

## Book Reviews

*A Midwestern Mosaic: Immigration and Political Socialization in Rural America*, by J. Celeste Lay, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2012. 224 pp. \$29.95 (paper). ISBN: 978-1-4399-0793-1.

*Reviewed by*  
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The influence of a growing midwestern immigrant population is reshaping the social, political, and demographic landscape of the American heartland. While major urban areas have long been the dominant destinations for immigrants, contemporary Latin American and Southeast Asian immigrant waves are now flowing away from urban cities in the Northeast and Southwest and into new destinations in the rural Midwest. The availability of employment in construction, agriculture, and various other low-skilled labor positions serve as pull factors for immigrants seeking secure employment and a safe life for their families. It is here within this context of rapid ethnic diversification in the Midwest where J. Celeste Lay advances our knowledge of immigrant reception in the Midwest and incorporation into the region's civic and political life.

In her timely book, *A Midwestern Mosaic: Immigration and Political Socialization in Rural America*, Lay examines the effects of rapid ethnic diversification on the political socialization of young adolescent natives at the local level. Specifically, Lay seeks to find the degree to which political attitudes and inclinations are influenced by the rapid development of multiethnic communities in rural America. She finds that native adolescents adapt very quickly to a multiethnic community and that over a short time tolerance, political knowledge, efficacy, and school participation all increase measureably. This study has broad implications for both the current and future state of political ideologies relating to the ever-looming immigration debate as we learn how coming of age in a time of ethnic diversity shapes political and social behaviors that inform macrolevel immigration policies.

Lacking the ability to pretest the rural towns experiencing rapid ethnic change, Lay implements a natural experiment survey research design. In a logical and methodologically convincing move, she selected five rural Iowa towns as cases to represent rural midwestern towns experiencing rapid ethnic change in demographics. Lay justifies the decision

to use a natural experiment research design and her selected cases as she outlines the geographic, historical, social, and political similarities that existed prior to the arrival of immigrants in the communities in the 1990s. In chapter 1, Lay provides a thorough discussion of the historical and current trends in immigration destinations and the resulting impact on economic, political, and social life of immigrants and natives. In addition to providing a broad discussion of immigrant destinations, Lay focuses on Perry and Storm Lake, two rural towns in Iowa that have experienced substantial demographic change and where the manifestation of significant backlash against immigrants from natives would be expected.

Chapter 2 outlines the logic and reasoning for the selected mixed-methods approach of quantitative survey analysis and qualitative interviews and observations. Chapter 3 examines the effect of ethnic diversity on attitudes toward immigration and immigrants. According to Lay, attitudes toward immigrants are not directly driven by a perceived economic threat among natives. Rather, positive feelings toward Hispanics and a symbolic political disposition toward African Americans intersect to form a delicate recipe for tolerance. Chapter 4 focuses on the impact of rapid ethnic diversification on civic engagement of adolescents. According to Lay, political knowledge and engagement with the political system do not correlate negatively with ethnic diversity. In the case of the rural towns included in this study, political knowledge and participation in civil society from native and immigrant adolescents increase over time with the normalization of diversity.

One can easily see the great potential of this phenomenon as members of both communities encourage the development and emergence of new leaders. Whereas conclusions drawn in chapters 3 and 4 are based on a 2001 survey, chapter 5 incorporates qualitative data from interviews and focus groups conducted in Storm Lake and Perry. These two rural Iowa towns experienced a clear difference in support afforded to migrants. Lay traces the support immigrants received in Storm Lake back to a small wave of Asian refugees settling in the town in the 1970s and laying the groundwork for the rapid change that was to come 20 years later; Perry, which received no such small wave, was markedly less supportive of immigrants. According to Lay, the presence of a small immigrant population served to cultivate a more open attitude toward multiethnic civil society. The final chapter discusses the implications of the findings for immigration policy. While immigration to major urban areas or along the U.S.-Mexico borderlands receives the majority of attention in national discussions of this issue, Lay makes a clear and convincing case for the need to understand the impact of macrolevel

economic and political policies on rapidly changing rural social life and relationships.

