

I

Introduction

Moving Across Borders

The movement of people across national borders represents one of the most vivid dramas of social reality in the contemporary world. If immigrants are the central characters in this drama, there are numerous other dramatic personae whose supporting roles are crucial to determining the ultimate course of events. These include the family and friends left behind in the homeland, government officials and employers in both the sending and receiving countries, other immigrants from the homeland who become part of ethnic communities, sympathetic members of religious and other institutions concerned with assisting newcomers, and people who through either organized or spontaneous means express their hostility toward immigrants. And, as this book seeks to illustrate, the drama also involves social scientists involved in the study of migrants and the migratory process.

People move across borders for a variety of reasons, and in many instances what is involved is a bundle of motives. Some people move because they are, in early sociologist Georg Simmel's terms, adventurers, individuals who are intent on "dropping out of the continuity of life" (Simmel, 1971/1911, p. 187). Those caught up in wanderlust are motivated by a psychological quest for novelty that propels them to seek ever-new experiences in ever-new locales. While such people have existed throughout history, they are such a tiny minority that they cannot account for the large-scale movement of people across national borders. Rather, external forces in their social environments motivate those involved in mass migration.

They move for economic reasons, either because things are sufficiently desperate where they currently reside that exodus appears to be the most viable option for improving the situation or because, in the scheme of things, migration is seen as a way of enhancing the ability to be upwardly mobile. They move for political reasons, during times of revolutionary turmoil or periods of intense political repression. They move because they are prevented from practicing their religious convictions or because their political and social views place them at risk.

Migrations take place within national borders as well and with often profound consequences. The epic movement of victims of the Depression-era Dustbowl of Oklahoma to California is a case in point, one vividly captured in John Steinbeck's classic novel, *The Grapes of Wrath* (1967/1940). Though the geographic distance was not great, the movement of urban dwellers to the suburbs, particularly after World War II, revealed a large social distance between the city and, as Kenneth Jackson (1985) described it, the "crabgrass frontier." Earlier in the 20th century, the "Great Migration" of blacks out of the rural agrarian South to the urban industrial North—seen for a short time by the migrants as the "promised land"—had profound consequences for black identity and the black community, as well as for the larger society. The early American sociologist Robert Park (1914) may have been the first to compare this movement to that of the eastern and southern Europeans then entering the United States in large numbers. Like their European counterparts, blacks were viewed as peasants deeply immersed in the folkways and mores of an agrarian society, and in both cases, they were entering the same urban industrial milieu. The movement of people off the land to the city was one of the major world historical developments of the 20th century—not only in the United States but across the globe. Indeed, it was Park who commented that the world could "be divided between two classes: those who reached the city and those who have not yet arrived" (1950/1935, p. 167).

The Sociology of Migration

If, as demographer Everett Lee (1966, p. 49) argues, migration refers to a "permanent or semipermanent change of residence," then "a move across the hall from one apartment to another" amounts to the same act as a move "from Bombay, India, to Cedar Rapids, Iowa." While this may at some level be true, we are not concerned in this book with moves across the hall. In fact, using a distinction that has become commonly accepted despite Park's cautionary suggestion about the similarities between some internal and external movements, we will proceed with the assumption that immigration

refers (as noted at the outset) to cross-border movements. Thus, we are also not concerned with movements within nations, however distant those moves might be (and a move from Boston to Los Angeles is, in terms of distance, farther than the move from Puebla, Mexico, to Los Angeles). Given that we are interested in movements beyond a border, clearly nation-states need to be seen as playing major roles in either preventing or facilitating immigration, and when it occurs, in shaping it (Joppke, 2001a, p. 7208). As will become clear in due course, the precise role of the state has become a major area of contestation within immigration studies.

