

Adrian Favell and Michael Peter Smith, eds.

The Human Face of Global Mobility.

Transaction Publishers, 2006, 322 pp.

\$US 29.95 paper (1-4128-0520-1)

Those of us seeking to understand the interplay of globalization, personal mobility, and migration will benefit from this volume, the latest output of the UCLA International Institute Working Group. This edited collection brings together various perspectives on the movement of students, skilled workers, and professionals across borders. These people move for such diverse purposes as educational opportunities, employment challenges, and cultural enrichment. Meanwhile they are welcomed by host countries for a comparably diverse list of reasons including domestic skill shortages, the recruitment done by institutions of higher learning, and the needs of expansive trans-national corporations. All of this is, of course, well known but two things set this volume apart from many studies. First, there is concerted attention to what might be loosely termed high-end migration and migrants. Second, is the time spent within the volume on combining large macro-level discussion with the life experiences of certain groups of migrants in particular settings. The result is an interesting collection of numerical data and personal experiences related to a group of migrants more studied by global business than by social scientists.

The members of the UCLA group are to be commended for trying to flesh out the nature of migration and its particular features among the up-scale assortment of overseas students and mobile professionals. There are intriguing comments from those who have migrated about their perceptions and rationales. As a reader it is fascinating to learn about migrants coming to unlikely places such as Finland and Sweden for education and/or high tech employment; or about the ability of young Europeans to circulate through London and thanks to the European Union move easily across Europe's assorted national boundaries. There is also useful discussion of the educational flows across borders and the reliance by the United States on international recruitment when facing personnel shortages such as in nursing.

There is also some sustained commentary, notably chapter two, on the role played by states and state institutions. Chapter two, "The Competition State and Multilateral Liberalization of Highly Skilled Migration", makes reference to "the relative weakness of multilateralism in states' attempts to regulate migration flows" (p. 29) and contemplates inter-state competition for immigrants. This is a helpful discussion as it supplements the volume's more general focus upon migrant experiences, student flows, and professional career options.

There can be little doubt about either the volume's timeliness or the significance of the research questions. At a time when university expansion and freer global trade are both significant events, the value in learning more about the extent and diversity of cross-border movement among students and professionals is clear. This is especially so when we factor in the escalating movement of students and commerce in fast growing states of China and India.

Those reading this volume will easily see opportunities for asking similar research questions in the Canadian context. This is helpful to bear in mind for despite the title and some of the book's rhetoric the focus is primarily upon migrants from or to the United States and to a lesser extent the European Union. Canada is noted in the index as appearing on only five occasions in the text and there is very limited study of Canadian experiences even in those instances. We are told in the introduction that the skills-based approach to immigration utilized by Canada and Australia is 'a model' (p. 11) but

there is little more said about the operation of such an approach. Instead the mention in the text seems made simply to indicate a counter-point to the experiences in the United States involving fields such as nursing.

One further comment regarding the limited reference to Canada in a volume on global mobility lies with reference to the paper entitled "London as Eurocity: French Free Movers in the Economic Capital of Europe" (pp. 247-74). This chapter is a fascinating look at how youthful migrants from France and elsewhere regard London as an appealing centre where they can find tempting cultural and employment opportunities within a cosmopolitan environment. Within this discussion the author (and co-editor), Adrian Favell, notes estimates of the number of French in London ranging from 40,000 to 200,000 (p. 250). Favell follows this up by throwing into play the possibility that London is "the fourth largest French city after Paris, Lyon, and Marseilles." (p.251). That Canada might have a French city of substantial size seems not to have occurred to the author and his co-editor. In a university-oriented collection on global migration this seems an unfortunate oversight.

Co-editors Smith and Favell deserve praise though for the volume before us. Its limitations regarding Canadian populations and experiences should not obscure the collection's merits. There is much here about educational flows, immigrant experiences, U.S. issues, and the flexible nature of modern boundaries for the upwardly (and geographically) mobile which deserves ongoing comparative attention. Overall, this is a welcome contribution to fact-finding and analysis regarding a growing international set of issues. Learning more about professional and student migration and hearing more of the words and perceptions of those involved is necessary, and reference should be made to the work of the UCLA International Institute Working Group.

Hugh Mellon
King's University College
University of Western Ontario
hmellon@uwo.ca

Dr. Hugh Mellon is an Associate Professor of Political Science. He is keenly interested in questions related to public policy and federalism.

<http://www.cjsonline.ca/reviews/humanface.html>

December 2006

© Canadian Journal of Sociology Online