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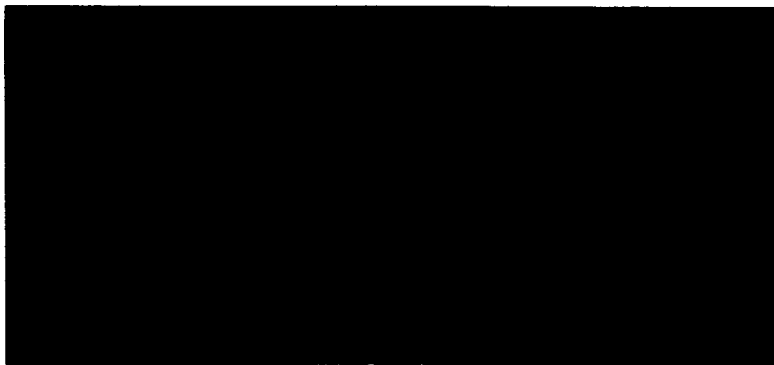
IMMIGRATION RESEARCH:

A CONCEPTUAL MAP

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IMMIGRATION RESEARCH: A CONCEPTUAL MAP

A veritable boom in immigration research has taken place in the last fifteen years. The purpose of this paper is to provide a conceptual map -- a way of presenting the issues and approaches that pertain to the topic -- to guide us through the vast territory immigration research now encompasses. As this boundless growth in immigration research has been experienced across the social sciences, this review of the literature does not intend to be exhaustive but merely illustrative of what sociologists, historians, and anthropologists have contributed to immigration research. Increasingly immigration research is one of the topics where sociologists and historians meet (research on revolutions being another such topic), although they meet in much the same fashion that one sometimes arrives at a party and is much surprised to find out who else is there. Our common research interests increasingly bring us to encounter one another, although not without a fair amount of surprise and trepidation.

Among historians, for whom the past never ceases to be, research on immigration has been more constant than among sociologists. In sociology, the pattern of immigration research is quite clear. As Alejandro Portes (1978:241) has repeatedly stressed, the study of immigrants was closely wedded with the beginnings of social science in America. Immigrants and their plight were the focus of vivid studies from the early days of social science (Park and Burgess, 1921; Park, 1928, 1950; Thomas and Znaniecki, 1927; Hansen, 1940: Handlin, 1959, 1973; Higham, 1955; Jones, 1960; Gans, 1962). Thus, for example, Robert Park (1950), one of the founding fathers of American sociology, evolved his famous theory of the race relations cycle as stages of interaction through which racial or ethnic groups were thought to progress irreversibly: contact, competition, accomodation, and the final stage of eventual assimilation, of becoming *like* the dominant, majority population. Park was also responsible for creating the concept of the "marginal man." Park (1928) stressed that marginal human beings -- those who, as a result of migration, ended up by

living simultaneously in two separate worlds -- were not only marginal, never fully belonging to the one or the other, but also enormously creative and intelligent, as experiencing more than one social world had sharpened their vision and sensibilities. Sociologists, then, at the turn of the century were concerned with what the experience of immigration had done to the immigrants' lives themselves and with the outcomes to the process of integrating those who arrived at its shores, outcomes that were usually conceptualized as acculturation and assimilation -- becoming *like* the dominant population, which at the turn of the century clearly meant conformity to Anglo-Saxon ways (Gordon, 1964).

Research on immigrants and the eventual outcomes of processes of immigration, therefore, was at the very foundations of American sociology. But that emphasis began to wane until, in the 1960s, it all but disappeared. Several different trends promoted its disappearance. First, the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1924 cut the massive waves of European immigration to the United States. Second, under the pressures of Anglo-conformity, the children of those European immigrants went on to assimilate in American society at a time when the price of success was often one's ethnicity and identity. This last is well exemplified in An Orphan in History, where Paul Cowan (who in truth should have been Saul Cohen) goes on a personal search for the Jewish past he lost as a result of his parents' great American success. And third, as Portes (1978:242) stressed, the research focus on immigrants and immigration was also lost as a result of the arrival of the racial demands and militancy of the Civil Rights Movement so that the analytical focus shifted to that of racial and ethnic relations. And in the process what is really distinctive about immigrants was lost.

