

**Carol M. Swain (ed.), *Debating Immigration*,
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Carol Swain's *Debating Immigration* is very much a product of its time. At present, the United States is experiencing one of the most sustained periods of mass immigration, with the number of legal and unauthorised immigrants admitted each year now reaching unprecedented levels. It is no surprise, then, that Swain begins her introduction to this volume by criticising the ineffectiveness of policies set by the Executive or Congress at controlling immigration to the US. Indeed, Swain argues that many of the recent reform efforts have had negative (and unexpected) consequences, transforming what was once a regionally restricted problem to extend throughout the US and cause significant social and economic upheavals. While many scholars and commentators have typically focused on the estimated 11 million illegal immigrants currently in the US, Swain believes that the issue is much bigger than illegal immigration. For Swain, 'the major issue is immigration, period' (p. 11). Swain has therefore presented a volume of 18 original essays written by some of the leading researchers in the field that attempt to explore the complexities and nuances of contemporary issues in immigration in the US and Europe. The contributors represent a variety of political perspectives and collectively they have addressed a number of immigration issues pertinent to contemporary debates, ranging from the economic impact of immigration on native-born workers, to the moral and ethical dilemmas of immigration. Although the quality of the essays does vary, this volume does add some fresh insights into old debates as well as shedding some light on the more obscure topics.

It is evident from the text that Swain and a number of her contributors are dissatisfied with the current state of immigration in the US and advocate new restrictions on admissions. In the introduction, Swain expresses concern that some of the newest settlers are unskilled and lack education in an era when

federal resources for combating poverty are declining. In his discussion on a Biblical perspective on immigration, James Edwards argues that, according to the Bible, we have special obligations to the family, community and nation. As such, Americans have a greater and more immediate obligation to the welfare of fellow Americans than to strangers outside the national community. Likewise, Stephen Macedo argues that: 'citizens have special obligations to one another' and contends that if high levels of immigration have a deleterious effect on America's most disadvantaged citizens that is a sufficient reason to restrict immigration (p. 64). In the section on economics and demographics, Steven Camarota dismissed the claim that immigrants only take jobs that natives do not want and presented evidence that supported the contention that immigration has adversely affected American workers. He concluded that if the US were to enforce their immigration laws and reduce unauthorised immigration, this would improve the job prospects of Americans (pp.155-6).

One of the strengths of this volume is that it does provide a couple of fresh insights and new perspectives into a well-established field of research. Noah Pickus and Peter Skerry argue for a re-conceptualisation of immigration. They believe that in order to consider policy alternatives, we need to move beyond the rigid legal immigration/illegal immigration dichotomy. Rather than focussing on the legal status of immigrants, they argue, it would be better to consider whether immigrants are behaving like responsible, law-abiding members of the political community (p. 111). In his essay, 'Borderline Madness', Douglas Massey highlights the 'escalating politics of contradiction' (p. 129). He notes that since the passage of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 the US Government has simultaneously moved toward an integration and consolidation of markets within the Western Hemisphere for capital, goods, commodities, services and information, and yet it insisted on keeping labour markets separate. Massey describes current immigration policy as 'dysfunctional', explaining that the increased emphasis on border enforcement along the urban corridors of the US-Mexico border has resulted in a push-down, pop-up effect: the Border Patrol

has not reduced unauthorised immigration, but simply channelled immigrants from the urban areas to the sparsely populated (and, hence, less patrolled) regions of the border where they are less likely to be caught (pp. 134-137).

The inclusion of two chapters on the debates on immigration in Europe should also be of use to American immigration scholars. In the introduction, Swain tenuously justifies the comparison on the basis of similar experiences: on both sides of the Atlantic, wealthy nations share borders with poorer ones, battle with illegal immigration and 'unassimilated foreigners who reject the culture and values of the host nation' (p. 4). However, the real benefit of the comparison lies in the differences between the two regions. As Randall Hansen points out, most Western European countries do not derive their national identities from immigration. Thus, the difference between the stories of immigration in the US and Europe is conceptual. Hansen states that while most European countries in the past discouraged immigration, this has changed since the 1990s. Hansen explains that with a shortage of skilled labour and a declining, and aging, population, for European governments, immigration is no longer a problem but is now part of the solution. In the second essay on Europe, Marc Morjé Howard maintains that the ideological orientation of the government only partly explains the liberalisation of citizenship laws. Howard argues that another factor is the extent to which right-of-centre governments are mobilised on the issue of immigration and citizenship reform, which would then preclude the liberalisation of citizenship laws. Howard notes that the non-democratic, elite-driven process has generally led to liberal immigration policies, whereas popular movements have led to more restrictionist laws. He concludes that one of the problems facing policy makers in Europe (and in the US) is to overcome this 'democratic deficit' in shaping immigration policy without succumbing to the traps of populism (p. 253).

One of the flaws with this volume is the insufficient analysis in some essays. Peter Schuck claims that most of the mass media are 'pro-immigration' (p. 29) and cites only one example to verify his position: an editorial from the *Wall Street Journal*. Schuck, however, fails to reflect on the fact that this newspaper

staunchly promotes the free market and views immigrants as economic units to be imported in the national interest and displays little regard for the exploitation and oppression that many immigrants suffer. Arguably, the *Journal's* perspective is more in line with a pro-business, rather than pro-immigrant, position. Moreover, Schuck, along with Hansen, use public opinion data at face value to support their contentions. Both Schuck and Hansen do not analyse the wording of the survey questions, the ordering of the questions, or the variations in the range of responses offered, all of which can influence the results of surveys. Murray Goot, Australia's leading expert on the uses of public opinion, has argued that public opinion is created by the very act of attempting to measure it. Schuck and Hansen should have considered the methodological problems associated with public opinion. Finally, Macedo posits that immigrants have a higher usage rate of welfare services than the native-born, without including any evidence or an endnote. This argument is debateable, and indeed, the counterargument that immigrants have a lower utilisation rate of welfare has been demonstrated persuasively by economists such as Thomas Espenshade.

The contribution of Carol Swain's *Debating Immigration* is that it has effectively brought together leading scholars from different disciplines and varied political positions to address one of the most complicated and pressing issues in US politics at present. The volume demonstrates the complex nature of the politics of immigration and the far-reaching consequences of current policy on American society and its economy. There are a couple of original insights, however, this collection of essays can be seen as an addition to the established conversation on immigration in America.

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