This book is a valuable addition to the literature on immigration, integration, and political socialization. J. Celeste Lay provides the reader with a detailed analysis of the political socialization process as it develops within rural communities in the American heartland. We learn that the Midwest is not a bastion of xenophobia as it is commonly assumed to be, but rather a sphere of social life experiencing rapid change and producing progressive and potentially large-scale contributions to the U.S. political system. The book is written in an engaging and easily accessible tone, making it applicable for rural sociology, sociology, political science, geography, and public policy courses at both the undergraduate and graduate level. Anyone interested in the rapid demographic changes occurring in the rural Midwest and the emerging relationships being produced will most definitely find an engaging read in this highly thought-provoking book.

*Small Works: Poverty and Economic Development in Southwestern China*, by John A. Donaldson, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011. 240 pp. \$45.00 (cloth). ISBN13: 978-0-8014-4968-0.

*Reviewed by*  
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In the global fight against poverty, one finds a wealth of literature on the causes of poverty, its disempowering effects on the world's poor and on developing economies, and its uneven persistence across geographic space. It is less common to find deep, measured analyses of different antipoverty strategies that, in a single work, demonstrate empirically supported contrasts in outcomes while accounting for the richness of a region's cultural heritage. In *Small Works: Poverty and Economic Development in Southwestern China*, John A. Donaldson offers a painstakingly researched comparison of two highly divergent antipoverty strategies in two southwestern Chinese provinces: Yunnan and Guizhou. Donaldson succeeds at giving the reader a "soup-to-nuts" experience, examining everything from macroeconomic trends across China to local attitudes and cultural norms, all in the context of finding better strategies in situ for reducing poverty and improving rural livelihoods.

In *Small Works*, Donaldson seeks to explain the strange paradox of Yunnan and Guizhou, two rural Chinese provinces that have historically

experienced widespread poverty and lacked the fast-paced economic and population growth of China's East Coast. To fight poverty over the past few decades, Yunnan pursued a centrally planned approach, focusing on the construction and modernization of infrastructure, investment in the province's major cities and wealthier areas, attracting skilled workers, and creating scale efficiency through growth. Guizhou, by contrast, developed tourist sites in persistently poor rural areas, trained rural workers in these areas, and kept roads and villages small while rural citizens independently pursued multiple, small income streams (farming, hosting tourists, impromptu mining, and so on). The result was that the gross domestic product (GDP) of Yunnan Province grew rapidly in the following decades, but poverty reduction barely occurred. Guizhou, by contrast, had far less impressive GDP growth over the same period but higher net rural income than Yunnan, a smaller income gap between poor and nonpoor counties, and a reduction in the number of poor counties within the province. Donaldson's aim throughout the book is to understand how the divergent antipoverty strategies pursued by these similar, neighboring regions could have produced such different outcomes and what this means for antipoverty policy strategies elsewhere.

After presenting a detailed background of Yunnan and Guizhou in the larger context of China, *Small Works* focuses on four areas of the provincial economy where divergent outcomes from unlike economic strategies can clearly be seen: roads, migration, tourism, and coal mining. The author makes full use of mixed methods to examine trends across these economic foci, traveling across the countryside of southwest China, and digging up difficult-to-access data and previous studies on these remote and understudied areas. Donaldson demonstrates how, for each of these factors, Yunnan's strategy has benefited citizens of nonpoor counties, while Guizhou's strategy has benefited the rural poor. The key to Guizhou's successful antipoverty policy and economic strategy is the investment of the state in creating "opportunities that are sufficiently small in scale to allow poor people to participate" (57). This small-scale approach to development is what Donaldson calls the "micro-oriented state," which contrasts with top-down approaches embracing the assumption that a rising tide lifts all boats, and that the modernization of the countryside will necessarily lead to trickle-down development. While shunning central planning, Donaldson uplifts the agency, adaptability, and self-sufficiency of rural citizens as the key to rural prosperity in a rapidly modernizing nation.

