see, especially by the professional students of what is called “immigration,” as they tend to stand with their backs at the border’s edge. From that perspective, it’s clear that the immigrants are just putting into practice the program that the Americans have long endorsed: namely, that of trying to get ahead on the basis of their own effort, requesting no help from anyone else (though that pesky driver’s license would be nice!). Having already broken with the stay-at-homes, the immigrants’ search for a better life—whether in the form of a higher-paying job, safer neighborhood, or higher quality schools—leads them to cross ethnic boundaries, heading away from others of their own kind and toward the American mainstream, whatever that might be.

Once across the territorial frontier, the immigrants discover that they have yet another obstacle to cross, namely the barrier that precludes them from membership among the people of the state in which they now live. In general, sociologists take that boundary for granted, asking about the factors that motivate immigrants to “naturalize,” assuming that the answer is to be found at the individual level. The problem, however, is that access to citizenship is carefully rationed, effectively excluding far more people from having any say than democratic theory would allow.

One might wonder why. Moreover, it wasn’t always so, as in the U.S. during the last century of mass migration, citizenship was far easier to acquire. More importantly, perhaps, the other rich democracies aren’t all like the United States. Case in point, our neighbor to the north: Canada. Though immigrant densities are even higher in Canada...
than in the United States, the foreigners arriving in Canada are becoming citizens at roughly twice the rate of their counterparts who instead head for the United States. Irene Bloemraad’s insightful new book explains just why the path to citizenship has become so divergent in these two adjacent countries, similar in so many fundamental respects.

Like any good comparative sociologist, Bloemraad uses the Canada/U.S. comparison to illuminate the impact of differences in underlying variables. For over a decade, the most influential writings on citizenship have asked how “civic” versus “ethnic” conceptions of nationhood can impede or facilitate immigrants’ access to citizenship. While the U.S. and Canada both fall into the civic variant, policies toward citizenship differ, doing so along two dimensions. One pertains to government policy toward citizenship; the other dimension involves government policy toward ethnic (or more precisely, home country) identity: the U.S. is again laissez-faire; Canadian multicultural policies facilitate the retention of, and indeed use, home-country ethnic ties.

Bloemraad ingeniously fills up this two by two space by focusing on the same two, relatively low-skilled groups in both countries—Portuguese and Vietnamese; whether moving to Canada or the United States, the Portuguese arrived as labor migrants and the Vietnamese as refugees, officially so recognized in both countries. This turns out to be the perfect choice of groups: though relatively invisible in the greater U.S. scene, the Portuguese are the ideal stand-in for the classic labor migrants, whether the Italians of yore or the Mexicans of today. As officially recognized refugees, by contrast, the Vietnamese are the exception, receiving government support in the U.S. that comes close to the situation encountered in Canada, though without the multicultural apparatus. Thus, the comparison among Vietnamese communities across borders lets Bloemraad trace the impact of differences in multiculturalism; south of the border, the comparison between the Vietnamese and the Portuguese illuminates the effect of government support.

Using a variety of sources and methodologies, but principally relying on in-depth interviews among immigrants, ethnic leaders, and officials in Boston and Toronto, Bloemraad shows how much policies and institutions matter. In Boston, the Portuguese are indeed invisible, with low levels of citizenship, surprisingly few ethnic organizations of any type, and almost no representation among elected officials, no matter how modest. Their local Vietnamese counterparts have not fared much better in electoral politics, but organizational density is far greater. Both groups find it hard to fit their imported, home country identities within the ethnorracial pentagon that defines American political life. In Toronto, the Portuguese seem to enjoy the best of both worlds, with a high level of organizational density and considerable success at electoral politics, thanks, in part, to the ethnic organizations that launched numerous political careers. Both Vietnamese and Portuguese Torontonians report that support and recognition of their home country identities has made them more eager to be Canadians, in both the formal and larger sense.

A summary of this sort can’t do full justice to this sophisticated, well-written, engaging book, which has already become required reading in both my undergraduate and graduate classes. But like any work of importance, Becoming a Citizen is likely to leave the reader wanting some further debate with the author. Bloemraad’s take-home message emphasizes the positive role of multiculturalism in facilitating citizenship and encouraging common membership in a multicultural society. Maybe, but for my taste, the case has not been clinched. As noted above, multiculturalism is only one of the two axes of variation along which this book is organized; government support of citizenship per se is the other dimension and conceptually, the two are distinct. In this respect, the set-up is not quite perfect: in particular, the comparison of Portuguese across borders is muddied by the fact that it involves differences along both multicultural and support dimensions. For that reason, among others, I’m not convinced that it’s multiculturalism, rather than government facilitation of citizenship, that explains the Canadian success story; even if
multiculturalism is the decisive element, the available evidence doesn't tell me just how much more important it is. Bloemraad also concludes that the United States should shift toward the multicultural variant pursued by its neighbor to the north, in effect, manipulating the book’s independent variable so as to hasten the immigrants’ full, political incorporation. But one wonders whether citizenship policy is quite as malleable, and as independent from immigration policy, as this conclusion would seem to imply. After all, the immigrants who arrive in Canada are indeed the Canadian state’s chosen people; given the government’s careful sifting and selecting, doesn’t it follow that the Canadian state will work hard to get the immigrants to commit, as part of an effort to get maximal reward for its investment? South of the border, by contrast, immigration is a society dominated process, leading to a situation in which the economy has developed a need for foreigners whom the people of the United States don’t really want. With all energy focused on a thus far hopeless effort at exclusion, are policies that would provide political and material support for inclusionary citizenship truly an option?

The criticisms notwithstanding, Becoming a Citizen is an impressive achievement, belonging on the shelf of all serious migration scholars. Based on this reading, they can also look forward to learning what Irene Bloemraad will do next.