What is really distinctive about immigrants? Immigrants are a distinct social category in that they have experienced another whole life in another country, another culture, while they will live out a whole new set of choices and experiences in the new society to which they migrated. Immigrants bring a whole host of social resources with them (social class, education, occupation, culture, values) from another society and their outcomes in American society will be partly a function of those initial resources, partly a function of the nature of their migration (are they

political or economic immigrants? are they victims of genocide? are they driven by a mere economic search?), and partly a function of the social context that greeted them, of the amount of opportunity available to them in the new society (in jobs, the particular cities and industries they become concentrated in, the nature of the discrimination or exclusion they afterwards face). Indeed, the major questions in immigration research can be summarized briefly as 1) What led people to make the decision to move, what "push" and "pull" factors impelled them to displace and uproot themselves? (cf. Lee, 1966); 2) What is the nature of the crossing -- not only the literal crossing but the more abstract crossing of government policy, the policies of two governments that can, in societies that have developed long histories of emigration and immigration result in developing systems of economic and political migration? (cf. Pedraza-Bailey, 1985); and 3) What can they attain afterwards? How do we best describe that process -- as assimilation, adaptation, integration, incorporation? (cf. Gordon, 1964; Portes, 1981) Is that process invariant across groups over time (as theories of assimilation expected it to be), or do we need to describe that process in essentially different ways for different groups (as the theories of internal colonialism stressed)?

After this brief historiography of immigration research, let us now turn to the EAST-WEST coordinates of our conceptual map. The most commonplace statement is also the truest: with the exception of the Native American, everyone else is an immigrant to American soil. As Muller and Espenshade (1985) pointed out in The Fourth Wave, immigration to America can be broadly understood as consisting of four major waves: the first one, that which consisted of Northwest Europeans who immigrated up to the mid-19th century; the second one, that which consisted of Southern and Eastern Europeans at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th; the third one, the movement from the South to the North of Black Americans and Mexicans precipitated by two World Wars; and the fourth one, from 1965 on, is still ongoing in the present, of immigrants mostly from Latin America and Asia.

If we superimpose the major theoretical questions in immigration research onto these four waves of American immigration, the questions we then would want to ask are: Have the

descendants of the Southern and Eastern Europeans "caught up" to the level of achievement of the Northwest Europeans? Is the experience of the racial and ethnic minorities different, as Thurgood Marshall (1978) argued, not only in degree but also in kind, from that of the Southern and Eastern Europeans? And can those who are now the "new immigrants" (Latin Americans and Asians who immigrated since 1965) hope to duplicate the experience of those who were once upon a time called the "new immigrants," the Southern and Eastern Europeans, or has the society essentially and fundamentally changed in the amount of opportunity it now provides?

Indeed, the major challenge to assimilation theory came from the proponents of the internal colonialism model, the effort to delineate in what ways the experiences of the racial minorities (Blacks, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, Native Americans -- some of its oldest immigrants and most indigenous native sons and daughters) differed significantly from the experiences and eventual assimilation of the White European immigrants at the turn of the century. The internal colonialism model underscored that the experience of these groups was different in that they had suffered a process of internal colonization due to their place and role in the system of production, place and role they came to occupy because of their color, their race (Blauner, 1969; Barrera, 1979). An important corrective to the assimilation model, the internal colonialism model itself suffered from stretching the colonial analogy overly far, not recognizing the essential differences between the domestic situation of race relations in the United States and what happened in Africa and Asia. The shortcomings of both the assimilation and internal colonialism models can be transcended by focusing on the varying ways in which different ethnic groups were *incorporated*, became a part of the society. As Joe Feagin, (1978:47) underscored, we need to pay attention to the initial and continuing placement and access of various groups to the economic, political, and educational institutions of the society over the course of American history.

