Introduction

The recent discussion of the concept of citizenship suggests that the traditional senses of citizenship as an instrument for the allocation of resources, rights, and entrée to the political community are undergoing erosion and transformation. Global trends such as growing inequality and labor migration, transforming the features of the political community, are generating new transnational and cosmopolitan forms of citizenship while making citizenship an institutional act grounded in neo-liberal reasoning. As a consequence, a new model of neo-liberal (Joppke 2021) or ordinal (Fourcade 2021) citizenship, typified by exacting measurement of individuals’ productive capability, has come into being. Concurrently, other researchers indicate that the neo-liberal logic that is reshaping the concept of citizenship is not tethered to pre-market values alone; rather, it operates alongside a national logic that demands cultural assimilation and internalization of the receiving community’s values. This model, called Neo-Liberal Communitarian Citizenship, exemplifies the changes that have occurred in the criteria for accommodation of highly capable migrants in Western countries (Schinkel and Van Houdt 2010).

Our study shows how these models of citizenship are valid not only for processes of accommodation and exclusion in developed countries that are coping with labor migration, and are associated not only with changes in functioning and in the state-level institutional structure. We, in contrast, wish to show that citizenship is primarily an ensemble of discourses freighted with meaning that is subject to contexts of time and place. By conducting in-depth interviews with prominent members of the Scientology community in Israel, we show how new religions invoke their corporate characteristics to harness local citizenship discourses and, by so doing, gain accommodation by the political community. In the course of the study, we indicate that citizenship as a discourse is not merely an act of state but also a strategy that minorities may use to integrate into the political community. Our main argument is that the legitimation strategy of the Scientology Center in Israel is successfully putting the Neo-Liberal Communitarian Citizenship model to use by paving two paths of integration. The first emphasizes the capabilities developed by membership in a corporate religion and success in the free market; the second path displays cultural integration and identification with local values, which, in the case at hand, relate to affiliating with Judaism and contributing to the community. Thus, the integration strategy successfully combines Jewish ethno-national logic and free-market logic and, by force of both, the success and the relative acceptance that the Scientology Center in Israel has received are explained.

Through the case study of the Scientology Center in Israel, in which members maneuver within a limited pluralistic space, we show how citizenship discourses serve as a strategy for a religious minority that wishes to create an alternative place of faith and obtain legitimacy in a country where nationalism and citizenship are framed by force of an ethno-national, Jewish-religious logic. In the State of Israel, ethno-national affiliation with Judaism is a *sine qua non* for the bestowal of rights and privileges and the members of the Scientology Center in Israel mobilize their Jewish identity for this very purpose. Namely, by harnessing the Jewish ethno-national citizenship discourse, they wish to carve out a space for action and for the legitimization of religious activity that is not identified with, and may even be perceived as challenging to, the dominant ethno-national identity.

Conclusions

It is found in the study how the crystallization of new forms of citizenship is typical not of the institutions and functioning of the state alone; rather, it serves marginal groups that wish to generate an integration strategy and gain legitimacy. Similarly, marginal groups can make use of their particular characteristics and tailor them to local contexts and discourses that structure the civic logic and, by so doing, design an integration strategy that will give them freedom of action and acceptance in a given society.

Scientology is a corporate religion in the sense that its members insist that it does not contradict other faiths and beliefs given its wish to care for the individual by offering courses and training activities, and due to its theological vision of playing a social role, contributing to the common good, and caring for all of humanity by aiding individuals. Even in the exceptional case of a society that gives one dominant religion a monopoly in defining nation and affiliation, members of the Center for Scientology successfully harness the characteristics of the Scientological corporate religion to devise an integration strategy predicated on three traditional discourses: republican, neo-liberal, and ethno-national. These three civic discourses merge to form a new model of citizenship that researchers have detected in other developed countries—**Neo-Liberal Communitarian Citizenship**—that is reshaping the image of **good citizenship**. The Neo-Liberal Communitarian Citizenship model emphasizes not only the productive power of the individual as a condition for integration and receipt of rights but also his or her ethno-national belonging in general society.