The sociological study of immigration is deeply embedded in the history of the discipline. This is particularly so in the United States, where the first major center for the discipline, the Chicago School of Sociology, located at the newly established University of Chicago, took as one of its major areas of empirical and theoretical interest the mass immigration to the country that began around 1880 and continued until the 1924 National Origins Act effectively stopped mass immigration for the next four decades. While other sociologists of that era, such as Franklin Giddings and E. A. Ross, were either hostile or unsympathetic to immigrants and were vigorous proponents of immigration restriction legislation, the key members of the Chicago School over an extended period of time—from the time when W. I. Thomas worked with Florian Znaniecki on their study of Polish immigrants to Robert Park's agenda setting and theoretical framing of the issue for a generation of students, through the leadership of Louis Wirth—were sympathetic to immigrants and supportive of liberal immigration policies. This is not always evident in their work, in no small part because Park in particular sought to distinguish sociological work from social reform, thereby making a clear distinction between research and advocacy. Although the end of the centrality of the Chicago school was evident by the conclusion of World War II, when its decline in reputation meant that it was often forgotten, it had nevertheless managed to establish and entrench in the discipline many of the ways that sociologists study immigration (and for that matter other social phenomena, as well). It did so dispassionately. Moreover, it did so with the goal being to uncover patterns that were capable of generalization. In the process, what was often lost was an explicit concern with the varied ways that concrete individuals experienced immigration at an existential level. Missing are the tears, fears, hopes, plans, aspirations, uncertainties, ambivalences, and the like that are part and parcel of the immigrant experience.

While sociology has proved itself to be a major source for comprehending immigration, it needs to be complemented with other insights. Of course, listening to immigrants themselves or reading diaries and memoirs is one important way to get what might be viewed as a more immediate, unmediated

account. Another is to look to literature. In fact, both today and during the last major wave of immigration to the United States and other rapidly industrializing immigrant-receiving nations, an expansive body of fiction has been produced, sometimes by the immigrants themselves, sometimes not.

Migration as Lived Experience in Recent Fiction

Three recent examples of decidedly nonautobiographical novels illustrate the virtues of fiction for developing a sympathetic understanding of immigration as lived experience. Each of these examples brings the reader into contact with a fictional character from South Asia, one of the major areas in the globe today that is supplying a sizeable percentage of immigrants to western Europe and North America: Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006), Hari Kunzru's *Transmission* (2004), and Monica Ali's *Brick Lane: A Novel* (2003).

In Desai's novel, which won the Man Booker Prize, one of the characters departs for the United States with the encouragement of his father, who is an aging cook working for a retired judge in the northeast region of India bordering Nepal, which is plagued by guerrilla activities of Nepalese-origin militants with irredentist or separatist intentions. Biju lands in New York City, an undocumented worker ripe for exploitation—and exploited he is. With limited education, no money, and lacking an effective network of friends and relatives who can assist him in trying to get a foothold in the United States, he moves from dead-end job to dead-end job, never managing to secure a future with promise. Meanwhile, not wanting to disappoint his father, he works hard at giving the impression that things are going well. This fabrication makes his loneliness, anxiety, and despair even more difficult. Living in crowded conditions with others in his situation does not help Biju, for he finds himself incapable of connecting in any genuine way with others. The one person who takes an interest in him is something of a hustler, who, for all of his efforts to project an aura of success, appears in the end to also be living a precarious existence. Haunted by the suspicion that his decision to migrate had been a huge mistake, Biju ponders whether returning home would be a better choice than remaining in such an inhospitable land. In the end, he opts to return, only to discover that the calamitous result of the rebel movement is that his previous existence has been turned upside down, that the world he left has in the interim been irrevocably changed.