As a result of the fourth wave of American immigration that we are still living through, sociology refocused its research on immigrants as a social category distinct from racial and ethnic minorities and on immigration as an international process that reshuffles persons and cultures across nations, until we now find ourselves amidst a veritable explosion of immigration research,

by sociologists (who attend most to the contemporary flows in the developed nations), anthropologists (who attend most to flows in the underdeveloped nations), and historians (who attend to past flows). In all cases there is a fair amount of "roots" going on (e.g., Kamphoeffner, 1987; Gabbaccia, 1983; Cinel, 1982; Morawska, 1985; Bukowczyk, 1987; Portes and Bach, 1985; Pedraza-Bailey, 1985; Sanchez-Korrol, 1983).

While the East-West of immigration research is the time line of the four major waves of immigration over the course of American history, the NORTH-SOUTH can be said to be constituted by the different levels of analysis. What is often referred to as the traditional approach focused on individual-level variables; the newer approach focused on structural-level variables. The difference is, of course, the difference between micro and macro levels of analysis.

In sociology, the traditional, individual, micro approach was best developed by Everett Lee. Lee's (1966) theory made explicit the "push" and "pull" factors that hold and attract or repel people, as well as the intervening obstacles that prove more or less of an impediment to some than to others. The decision to migrate was the focus of his analysis, although, as he stressed, "indeed, not all persons who migrate reach that decision themselves. Children are carried along by their parents, willy-nilly, and wives accompany their husbands though it tears them away from environments they love" (1966:51).

In history, the traditional approach concentrated not only on the nature of the personal or familial decision to migrate, but particularly on the impact that the experience of immigration had on the lives of the immigrants themselves. It has already become a commonplace statement that the classic of a generation ago, Oscar Handlin's The Uprooted (1973), has now been replaced by John Bodnar's The Transplanted (1985), already the classic of our times.[1] Both studies have in common that they moved away from the predominant approach of a case study of an ethnic group to a synthesis of the European immigrant experience. Both studies focused on the impact of immigration on the lives of the immigrants themselves. As his title denoted, Handlin underscored the profound clash of cultures that left the immigrants uprooted, bewildered, and in pain, forever

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[1]See the issue of Social Science History 12 (Fall 1988) devoted to commentary and debate on The Transplanted.

having left the best of themselves and their lives behind them. Thus, Handlin (1973:97) caught

the sadness, despair, and nostalgia of everyone who has ever been uprooted:

> Yesterday, by its distance, acquires a happy glow. The
> peasants look back...and their fancy rejoices in the better
> days that have passed, when they were on the land, and the
> land was fertile, and they were young and strong, and
> virtues were fresh. And it was better yet in their father's
> days, who were wiser and stronger than they. And it was
> best of all in the golden past of their distant progenitors
> who were everyone a king and did great deeds. Alas, those
> days were gone, and now there is only the bitter present.

In Bodnar's hands, the immigrants are in less pain because, as his title denoted, he sees

them and paints them as more resilient. The immigrant struggle, he emphasized, was shaped by

capitalism -- first in the form of the arrival of commercial agriculture in the Old World and second

in the form of the arrival of industrial capitalism and urbanization in the New World.

Transplanted by forces beyond their control, Bodnar underscored, the immigrants were indeed the

children of capitalism. But they, in turn, sought to gain some measure of control over their lives

by the effective use of institutions they brought with them, particularly the core institution of "the

family-household" and the development of new institutions -- unions, churches, and schools that

responded to their needs as members of a class (working-class or middle-class) and as ethnics

(Germans, Italians, Poles, Jews).

