IMMIGRATION
Crossing Borders and Crosses to Bear

Lawrence D. Bobo
Department of Sociology, Stanford University

Michael C. Dawson
Department of Political Science, University of Chicago

There is a deep irony about the current political moment. Though having an immigrant background is arguably a core feature of how most Americans understand themselves, the topic of immigration has in recent years risen to a fever pitch of political controversy and polarized views. Of course, the immigrant streams to the United States today differ substantially from those that characterized the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Instead of bringing in millions of South, Central, and Eastern Europeans looking for better opportunities than were available in their homelands, the current immigrant wave has drawn most heavily from those with Latin American and Asian origins. Concomitant to these changes in economic, cultural, and political context as well as in who constitute the new immigrants, are a series of deep questions about civic belonging, the social consequences of immigration, and what appropriate policy responses to recent immigration should be.

To be sure, the United States is not alone in facing challenges posed by large-scale population movements. Debates rage among European Union nations over the numbers, effects, rights, and entitlement of immigrants to many of these nations as well. Indeed, the much publicized "riots" in the suburbs of France underscored the challenge of the treatment and prospects for assimilation of recent immigrant groups in the European context.

The larger questions here are many, complex, and fundamentally global. However, mainstream media discourse on immigrants and immigration focuses overwhelmingly on whether or not major new federal legislation will be passed here in the United States. Will we build a "great wall of America"? Are employers finally to face serious sanctions for hiring undocumented workers? Will we literally deport millions of undocumented people now living, working, and making homes for themselves and their families in this country? These political and policy-related questions are important. But even this set of issues falls far short of capturing the full dimensions and import of the current challenge of immigration, whether here or around the globe.

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Scholars across the social sciences are examining anew processes of immigration and transnational population flows. In this issue of the *Du Bois Review*, we aim to make a first cut beneath the surface layers of political controversy about immigration. Suitably, the empirical research, analyses, and essays in this issue span the fields of economics, political science, sociology, anthropology, and educational research.

Two core questions in the renewed examination of immigration concern the economic effects of immigrant streams and the related matter of whether controversy about immigration reflects legitimate practical concerns or mere out-group prejudice. Regarding the former, economist and noted African Americanist scholar Gerald Jaynes puts immigration in global perspective. He helps bring into sharp relief the types of policy choices and consequences facing Western industrial democracies as they draw upon low-wage migrant flows from other nations. Jaynes suggests that, if we are to avoid solidifying a new global ethnoracial class structure, strong policies to protect the rights and living standards of low-wage workers must be made a priority. Indeed, some analysts have recently suggested that immigration, especially undocumented immigration to the United States, has paved a way for the creation of an enormous new underclass defined by the conjunction of low skill levels, Mexican origin, and an almost complete lack of the protections accorded citizens (Massey 2007).

Although he approaches immigration from the vantage point of civil rights and antidiscrimination law, sociologist John Skrentny confronts some of the same dilemmas identified by Jaynes. Immigration is changing the work force, to be sure, but it is not doing so in a manner that results in a "color-blind" labor market or polity. Indeed, Skrentny suggests that the Jim Crow–era logic that guided the adoption of most civil rights and antidiscrimination policy has now proven itself poorly adapted to preventing the creation of a whole new regime of racialized labor.

Advancing similar themes, sociologist Milton Vickerman tackles directly the question of whether immigration in the United States is resulting in such a degree of demographic complexity as to finally shatter the longstanding Black-White divide in America. While carefully sketching out the enormous complexity of the new demographic terrain, Vickerman concludes that the Black-White divide is remarkably obdurate and in no sense fundamentally unsettled by massive waves of immigration.

The enduring significance of this divide is, in a fashion, a recurrent theme of several of the more expressly sociopolitical analyses published in this issue. Camille Z. Charles assesses how Latino/a and Asian immigrants think about the prospect of living in integrated communities. She shows the importance of the length of time in the United States and the degree of English-language fluency in structuring preferences for more (or less) integrated living circumstances. But, critically, Charles also shows the importance of negative racial stereotypes and of an ethnoracial hierarchy where immigrants often struggle to distance themselves from a bottom position seemingly allotted to African Americans. This phenomenon has recently been the subject of careful ethnographic work by William Julius Wilson and colleagues as well (Wilson and Taub, 2006).

Political scientist Karen Kaufmann raises the intriguing question of whether we should expect to find strong Black and Latino electoral coalitions. The alliance is presumed to be a "natural" one in many discussions. Not so, finds Kaufmann, who carefully identifies the competing motives and contexts that greatly complicate the prospects for any such alliance. Given the results of Charles and of Kaufmann, it is little surprise that the North Carolina Blacks studied by McClain and colleagues perceive immigrants as weakening their economic opportunities, and draw upon group stereotypes in forming these views.

Social psychologist Thomas Pettigrew and colleagues more directly address the role of racial prejudice in the politics of immigration. In this case, however, the focus

is on data from Germany, which the authors carefully compare to public-opinion poll results in the United States and other countries. They find that individual circumstances and considerations are less important to anti-immigrant hostility than are a standard set of social psychological measures. In particular, they stress that a sense of fraternal or group deprivation plays the most consistent and prominent role in structuring anti-immigrant hostility across many national settings. This result has powerful echoes in the work published here of Charles, Kaufmann, and McClain and colleagues. Of course, the social and political importance of a "sense of group position"—perceived entitlement to certain rights, statuses, and privileges—is a motive of longstanding significance in sociological studies of prejudice (Blumer 1958, Bobo and Tuan, 2006).

The media have a role to play in shaping the informational and cultural context in which the immigration issue plays out. Linguistic anthropologist and Chicano scholar Otto Santa Ana and his collaborators assess images of immigrants during the recent legislative policy debates and related protest marches. They find that a dominant metaphor depicts immigrants as a growing criminal presence. One especially troubling irony of such a depiction is brought home in political scientist Cara Wong's nuanced assessment of the ethics of reliance upon "green card troops" to staff the military in exchange for the prospect of an expedited granting of citizenship. Claire Kim extends the immigration debate beyond its orthodox bounds, examining practices sometimes claimed by immigrants to be protected on cultural grounds, and arguing that moral standards apply across the board, but also represent an opportunity for increased dialogue between immigrants and nonimmigrants.

Implicit in much discourse about immigration is the classic sociological issue of whether immigrant populations are effectively "assimilating." Sociologists Min Zhou and Jennifer Lee take stock of the literature on how the children of immigrants are doing, both in terms of social mobility and the identities they embrace. The authors find no simple or uniform path and caution against reliance upon outdated assumptions of "straight line assimilation." Likewise, distinguished education scholars Marcelo Suárez-Orozco and Carola Suárez-Orozco focus in on how immigrant children fare in educational institutions. They identify a set of factors, including poverty status, segregation, and peer-group relations, that heavily structure likely patterns of achievement for the children of immigrants.

It has been remarked that we have entered a global, transnational age. Even if this is true, the work published here makes it clear that in the United States, and most other developed nations, race, class, and national origin still intertwine to define who enjoys the benefits of the good life and who bears its burdens.

Corresponding author: Professor Lawrence D. Bobo, Department of Sociology, Main Quad, Bldg. 120, Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305. E-mail: lbobo@stanford.edu

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