*Small Works* is exceptionally fine-tuned. Donaldson's writing conveys an impressive amount of nuanced data in a reasonably small book. Rather than focusing excessively on the technical aspects of the research,

Donaldson artfully tells the story of Yunnan and Guizhou and takes great care not to overstate the implications of his findings. Every assertion is supported, almost to a fault, as the author makes copious use of footnotes that, while useful, can be a bit distracting. The book is not a light read, but its density may be one of its brightest assets: Even a novice to the field of poverty research will emerge from *Small Works* knowing considerably more about poverty, policy, and, of course, China and the Chinese economy. Even if the writing style edges toward being a bit ponderous, the book retains a brilliant clarity of message throughout its well-organized pages, and the knowledge payoffs are immense thanks to Donaldson's meticulous attention to detail.

The author has not suggested a target audience for his work, but I can think of several groups of individuals who would benefit from reading it. One such group would be graduate students. *Small Works* not only provides a wide background of information on Chinese antipoverty strategies, but the rigor of this book provides an exemplar of what a very good dissertation might look like. Another group would be poverty scholars, who may be seeking new directions in policy research that effectively hybridize state-level policy and local action. Donaldson's empirical findings regarding the effectiveness of the micro-oriented state in alleviating poverty and bolstering self-sufficiency may inspire others to conduct similar research under different cultural circumstances and policy regimes. While the work is denser than the average policy brief, policymakers, nongovernmental organizations, and strategists in the West may use *Small Works* as a springboard to "thinking small." The book's strong use of empirical support and analytical justification for the micro-oriented approach to fighting poverty carries considerable sway in suggesting the power of a "bottom-up" approach that values small-scale adaptability over large-scale efficiency.

*Small Works* is an important achievement in thinking about poverty for two reasons. First, the book introduces the concept of the "micro-oriented state" to the policy literature, and explains how this approach diverges in important ways from the commonly discussed "developmental state." Second, and perhaps more importantly, it offers an intriguing opportunity for reflecting on the role of policy in fighting poverty, and how definitively strategy can shape real outcomes. Does a strategy that raises GDP also raise poverty, or is that a flawed assumption? Do our nation's poor citizens have ample opportunity to participate in the economic opportunities we aim to provide? Are we developing our state, or just certain groups *in* our state? Are we cultivating talent locally within the capabilities of our heritage, or attracting talent from the outside while others remain impoverished? These and other deserving questions

are given careful consideration in *Small Works*, opening the door for an evolving discussion about the viability, applicability, and promise of the micro-oriented state as an effective approach to fighting poverty and empowering rural citizens.

*Rural Transformations and Rural Policies in the US and UK*, edited by Mark Shucksmith, David L. Brown, Sally Shortall, Jo Vergunst, and Mildred E. Warner, New York: Routledge, 2012. 403 pp. \$133.00 (cloth). ISBN:0-415-89010-6.

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The essays contained within this substantial book come at a time when rural places in both the United States and the United Kingdom face shifting local demographics, changing community identities, and increasing environmental change, yet at the same time, they are being transformed through global processes of political economic crisis and neoliberalism. This tension between local, national, and global scales is keenly felt throughout the chapters, leading readers to questions concerning the agency of rural people in an era of global neoliberalism. Taken as a whole, these essays make a significant contribution to our understanding of not only rural society and policy but of the future role of rural sociology as a discipline. Collectively, they call for new, creative links between policy and research in order to imagine viable futures for rural and urban communities alike.

The book facilitates an important conversation by bringing over 30 academics from North America and Europe together to examine rural change and policies in both the United States and United Kingdom through an explicitly comparative method. Although this method is often fraught with difficulty because of regional differences within the United States and United Kingdom, after reading the book, I came to agree with the authors' comparative approach and found the essays important because they establish a common understanding of the vocabulary and the issues in both countries and thus a dialogue on them. From this foundation, a strong and useful transnational comparative analysis of rural policies and societies emerges.

