

Manuscript: “Moral lines of credit: forging race projects, citizenship, and nation on online U.S. spousal reunification forums” by G.M. Longo

The proposed article is clearly organized and rich in original data from online ethnography and content analysis of conversation threads in the “Immigration pathways” website (p. 10). Drawing from almost a thousand online conversation threads “that consist of the term red flag” (p. 11), the author demonstrates how petitioners (U.S. citizens) of their non-citizen partners from Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East/North Africa (MENA) participate in the upholding of U.S. state’s race project as they draw from their “moral lines of credit” as their “bargaining position” and emphasize their “character status assets” (p. 20) for claiming privilege. The strengths of the paper can be found not only in its original empirical data but also in its analytical framework called “moral lines of credit”, which offers a new window through which to view a state’s maintenance and perpetuation of its ideal form of family mainly based on whiteness, race, gender, and social class. Given the high quality of the paper in empirical and theoretical terms, I only have the minor remarks below to help the author finalize her paper for publication.

First, the concept of “moral lines of credit” should be explicitly defined to reinforce its empirical utility for future studies on family reunification issues. Some terms/concepts mentioned in the paper should also be defined for non-specialist readers. For example, D’Aoust’s “technologies of love” on pages 22 and 26 is mentioned but its meaning is not explained, and so are the terms “bezness” (pages 16 and 19) and “intimate citizenship” on page 25. The author can also cite Bonjour and De Hart 2013 when they evoke the latter term.

Second, the literature on family reunification is particularly vast; there are separate but overlapping scholarships on migrant parent-child, migrant children-parent, and spousal reunifications. It will be good for the paper if the author can at least recognize this rich corpus of works and specify in the Introduction the specific scholarly strand on which she is focusing – the spousal reunification literature. In addition, to diversify the studies mobilized in the paper, the author should also draw from other scholarly works focusing on other spousal migration phenomena with socio-legal dimensions: for example, see Cole’s article “Working mis/understandings: The tangled relationship between kinship, Franco-Malagasy binational marriages, and the French state” in the journal *Cultural Anthropology* (2014); Ishii’s “Marriage migration in Asia: Emerging minorities at the frontiers of nation-states” (2016); Fresnoza-Flot and Ricordeau’s “International marriages and marital citizenship: Southeast Asian women on the move” (2017); and Groes and Fernandez’s “Intimate mobilities: sexual economies, marriage and migration in a disparate world” (2018). Sportel’s article “Transnational divorce in Dutch-Moroccan families. The semi-autonomous social field of legal aid” (available at <http://hdl.handle.net/2066/112920>) is another useful reference, particularly as regards “bezness” (pages 16 and 19) mentioned in the paper.

Third, the “Methods” section can still be improved by adding further details. For example, the author stated on page 11 that she has “five to 30 replies from three or more respondents” suggesting that she participated in the online forum; information about this participation should be added. The author should also explain if she examined in her paper the “five to 30 replies” she obtained or if she only drew from the “668 MENA and 319 SSA conversation threads” she analyzed. It would also be good for the paper if the author can explain how long (in weeks or months) she carried out her online ethnography and why/on what grounds she selected the “Immigration Pathways” website among “the largest U.S. immigration self-help

websites” (p. 10). How did she presented herself to participants in the forum, specifically to the “three or more respondents” who responded to her?

Finally, there are other minor issues that need to be addressed. For example, please be consistent in your style of citation: the term “bezness” is written without quotes on page 16 but within quotes on page 19. The proposed concept of the paper is sometimes written in singular (“moral line of credit”) and sometimes in plural (“moral line of credit”). Please be consistent. Please avoid contracting two words like “wouldn't” on page 24. Please also remove unnecessary spaces: for instance, the space before a colon in the title “Moral Line of Credit :” on page 4 as well as the space after an open quote and before a close quote in the term “intimate citizenship “ on page 25. The second period after the phrase “privilege-claiming strategies..” on page 6, the period before the cited reference in the phrase “artifacts. (D'Aoust 2014)” on page 17, and the dash in the phrase “promoted,-undoubtedly skewed” on page 28 should be deleted. Please replace the symbol “&” in the title on page 7 with the word “and”. Finally, please correct “andusing” on page 32 and provide in the References section the following missing cited works in the text: USCIS 2013, Moynihan Report 1965, and Collins 2005.

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