The more recent approach to the study of immigration has focused on structural-level

variables. As the link between migration and world patterns of unequal development increasingly

became evident, not only in North America -- the magnet that yesterday as well as today

continues to attract the world's poor -- but also in Western Europe -- where the periphery countries

of Spain, Italy, Greece, and Turkey became suppliers of labor to the industrialized core countries of

France, Germany, and Switzerland -- a new set of structural, macro perspectives emerged. This

type of migration theory stressed the increased significance of immigrant workers in developed

capitalist societies. To counteract the traditional perspective that focused on the migrants' reasons

for migration and its personal consequences, the structural perspective argued that a system of

economic migration had developed from the flow of labor between developed and underdeveloped

nations. The essential question became: what functions did the system of labor migration perform for the developed and underdeveloped nations? Arguing independently but in a similar vein, Manuel Castells (1975), Michael Burawoy (1976) and Alejandro Portes (1978) all agreed that migrant labor -- as immigrant, and as labor -- had structural causes and performed important functions for the society that received them. Defined institutionally, Burawoy stressed that migrant labor is a system that separates the functions of renewal and maintenance of the labor force, physically and institutionally, so that only the function of renewal takes place in the less developed society (such as Mexico, or Turkey), while only the function of maintenance takes place in the developed world (such as the United States, or France). While replacement labor provided countries such as the United States or France with a dependable source of cheap labor, it also provided countries such as Mexico or Turkey with a "safety valve" as migration became the solution to their incapacity to satisfy the needs of their poor and lower-middle classes.

Extending this approach, Pedraza-Bailey (1985) sought to explain refugee flows by adding that not only was it possible to develop a system of labor migration between sending and receiving countries that is generated by the economic functions the emigration and immigration play in those two societies, but that it is equally possible to develop a system of political migration between sending and receiving societies, such as Cuba and the United States, that is generated by the political functions the emigration and immigration likewise play in those two societies. While the loss of such large numbers of the educated, middle classes proved erosive to the Cuban revolution, it also served to externalize dissent. At the same time, the arrival of so many refugees who had succeeded in the flight to freedom served to provide the United States government with the legitimacy necessary for foreign policy actions during the peak years of the Cold War.

Despite their differences, the structuralists essentially argued that the notion of assimilation ought to be replaced by one of incorporation -- of the varying ways in which immigrants or ethnic groups have become a part of American society.

After the boundaries drawn by the NORTH-SOUTH and EAST-WEST of immigration research at present, let us now turn to a few of the BLUE HIGHWAYS -- the secondary roads

that take us away from the rapid main highways and that, if we have the time to follow them, can provide us with more interesting and beautiful pathways. Since each of these topics has taken on "a life of its own" they can only be pointed to briefly.

One such BLUE HIGHWAY is the research literature that has grown around the question of why immigrants (and not the native-born) become concentrated in petit-bourgeois small business enterprises, and what is the source of the disparity between the foreign-born and the native-born, as well as among foreign-born groups themselves (Light, 1972, 1979, 1984; Bonacich, 1973, 1980). Intuitively, we all know that the epitome of ethnic enterprise are the Jews -- throughout Europe for centuries and thereafter in the immigrant generation in the United States and Latin America. Precisely because at other times and other places other immigrant groups have occupied a similar place in the social structure, the people among whom they lived often recognized the parallel. Thus the Chinese in South East Asia were often called "the Jews of the East," Asians in East Africa were dubbed "the Jews of Africa," and most recently the Cubans have been called "the Jews of the Caribbean." Historically, ethnic enterprise was often a refuge for groups that, due to discrimination or other reasons, faced occupational closure (Light, 1972; Aldrich, Jones, and McEvoy, 1984). One of the questions in research on ethnic enterprise is whether, once again, it serves this function among contemporary immigrant groups, such as Koreans, who in many major cities have quite directly succeeded the old Jewish merchants (Kim, 1981). The central question in research on ethnic enterprise is why some groups are over-represented in this type of enterprise (among first generation Koreans and Jewish immigrants the rates were as high as 30 to 50 percent), while other groups (Black-Americans, Mexicans, Philippinos) have consistently shown such minimal representation (around 2 percent). Most explanations for the over or under-representation of different ethnic groups in small business enterprises stress either the differential resources immigrants brought with them or the social context that greeted them (Waldinger, Ward, and Aldrich, 1985).