Both the book overall and the individual chapters are balanced in their attention to U.S. and U.K. rural policy and change. The 16 chapters are arranged into three parts: after an introductory segment, the second

part contains chapters addressing “socio-economic change,” and the third addresses “governance.” In setting out the aims of the book, the introductory chapter provides a helpful justification for using a comparative analysis and situating rural change in a social and political context. The second chapter provides a short history and critique of rural sociological study, which is particularly helpful to those who may be less familiar with the field. The chapter questions “the role of comparative analysis in establishing transcendent truths” (18)—an important starting point for any critically reflexive social inquiry. By situating the volume in the wider context of the academy and social science as a whole, this chapter provides a helpful foundation for the studies that follow.

In the second part we meet several perspectives on “social, demographic and economic transformations” (11). One example of these transformations includes migration into and out of rural areas and the changes in population age and ethnic makeup that are the result of shifting economic opportunities and immigration policies. In exploring these demographic transformations, the authors take the opportunity to examine the ways in which poverty can be conceived of more broadly in terms of social exclusion in addition to structural inequality. Further chapters explore the changing economy in rural areas, where a shift from agriculture and resource extraction has led to new challenges and opportunities as rural areas seek to resituate themselves within the global economy, adopting social and economic entrepreneurship and local development initiatives as ways to help build strong communities.

The collection of chapters in the third part moves to look at rural policies and governance responses to the changes described in the previous part. Here, differences in the historic, political, and social bases of policy in the United States and United Kingdom become more apparent, yet at the same time, the general direction of current policy shifts become more similar, as a neoliberal, market-driven framework for development focusing on decentralization, privatization, competitiveness, and state and private partnerships becomes dominant in both the United States and the United Kingdom. While this similarity is not always highlighted as being a key shift in political and economic ideology and policy, the tension, nonetheless, runs through the chapters, which focus on singular topics of rural, agricultural, environmental, regional, and local policy and governance.

The final chapter, “Constructing the Rural-Urban Interface” is particularly important, drawing attention to the rural-urban nexus where the mobilities engendered through contemporary global restructuring and place-based, endogenous forces come together. This conceptual move returns agency to rural people and places, while at the same time

it does not deny global structures. This move offers rural people possible futures that exist beyond modernist development and neoliberal paradigms by locating the generation of power within the “increased volume of rural-urban transactions” (291) that comes from increased mobility.

This book provides a timely intervention into debates within rural sociology, comparative politics, and rural transformation and policy more broadly. The chapters stand on their own and would provide useful material for both undergraduate and graduate students seeking overviews of U.S. and U.K. rural issues, yet at the same time, the book as a whole offers an exceptional reference source for researchers working on rural issues. The themes of and tensions between scales, social and political transformations, and questions of governance provide a relevant backdrop to a discussion on the future of rural sociological study and the future of rural communities.

*Seeds, Science, and Struggle: The Global Politics of Transgenic Crops*, by Abby Kinchy, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012. 240 pp. \$22 (paper). ISBN: 0-262-51774-4.

*Reviewed by*  
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In the introduction to the second edition of his classic work on the political economy of seeds, *First the Seed*, Jack Kloppenburg ([1988] 2004) writes that “however far-reaching the social impacts of the new biotechnologies ultimately may be, it is a premise of this book that they will be shaped in important ways by existing social relations” (4). Kloppenburg offers a critical analysis of the history of agriculture, industry, and science in the United States, and creates a framework for analyzing the emerging struggle over the modern agricultural system in general, and the role of seeds and genetic diversity in this struggle. Sociologist Abby Kinchy adopts a similar view of the importance of existing social relations in two recent cases of controversy over the use and spread of genetically engineered (GE) seeds—maize in Mexico and canola in Canada. She focuses in particular on the role of science in both public discourse and regulatory bodies, from courtrooms to government agencies, arguing that the scientization of the debate over GE seeds is “ostensibly separated from its social context” but is in fact inextricably linked to both past and present social and institutional understandings of risk, contamination, and liability (2). By presenting two deeply researched



and well-chronicled case studies of recent controversies surrounding the direct and indirect effects of GE seeds in agricultural and social systems, Kinchy provides a rich look at two distinct ways in which science and scientific rhetoric of risk can be used to challenge or reinforce the status quo.