Biju's tale is that of one of the world's many poor who set out to try to improve their lot and in the process take care of aging parents and other family members left behind. Coming from somewhere near the bottom of Indian society, he managed to exist only at the margins of American society. He lives

in a globalized world, but one quite different from the world of the more affluent. Far from the Internet world where he and his father could have communicated by e-mail every day, he had to rely on prepaid phone cards, calling his father at the public phone in the home village because there was no phone in the judge's home. Given the unreliability of the telephone, more often they relied on letters—many of which never arrived due to the shortcomings of the Indian postal service. Thus, the ways that Biju and his father communicated looked in key respects like the ways immigrants in the past communicated rather than the portrait of the network society that makes possible the emergence of transnational social relations. Biju's life provides vivid testimony that, contrary to neoliberal journalist Thomas Friedman's (2006) claim, the world is not flat, at least not for the vast numbers of people on the wrong side of the digital (and, we would add, financial) divide.

Arjun Mehta, the protagonist in Kunzru's novel, is a graduate of the North Okhla Institute of Technology and a computer geek. In this regard, he is quite different from Biju. Residing in New Delhi, rather than in India's hinterland, Arjun occupies a world of cosmopolitan dreams. He lives in a networked world, as does his sister, who works for a call service whose customers are largely Australian. Thus, as part of her job training, she has acquired an Australian accent and knows a lot about Australian sports, television stars, and the like. But Indian reality cannot match Arjun's dreams: he sees his life stifled in India and his talent squandered. Meanwhile, if Bollywood offers nothing but escapist fantasies, Hollywood appears to depict a real world of success, American-style. Or so it seems to Arjun, who sets out to find his fortune in Silicon Valley.

The experience is, to say the least, jarring. The timing of arrival is crucial here: the protagonist arrives in sunny California as the high-tech bubble is about to burst. Arjun discovers that it takes effort to get acclimated to even the most mundane things. At the same time, landing a job proves to be far more difficult than he anticipated, and considerably more frustrating and disillusioning than he could have imagined. He finds his encounter with America to be increasingly disorienting. Thus, he learns that the apartment he settled into is located in a low-income neighborhood. In other words, his neighbors are poor. Kunzru (2004, p. 41) writes, "The idea of American poverty, especially a poverty that did not exclude cars, refrigerators, cable TV, or obesity, was a new and disturbing paradox, a hint that something ungovernable and threatening lurked beneath the reflective surface of California." From this point forward, the plot moves in an increasingly frenetic and crazed pace, as Arjun's disappointments and failures lead him in frustration and anger to unleash a nasty computer virus that has global consequences.

While Desai's novel is a tragic epic, Kunzru's is a dark, absurdist comedy. In both cases, immigration turns out to be an unmitigated disaster. While this is certainly not the experience of most immigrants, who in fact decide to stay and who do not wreak global havoc, nonetheless many of the experiences—the dilemmas, the ambivalence, the anxieties, the problems—of these two characters will resonate with the lived experiences of actual immigrants. Such is also the case with Ali's controversial novel, which bears the name of the principal London neighborhood for Bangladeshi residents. While today Brick Lane has become somewhat trendy, with its Balti restaurants, renovated flats, and newly marketed identity as "Banglatown," the community Ali describes is one that is largely poor, with its inhabitants living marginal lives in British society. The novel's central figure is Nazneen, who at age 18 migrates to marry Chanu, an older man with a lofty sense of his own prospects that doesn't match reality and a peculiar self-absorption that makes him callous without, curiously enough, making him unlikable.

Nazneen's situation highlights two interconnected issues, gender and Muslim identity. As a woman from a traditional society, she is in all respects ill equipped to deal with an individualistic, modern society. Her marriage, after all, was arranged and thus did not resemble Western romantic ideals. Critics within the Bangladeshi community have challenged what they perceive to be an unflattering portrait of their community, which for some includes the conviction that Ali is unfair to Islam. The intensity of opposition is such that plans to make a film version of the novel by shooting on location had to be changed, with filmmakers forced to find a substitute for Brick Lane.

