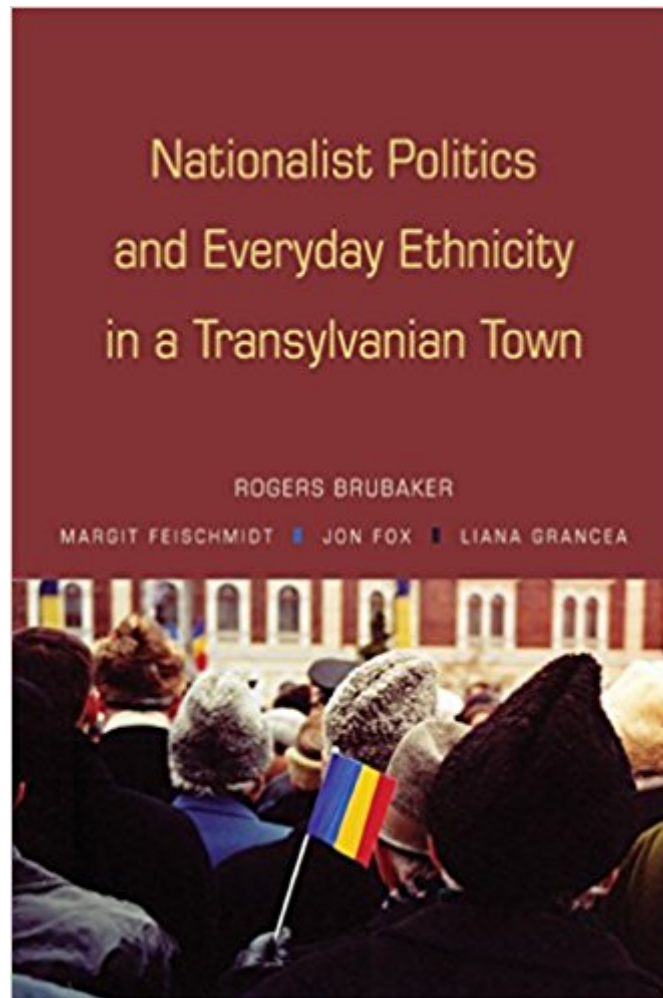




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Nationalist Politics And Everyday Ethnicity In A Transylvanian Town



Synopsis

Situated on the geographic margins of two nations, yet imagined as central to each, Transylvania has long been a site of nationalist struggles. Since the fall of communism, these struggles have been particularly intense in Cluj, Transylvania's cultural and political center. Yet heated nationalist rhetoric has evoked only muted popular response. The citizens of Cluj--the Romanian-speaking majority and the Hungarian-speaking minority--have been largely indifferent to the nationalist claims made in their names. Based on seven years of field research, this book examines not only the sharply polarized fields of nationalist politics--in Cluj, Transylvania, and the wider region--but also the more fluid terrain on which ethnicity and nationhood are experienced, enacted, and understood in everyday life. In doing so the book addresses fundamental questions about ethnicity: where it is, when it matters, and how it works. Bridging conventional divisions of academic labor, Rogers Brubaker and his collaborators employ perspectives seldom found together: historical and ethnographic, institutional and interactional, political and experiential. Further developing the argument of Brubaker's groundbreaking *Ethnicity without Groups*, the book demonstrates that it is ultimately in and through everyday experience--as much as in political contestation or cultural articulation--that ethnicity and nationhood are produced and reproduced as basic categories of social and political life.

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Customer Reviews

This book is nationalism studies at its best. It firstly stands out with its commitment to ensuring that a constructivist approach to ethno-nationalism does not betray itself by still falling back on the idea

of nations and the ethnic groups as assumed actors; the distinction Brubaker maintains between categories and groups being particularly pertinent here. Secondly, in a book about nationalism and ethnicity, Brubaker goes to extraordinary lengths to avoid arbitrarily reading those topics into all of life, which would contribute to the very process that he is seeking instead to observe, describe, and understand. This care is admirable and it pays dividends. With these conceptual commitments, Brubaker and his fellow researchers try and identify how and when ethnicity and nationhood becomes relevant and is utilized in daily life among regular people in the city of Cluj/ Kolozsvár, as well as - more commonly - when it is not relevant or utilized. The point is not that these concepts are unimportant, but that studying the topic in this way gives us a more accurate view than merely universalizing political discourse as the opinion of, for example, "the Hungarians". By looking for how ethnicity and nationhood is both used and produced in normal activity and discourse, rather than overtly asking for it, and thereby producing it, the book increases our understanding of both the limits as well as the enduring strengths of ethno-national ways of thinking. As the author sums up, ethnicity "is a way of understanding and interpreting experience, a way of talking and acting, a way of formulating interests and identities." Lastly, while many academics would drop us into the minutiae without much orientation, Brubaker and co.

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