The cases of GE maize in Mexico and GE canola in Canada have much in common in the use of scientific expertise in substantiating claims of safety and risk, and Kinchy details extensively the ways in which scientific notions of risk are adopted or challenged by social movements and public discourse in order to question the potential effects of biotechnology. In the Mexican case, activists and local farmers collaborated with and leveraged conflicting academic and institutional scientific reports of gene spread from new, GE varieties to native varieties of maize. Kinchy has interviewed and observed dozens of activists at various levels of the anti-GE movement in Mexico and provides a dynamic picture of the changing role of scientific discourse in the fight against GE maize. She builds on the description of the ways in which externalization of demands, from domestic civil society to transnational advocacy and expert groups, can influence policy change, arguing that in the case of the movement against GE maize in Mexico, the scientization of the debate led to an “epistemic boomerang” effect (51). Kinchy’s lively description of the 2004 meeting of the Commission for Environmental Protection (part of an “environmental side agreement to NAFTA” [63]), wherein scientists and policymakers planned to present their initial findings of the environmental and social risks and impact of GE maize seeds, highlights the beginning of an epistemic shift for some scientific experts. Overwhelmed by the number and intensity of local activists and farmers protesting the scientific premise of the meeting, one scientist interviewed by Kinchy recalls the moment he realized that rather than presenting data, the goal of the meeting was shifting to “serve a different function and we’ll just listen” (66). Once national and international scientists began to take seriously the observations and concerns of farmers and local advocacy groups, the epistemic boomerang effect pushed many scientists to recognize the negative cultural and social implications of GE seeds, leading them to use the influence associated with their expert positions and research to take political and ethical sides in the biotechnology debate.

In contrast to the controversy over GE maize in Mexico, which over time incorporated extrascientific assessments of social and cultural risk into the debate over GE seeds’ impact, Kinchy presents the case of GE canola in Canada as the contestation of “genes out of place,” which raises questions of liability and legality in the spread of a new technology.

Here, Kinchy offers a critique of the scientization of economic and social effects, and presents the Canadian case study as a prime example of the relative effectiveness of litigation and market leverage, with their narrow focus on the objective application of patent law and free market principles. She again presents, through analysis of primary interviews as well as of media articles and court documents, a nuanced picture of the anti-GE canola movement in Canada, where farmers and activists tried a variety of social organizing techniques to challenge the unregulated sale of GE canola seeds, failing to gain legitimacy for their concerns in virtually all arenas. The most promising developments in this case occurred when organic farmers, bringing a class-action lawsuit against Monsanto Canada and Bayer Crop Science, won recognition from a provincial judge that the undesired transmission of novel genes from GE fields to organic or non-GE crops could be challenged using environmental laws that regulate contamination. Kinchy argues, however, that the rejection of the class-action lawsuit, on the grounds that farmers do not constitute a uniquely affected class, and the implications of focusing on individual economic losses associated with contamination means that scientific understandings of risk and direct impact continue to undermine calls for social and ecological considerations in agricultural policies.

Kinchy's case studies of the role of science and scientific conceptualizations of risk and impact in controversies over GE maize in Mexico and GE canola in Canada provide excellent contextualized, primary research examples of current responses and challenges to the social and environmental effects of scientific innovations in agriculture. The writing style is rich and engaging, and there is ample use of direct quotations from individuals and a range of types of documents, all of which creates a dynamic description of each case. This book would be an excellent text for use in a graduate-level course, as it includes extensive detail and draws connections across a range of environmental, political, and social issues in contemporary biotechnology debates. The case studies could easily be read and analyzed from a variety of theoretical standpoints to further conceptualize current struggles over the future of farming and agrifood systems.

### Reference

- Kloppenborg, Jack. ([1988] 2004). *First the Seed: The Political Economy of Plant Biotechnology*. 2nd ed. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.