If these critics knew more about the immigrant experience in historical and comparative terms, they would not only have appreciated Ali's sensitive and convincing depiction of one woman's ability to slowly, fitfully, and at times painfully come to terms with her new environment and in the process come to see it and embrace it as home, but they would have seen this as something shared by many immigrant women from varied cultural and national backgrounds. Part of the story is one of loss, seen most vividly throughout the novel in the ongoing though intermittent efforts of Nazneen to keep connected with her one surviving family member, a sister who remained in Bangladesh. Like Biju, the major vehicle for contact is letter writing, something not easy for women with limited educational backgrounds. But both persist, and yet, over time, the gulf between the two—and thus between the old homeland and the new—grows. At the same time, Britain—or at least London—becomes less and less strange, and Nazneen discovers that she is capable to an extent that she couldn't have imagined a few short years earlier of making sense of and adjusting to it. The novel ends

sweetly on an ice rink, where she is gently reminded that self-discovery and learning about the possibilities opened up in a liberal pluralist society is an ongoing and never-ending process.

Like so many novels about the immigrant experience past and present, these three recent examples provide poignant testimonies regarding the perils and the promises of the migratory act—and in so doing they keep us focused on the flesh-and-blood nature of that act. But this book is not intended to provide a literary guide. Rather, its focus is the sociology of immigration. The reason for this brief excursus at the beginning of the book is to suggest that the ways that sociology and related social sciences approach this field of inquiry is often at the expense of appreciating the lived experience of concrete individuals—real or fictional. And how can it be otherwise, given that what sociologists are intent on capturing is that which is generalizable. Indeed, one of the first questions that social scientists will ask is the extent to which Biju, Arjun, and Nazneen can be seen as representative of large numbers of immigrants. Are their experiences anomalous or typical? Are they in some sense stock characters or are they particularly unique, idiosyncratic examples?

Beyond this, other questions will inevitably be posed. For example, in what ways is the South Asian immigrant experience similar to and in what ways different from that of immigrants from other points of origin? What difference does it make that one ends up in London rather than New York City—or Barcelona, Berlin, Paris, Sydney, or Toronto? What is the significance of race, class, and gender? How varied are the ways of maintaining homeland ties and how long do those ties persist? What are the ways that immigrants acclimate to their new surroundings and what are the difficulties involved? How significant is prejudice and discrimination? What sorts of roles do states—both sending and receiving—play in encouraging, sustaining, or preventing immigration and in shaping the ways immigrants end up located in and relating to the host society? These and a wide range of related questions are the stock-in-trade of sociologists and their fellow social scientists, and given that immigration is a mass phenomenon, these are essential questions to pose and attempt to answer if we are to adequately understand immigration.

Overview of the Book

For over a century, sociologists and others have sought to answer such questions, and in so doing they have developed a vast literature that documents empirically the myriad facets of immigration, while at the same time creating theoretical models that serve to inform interpretive and explanatory accounts. This book is intended to survey the state of the field, offering a

critical assessment of its achievements and its shortcomings while pointing to what we consider to be both important areas for future research and new theoretical approaches.

In broad brush strokes, it is possible to identify three main topics of inquiry that have preoccupied scholars of immigration, past and present:

- *Movement*: The first topic concerns the factors contributing to migration, which include a consideration of both the causal mechanisms contributing to the flow of migrants across borders and the patterned or structured character of the migratory process over time. Though the focus is on those who opt to migrate, the underlying problematic that needs to be addressed is how to explain, to use the distinction Harrison White (1970) made in a different context, between “stayers and movers.” To be more precise, as Thomas Faist (2000a, p. 1) has framed the matter, we need to know, “Why are there so few migrants from so many places and so many from only a few places?” It should be noted that throughout most of the history of immigration studies, sociologists have, to large extent, conceded this particular subject to demographers and economists. It is therefore not surprising that when, in recent years, some sociologists have invested in this matter, they have tended to be individuals with expertise in demography (e.g., Douglas S. Massey) or economic sociology (e.g., Alejandro Portes).

