BOOK REVIEW.

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Welborne, B.C., Westfall, A.L., Russell, O.C. and Tobin, S.A. 2018. *The Politics of the Headscarf in the United States*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. 216 pages.

With an increasingly mobile global population and intensifying nationalistic debates, the issues of identity and belonging and how to secure them through cultural, social, and political practices have become increasingly important in anthropology and to a broad spectrum of scholarly disciplines. But what does "belonging" mean within the context of political anthropology? Welborne et al. argue in *The Politics of the Headscarf in the United States* that belonging means security, acceptance and social harmony for most, yet, for some, belonging also means precariously navigating through the field hazards of race, class, ethnicity, and gender. Over the last thirty to forty years, as refugees and immigrants increasingly flow into neo-liberal "developed" nations, integration became a synonym to the concept of belonging. Based on extensive quantitative assessments, combining the results of nearly two thousand online survey responses from Muslim-American women across forty-nine states, the authors explore two very distinct perspectives on belonging from the viewpoint of Muslim refugees and immigrants: citizenship by embracing a chosen community's values, or the chosen community embracing and adapting to its newest citizens.

The Politics of the Headscarf in the United States by Welborne et al. shines light on the political and cultural challenges of the experience of integration and what citizenship means, as well as the critical role of identity-making in the political process of belonging somewhere new. The authors address the social and political effects of Muslim-American women wearing the headscarf (hijab) in a non-Muslim state which reinforces their identity in ways that ostensibly reflect

American cultural ideals: independence, spiritual commitment, and engaged citizenship. The act of head-covering is a religious, social and political act, and a reason for Muslim women to engage in identity-making in an American diaspora that believes in religious freedom and the protection of both individual and collective identities. The authors report that Muslim-American women wear a headscarf as a symbol of their belonging to the American community and as a demonstration of their inherent rights to choose and to act. The wearing of the headscarf creates an active physical boundary between hijab-wearers and non-hijab wearers, creating a reciprocal process of "othering" between Muslim and non-Muslim American women. Women challenging the boundaries of behaviour within a religious community is part of a larger movement against Eurocentrism, and becomes mired within current social, cultural, and political debates in the Western world.

The authors also state that the increased public, social and political engagement by Muslim American women works to counter the negative bias that exists against them in the US. Wearing a headscarf is one obvious example of their public and social engagement, and their efforts in participating in American life are rewarded with small gains in representation in existing political institutions. The women's interpretation of Islamic scripture and ethics includes expectations that they participate politically as an extension of their devotion to their faith; they understand that political participation as a civic and religious duty. Welborne et al. explore the reasons behind formal political activity such as party affiliation, and how the women's understanding of Islam supports their choices. According to the study's participants, political activity such as advocacy and joining political groups and parties are demonstrative of American citizenship, where responsible citizens should exercise civil responsibilities such as voting and advocacy. In return, Muslim-American women expect from the state "respect for civil liberties (inalienable freedoms protected in the Bill of Rights), recognition of individual freedoms (these arise from the primacy of the individual), and the application of civil rights (the right to participate in civil and political life free from discrimination and repression)" (Welborne et al. 2018: 168). Regardless of the strides, the study participants felt they are not reasonably represented and consequently do not belong to the political

system or in the larger frame of society. Participants increasingly look to American mosques as an exemplification of the diversity and acceptance that Muslim American women can find within the larger American population, and mosques provide opportunities for outreach activities and civic engagement.

CONTRIBUTION TO CURRENT LITERATURE

Benei (2008) states that political anthropologists have long explored the ideas of national belonging, citizenship, and membership through the deconstruction of actions and analyzing the behaviour that informs the narratives around "nationality". Welborne et al.'s tome builds upon this field of study. Rosaldo (1994) argues that diversity is a threat to sovereignty, and empire-building cannot occur without a homogeneous and well-behaved citizen mass that demonstrates uniqueness or individuality. Both Appadurai and Holston (1999) point out that in neoliberal states, this type of dialectical relationship between state and individual is as strained as chasms between the rich and the poor, the powerful and the have-nots, and have been increasing in the latter part of the 20th Century. They also argue that increasing diversity due to mass-migration into Western democracies compels the state to accentuate among its citizens the importance of conforming or embracing proposed ideals of identity and notions of culture. By the turn of the millennium, Arjun Appadurai (2002) builds upon that point and argues that nation states largely expect their citizens to take on some of their espoused social values as a condition of citizenship; they also expect citizens to communicate in a shared language and carry out certain duties such as military service or payment of taxes and duties. The state expects behaviours from potential citizens to contribute to the overall interest of the state. In turn, the state grants the well-behaved citizen with secure membership in the form of citizenship, granting the players, at the very least, equitable status.

Scholars such as Kymlicka (2011) contend that the notions of diversity and the policies of multiculturalism can eat away at shared concepts of nationhood and precipitate political divergence among its citizens;

states limit certain rights among minority groups due to that fear of divergence, including the use of minority languages and expressions of religious identity. Interestingly, this tome provides data that supports the image of a new political landscape where Muslim American women demonstrate their belonging results from the act of covering one's head as a symbol of their commitment to cultural *and* political citizenship.

CRITIQUE

Although Welborne et al. address the concept of cultural citizenship in this book, the authors make it evident that the Muslim-American women's cultural practices are also political as they carve out a political space. A sense of belonging and identity for many Muslim Americans is intimately intertwined in the expression of their faith in the current hostile American political climate. Many Muslim-American women wish to retain their identity while forging a new space. It, however, struggles with its own issues of identity; during the reading, one wonders whether it ought to be considered an ethnography or a research volume. Upon further reflection, there is nothing that prevents it from being both. The participants' prioritization of politics over religion in a Western Judeo-Christian environment and what it might mean in their respective cultural communities could have been more effectively teased out with some additional background on cultural agency and religious ideology. This gap led me to question how continually morphing one's identity can assure one of political space in the ever-increasingly heterogenous cultural makeup in the United States of America; the authors did not address this question. Regardless of those minor criticisms, it would serve as an excellent read for both political and cultural anthropologists, as well as political science scholars in the fields of citizenship and public and pragmatic activism. This very accessible book is a worthwhile addition to the reading list of any course or any scholar exploring US cultural and political dynamics.

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