Another BLUE HIGHWAY is the impact of immigration on sending communities, topic that, focusing as it does on the village level, has become the domain of anthropologists. Among the

questions it subsumes are: What is the impact of remittances -- do they become channeled into only consumption or are they productively invested? (Cinel, 1982) Are those who leave sojourners, who will soon return, or settlers, forever lost to the life of the village? This distinction has consequences, not only for the immigrants themselves, in so far as they make different types of investments in jobs or personal relationships (cf. Kessner, 1977), but also for the communities that they leave behind, affecting family structure and family roles. For example, Caroline Brettell, in her analysis of <u>Men Who Migrate, Women Who Wait</u> (1987), pointed out that the emigration of men from Portuguese villages to Brazil had been so massive and had gone on for so long that it had produced a new type of family structure as three generations of women would come together to form new households, new families. Indeed, she noted, that when the women of the village saw her living alone, doing her research, they quickly invited her to join them in one of their matriarchal families. Douglas Massey, a demographer, notes that the impact of migration on sending communities depends on when in the life cycle of the family it takes place (in the beginning years of family-building and child-raising all must, indeed, go to consumption *vs.* later on, when savings can be productively invested) as well as when in the life cycle of a community with or without a history of emigration it takes place.[2] Indeed, in communities that have long histories of migration to particular cities in the United States -- such as the one that Roger Rouse (1988) studied, where there was a very long history of emigration from Aguililla, Mexico, to Redwood City, California -- Rouse argued that the process is so longstanding, communication among people at both ends so intertwined, and the flows of capital and labor so regular, that the very image of a community from which people depart or go to is compromised. Instead, Rouse proposed that we reconceptualize it as a "transnational migrant circuit."

Yet another BLUE HIGHWAY lies in the topic of women and migration, the social consequences of gender. On this topic the historians, whose intent has been to write the unwritten history of women, as Louise Tilly (1988) stressed, and the anthropologists, whose concern with kinship is at the very root of their discipline, have both done a great deal more than sociologists,

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[2]Massey's comments at the session on "Return Migration in Comparative Perspective," Social Science History Association, 13th Annual Meeting, Chicago, November 3-6, 1988.

among whom research on the topic is just beginning. Because most studies have been studies of labor migration, the implicit assumption has been that of the male pauper model. Studying women is important not only because there are female paupers equally impelled to move and work, but also because we need to see in what ways, if any, are the causes and consequences of migration different for a woman than a man. For example, Donna Gabaccia's (1988) study of the regional variation in Italy regarding patterns of emigration showed that, in large part, large-scale emigration was a response to a decline in household production. Among the questions here subsumed is: How is gender related to the types of jobs immigrant women can obtain? For example, among yesterday's immigrants as well as today's, women have become incorporated in the garment industry because, first, it relied on a traditional skill that throughout much of the world defined womanhood; and, second, because it relied on home work and subcontracting, allowing women to stay at home with their children to care for them, advantage that led them to accept low wages and abysmal, exploitative conditions (Waldinger, 1986). Yet another question is: What are the causes and consequences of a migration flow being predominantly male (as the Italian one was) or female (as the Irish one was)? Thomas Kessner (1977) argued a that predominantly male migration seemed to result in temporary settlement, large amounts of remittances sent back home, and a large amount of return migration. By contrast, Hasia Diner's (1983) study of Irish immigrant women argued the consequences of a predominantly female flow. Changes in landholding and inheritance patterns in Ireland first caused the predominantly female nature of the migration. As the immigrants had no family obligations, Irish women were able to concentrate in domestic service, particularly as "live in" help, and to accumulate savings at an impressive rate. These savings went to bring over other relatives, especially other women; to pay for the mortaged lands back home; to support their favorite devotions in the Catholic church; to provide a "nest egg" for marriage; and to finance their own upward mobility into nursing or stenography, allowing them to eschew marriage to a poor (often drunken) Irishman altogether. In the final analysis, Diner underscored, this implied a more thorough and enthusiastic "Americanization." Another question issues: How does the experience of migration compare for a

