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Rogers Brubaker. *Grounds for Difference*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015. 240 pp. \$39.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-674-74396-0.

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Commissioned by Sean H. Wang

Rogers Brubaker is one of the leading scholars of citizenship, ethnicity, and nationalism, and *Grounds for Difference* is his latest contribution to the aforementioned fields. Renowned for his social constructivist approach, Brubaker focused on the everyday aspects of ethnicity and nationalism in his two last books and critiqued the use of ethnicity and the nation as fixed analytical concepts. In *Grounds for Difference*, however, Brubaker makes a twofold twist, from the micro- to the macrolevel of analysis and from the critique of concepts to a theoretical and empirical analysis of relationships among various markers of difference.

The first chapter analyzes the relationship between categorical differences of citizenship, gender, ethnicity, and the (re)production of inequality. Among those, citizenship is considered as the strongest source of categorical inequality in the modern world, with the most straightforward and yet undertheorized contribution to inequality's (re)production. This argument fits well with the vast amount of literature talking about citizenship as a means of "social closure"[1] and the implication that this has on immigrants and their sense of belonging in host societies. After deconstructing Charles Tilly's theory of categorical inequality,[2] instead of emphasizing exploitation and opportunity hoarding like Tilly did, Brubaker suggests three alternative processes through which categorical differences relate to the (re)production of inequality. These are "the allocation of persons (or their exclusion from) reward-bearing positions; the social production of persons unequally disposed and equipped to pursue desirable positions; and the structuring of positions and their rewards" (p. 42). This theoretical conceptualization provides fertile ground for conducting empirical research in the field of the (re)production of inequalities.

The second chapter deals with the return of biology

in the study of race. After biological understandings of race were debunked in the late twentieth century, a resurgence of biological objectivism about race is currently taking place. Brubaker claims that the work of Neil Risch and his collaborators has significantly contributed to the scientific validation of commonsense understandings of race.[3] The resurgence of biology in racial studies is posited to have influenced and transformed "vernacular and organizational understandings and practices" related to race and ethnicity (p. 55). Brubaker calls on social scientists to challenge this neo-objectivist trend by providing genuine arguments from a social constructivist perspective. In other words, Brubaker encourages social scientists to become critically involved with this new relationship between biology and race instead of disregarding or ignoring it all together. This proposition for a complementary rather than contradictory relationship between sociology and biology might provide a new ground for research in regards to the relationship between social and biological constructivism.

The relationship between language and religion as forms of cultural difference is the main issue examined in the third chapter. Both similarities and differences are identified between the two domains and their modes of institutionalization. In the last few years and especially after 9/11 and the consequent rise of Islamophobia, the number of studies examining the relationship between nationalism and religion has increased, contrary to what is happening with research examining language and nationalism. Thus, it would be almost impossible for Brubaker not to highlight the importance of religion as a source of cultural difference in the contemporary world. Brubaker's claim is that religion has overtaken language as the main area of contestation concerning the political accommodation of cultural difference in contemporary societies. His argument for that is that religious plu-

ralism appears to be more intergenerationally persistent compared to the linguistic one, driven by the resurgence of public, organized religion and immigration.

Religion is further examined in the next chapter, although this time in comparison to nationalism. A lot of claims are made concerning the relationship between these two ambiguous terms. Brubaker posits that they are intertwined but not identical and that the most fruitful discussions can arise by asking not what the connection between them is but rather how these two terms can be examined together. Consequently, he proposes four ways of doing so: (1) as “analogous phenomena,” (2) in a causal context, where religion provides either the cause or the explanation of nationalism, (3) as interrelated phenomena, and (4) treating religious nationalism as an exceptional kind of nationalism. These suggestions have great practical use for future studies as theoretical concepts requiring empirical validation.

Chapter 5 deals with the informed content of the term “diaspora” brought by the prolific interest in diaspora and diasporic studies after the beginning of 1980s. The discussion focuses around the claim originally made by Henry Goldschmidt that diaspora has itself become “diasporic,” that is, assigned various meanings.[4] Brubaker notes the danger for diaspora essentialism and suggests talking about “stances, projects, claims, idioms, and practice” (p. 130) in diasporic studies rather than strictly bounded groups, as a preventive measure. In other words, he revisits his argumentation, initiated in *Ethnicity without Groups*, according to which “groupness” should not be imposed where what actually exists is process and fluidity.

The relationship between migration, membership, and the nation-state is discussed in the sixth chapter. Brubaker argues that, although we are obviously living in a globalized era characterized by transnational mobility, the nation-state has increasing importance as a “locus of belonging” (p. 133). In other words, the nation-state is far from irrelevant as a model for political and sociocultural organization. So, postmodernity did not transcend “the national”; instead of “post-nationalism,” Brubaker talks about “transborder nationalism” (p. 143). The rest of the chapter sheds light on the various ways in which the nation-state continues to be implicated in the politics of

belonging, as these are defined both within and between nation-states.

The final chapter critically engages with the “multiple modernities” perspective. After unpacking it, Brubaker goes on to articulate his own argument, according to which modernity is a single historical phenomenon with multiple “configurations, patterns, and programs,” is “dynamically changing,” and is “subject to chronic contestation” (p. 147).

Grounds for difference is yet another of Brubaker’s publications calling for readers to constructively and critically engage with concepts that are usually taken for granted, if not ignored. Although this book is comprised of essays that were written separately, they form a coherent sum, easily comprehensible and united by the underlying principle of Brubaker’s social constructivism, understood as examining the various grounds of difference not as “things in the world, but perspectives on the world.”[5] For all students and researchers with an interest in citizenship, ethnicity, and nationalism this is a book worth reading. Full of fruitful ideas, it could form the perfect stimulus for innovative and much-needed research related to these topics as well as the interrelation between them.

Notes

[1]. Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretative Sociology Vol. 1*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 388.

[2]. Charles Tilly, *Durable Inequality* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

[3]. Neil Risch, Esteban Burchard, Elad Ziv, and Hua Tang, “Categorization of Humans in Biomedical Research: Genes, Race, and Disease,” *Genome Biology* 3, no. 7 (2002): 1-12.

[4]. Henry Goldschmidt, “Jews and Others in Brooklyn and Its Diaspora: Constructing an Unlikely Homeland in a Diasporic World,” Proceedings of the symposium *Diaspora: Movement, Memory, Politics and Identity*, Columbia International Affairs Online Working Papers, 2003, cited in Brubaker, 119.

[5]. Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 17.

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