- *Settlement*: The second problematic addresses the matter of immigrant incorporation. Christian Joppke (2001a, p. 7208) points out that immigration “is seen from the perspective of the receiving (rather than the sending) states.” In point of fact, he is right. Until very recently, immigration studies have been solely preoccupied with how immigrants do or do not manage to become integrated into the new social order. The impact of migration on sending states would presumably be defined as emigration studies. While no explicit area of inquiry bears that name, as it turns out, the development of transnational studies (which will be discussed in Chapter 5) has called into question the shortcomings of what some see as a container model of immigration studies. Advocates for a transnational perspective argue that we ought not confine our subject matter to the boundaries of nation states, but instead consider the impacts of immigration on transnational social spaces that penetrate into two or more nation-states (Faist, 2000a, 2000b; Glick Schiller, 1999; Glick Schiller & Levitt, 2006; Kivisto, 2001). Within the limitations of a focus on receiving states, this particular topic has generated an array of significant conceptual tools, among the most significant being those that seek to broadly characterize particular modes of incorporation: assimilation, pluralism or hyphenization, and multiculturalism (Alexander,

2006; Kivisto, 2005). Incorporation has been and continues to be the major preoccupation of sociologists of immigration. Although historians tend to eschew theoretical constructs in their work, they too have been deeply involved in answering questions about incorporation—and during the 1960s through the 1980s, the interdisciplinary dialogue between social historians and historical sociologists has proved to be particularly fruitful (Morawska, 1990). Although they have entered the arena of immigration studies somewhat more recently, anthropologists, too, have embraced this problem (Brettell & Hollifield, 2000).

- *Control*: The third thematic focus is on the politics of immigration, including considerations of the role of state actions, involving both sending and receiving states. It has been, rather curiously, the least developed of the three, both empirically and theoretically. Controlling borders has been and continues to be a prerogative of nation-states, though as Aristide Zolberg (1989, p. 405) pointed out some time ago, much of classical migration theory paid scant attention to this fact. Some regimes have been unwilling to allow their residents to exit and quite adept at preventing them from doing so (Zolberg mentioned Albania during communist rule; one might look today at Myanmar and North Korea as examples). At the same time, though borders in the advanced industrial nations appear in many respects to be quite porous, nonetheless there are some nations that have more limited entrée than others. A research concentration on border controls has increased in recent years (Cornelius, Tsuda, & Martin, 2004; Hollifield, 2004). One of the key figures involved in this trend has suggested that in “bringing the state back in,” three themes loom large: the politics of control; the politics of national security and sovereignty; and the politics of incorporation, citizenship, and national identity (Hollifield, 2000; Zolberg, 1981, 1999a, 1999b). Not surprisingly, the scholars most deeply invested in this area are political scientists and legal scholars, though, as is evident, the third theme dovetails with the sociological focus on incorporation.

What follows in the subsequent seven chapters involves an examination of each of these three broad topics. The first section of the book, which we have titled “Movement,” will look at immigration flows from the perspective of the history of the modern world. It will also review the most influential theories accounting for immigration. Finally, it will examine contemporary immigration across the globe, focusing on 20 major immigration-receiving nations in the world.

The second section—“Settlement”—is devoted to examining processes of incorporation, which refers to the varied ways immigrants come to be part of

a new society. Much of the literature on this topic is laden with preferences, and thus *is* and *ought* are often convoluted. In the three chapters that make up this section, an effort will be made to adjudicate the respective theoretical merits of three concepts that have increasingly come to shape discourse on incorporation: assimilation, transnationalism, and multiculturalism.

Finally, we turn in the last section of the book—"Control"—to the role of states in shaping immigration. For immigration studies during much of the 20th century, this remained an underdeveloped field. We focus on two recent developments in the section's two chapters. The first looks at states as key actors in defining and attempting to structure migratory flows and policies regarding incorporation. The next chapter turns to a discussion of changes in ideas about citizenship, particularly the expansion of dual citizenship around the globe, both as a reality and as something increasingly permitted by states. The book ends with a brief reflection on the need in the new global order/disorder to rethink traditional perspectives about the distinction between citizen and alien.