woman and a man? Nancy Foner's (1978) study of Jamaican women in London, for example, noted that, difficult as the experience of immigration was, it was often far more positive for women than for men, as it allowed women to break with traditional roles and patterns of dependence and assert a new-found (if meager) freedom. Other studies, however, have argued that immigrant women took on the burden of working outside the home as an extension of the traditional notion of a woman's role since, while her place was no longer in the home it was still by her husband and children's welfare, thus implying no necessary change in values and family roles (Ferre, 1979).

Let us now turn to those areas of research where social scientists have done too little and need to do more, the UNPAVED ROADS of immigration research.

A very UNPAVED ROAD lies in that we need to do studies that link the micro and macro levels of analysis better. The recent macro approach was an important corrective to the traditional, micro approach that failed to take into account that since the advent of the Industrial Revolution all individual decisions to move have cumulated into migration flows that moved only in one direction. The danger of the structural emphasis, however, lies in its tendency to obliterate people, to lose sight of the individual migrants who do make decisions. The theoretical and empirical challenge now facing immigration research lies in its capacity to capture both individuals and structure. We need to consider the plight of individuals, their propensity to move, and the nature of the decisions they make. We also need to consider the larger social structures within which that plight exists and those decisions are made.

Another UNPAVED ROAD lies ahead in the need to do more studies of "brain drain" -- the immigration of educated, middle-class professionals (doctors, scientists, accountants, nurses) from Third World countries to the First World. This is all the more important since "brain drain" is an increasingly large component of this last wave of migration that we are presently living through, defining most of the Asian immigration and a large part of the Latin American immigration. With the exception of "accounting" studies (so many moved from here to there, in the style of the ILO), virtually the only theoretical work on this topic has been that done by Alejandro Portes' (1976) study of "Modernization for Emigration: the Medical Brain Drain from Argentina." A sore need

exists for a research project that not only posits a theoretical framework but also actually engages in in-depth interviews.

Still other UNPAVED ROADS lie in that we need to do more comparative studies that move beyond the confines of documenting case studies without arriving at being syntheses of all migrations of a certain type. That is to say, that we need more studies that compare a small number of immigrant experiences with depth along a couple of key variables, what Robert Merton (1967) called "theories of the middle range." For example, we could fruitfully 1) study the different patterns of social mobility among Jewish and Italian immigrants in New York city at the turn of the century (amplifying Thomas Kessner's (1977) study) or among Blacks and Hispanics in Chicago in the 1980s; 2) the different patterns of political participation exhibited by the Irish and Germans in the beginning of the 20th century (Walter Kamphoeffner's ongoing study) or by Blacks and Latinos at the end of the 20th century, in both cases asking the essential question regarding the role of political machines in immigrant political incorporation then and now; 3) the different patterns of incorporation of refugees and economic immigrants, and of different types of refugees, such as victims of genocide (there is entirely too little research on the refugee as a social type, yet clearly modern migration flows are increasingly composed of refugees); 4) the different patterns of incorporation of Black immigrants -- Jamaicans, Haitians, Black Cubans -- those who are simultaneously ethnics and immigrants of color to a society where color has always been a principle of exclusion and where they themselves feel an identity, like all immigrants, with the countries they left behind (Dixon, 1988; Halter, 1988), thus collapsing the division that has now grown between studies of racial minorities and studies of immigrants.

To conclude, it is only necessary to underscore that while much has already been done much remains to be done in immigration research. The topic is as rich and as vast as our history and our present, in this as well as myriad other multi-racial and multi-ethnic nations. And the questions it poses lie at the very roots of social science. It is to be hoped that this conceptual map will help to chart the course of future research.

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