Transnationalism: A New Analytic Framework for Understanding Migration

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Our earlier conceptions of immigrant and migrant no longer suffice. The word immigrant evokes images of permanent rupture, of the uprooted, the abandonment of old patterns and the painful learning of a new language and culture. Now, a new kind of migrating population is emerging, composed of those whose networks, activities and patterns of life encompass both their host and home societies. Their lives cut across national boundaries and bring two societies into a single social field.

   In this book we argue that a new conceptualization is needed in order to come to terms with the experience and consciousness of this new migrant population. We call this new conceptualization, "transnationalism," and describe the new type of migrants as transmigrants. We have defined transnationalism as the processes by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement. Immigrants who build such social fields are designated "transmigrants." Transmigrants develop and maintain multiple relations–familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political that span borders. Transmigrants take actions, make decisions, and feel concerns, and develop identities within social net-

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works that connect them to two or more societies simultaneously (Basch, Glick Schiller and Blanc-Szanton n.d.).[1]

The following vignettes based on our observations of migrants from Haiti, the eastern Caribbean, and the Philippines now living in New York allow a glimpse of the complexities and intricacies of transmigrant experience and identity that, we believe, calls for a new analytical framework.

The ten men sat around a living room on Long Island. The occasion was a meeting of their regional association. Each member of the association had pledged to send $10.00 a month to support an older person living in their home town in Haiti. They came from different class backgrounds in Haiti, although all were fairly successful in New York. But one of the members, a successful doctor, expressed dissatisfaction—although he has a lucrative practice, a comfortable life style in New York and a household in his hometown which he visits every year "no matter what." As he stated it, "I'm making money and I am not happy. Life has no meaning."

His speech about his emotional state was a preamble to his making an ambitious proposal to his hometown association. He called on his fellow members to join him in the building of a sports complex for the youth in their hometown. He indicated that he already had bought the land which he would donate and he would also donate $4,000–5,000 for the building and called on others to assist in the construction. He had given no thought to maintaining the building or staffing it.

The doctor was not alone in his aspirations to make a mark back home in a way that maintains or asserts status both in Haiti and among his personal networks in New York. There were more than 20 Haitian hometown associations in New York in 1988. Their memberships were composed of people who have lived in New York for many years. Many of them undertook large scale projects back "home," projects which often are grand rather than practical. For example, an ambulance was sent to a town with no gasoline supply and no hospital.

These associations differ dramatically in the activities and audience from hometown associations of earlier immigrants whose main, if not only thrust of activity was to help the newcomers face social welfare issues in the new land. Russian Jewish immigrants in the beginning of the 20th century, for example,

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[1] The term "transnational" has long been used to describe corporations that have major financial operations in more than one country and a significant organizational presence in several countries simultaneously. The growth of transnational corporations has been accompanied by the relocation of populations. It therefore seems appropriate to use the term "transnational" as a description for both the sectors of migrating populations who maintain a simultaneous presence in two or more societies and for the relations these migrants establish. In 1986 the American Academy of Political and Social Science employed the term as the theme of a conference publication entitled *From foreign workers to settlers?—Transnational migration and the emergence of a new minority*. The conference papers dwelt more on the effect on public policy of this type of migration, but did so without developing the concept of transnational migration.

founded "landsman" associations to provide their members with burial funds and assist the poor and orphaned in the United States. In contrast, the members of Haitian hometown associations, much as the participants in similar Filipino and Grenadian and Vincentian associations, are part of a social system whose networks are based in two or more nation states and who maintain activities, identities and statuses in several social locations.

Approximately 200 well-dressed Grenadian immigrants, mostly from urban areas in Grenada and presently employed in white collar jobs in New York, gathered in a Grenadian-owned catering hall in Brooklyn to hear the Grenadian Minister of Agriculture and Development. The Minister shared with Grenada's "constituency in New York," his plans for agricultural development in Grenada and encouraged them to become part of this effort.

By being addressed and acting as Grenadian nationals, these immigrants were resisting incorporation into the bottom of the racial order in the United States that categorizes them as "black," much as Haitians do when they construct hometown associations or meet as members of the Haitian diaspora to discuss the situation in Haiti.

By having their views elicited by a government minister from home, the Grenadians were exercising a status as Grenadian leaders, a social status generally unavailable to them in the racially stratified environment of New York. Their perceptions of themselves as Grenadian "leaders" were further activated by the minister's suggestion that these migrants have the power to convince their relatives at home that agricultural work, generally demeaned as a productive activity, is worthwhile and important.

But the Minister was also addressing the migrants as Grenadian ethnics in New York when he asked them to try to assist in introducing Grenadian agricultural goods to the United States market by using their connections in New York within the fledgling Caribbean American Chamber of Commerce to which many of them belonged. And of particular significance, the organizers of this meeting, who had each been in the United States a minimum of ten years, were as involved in the local politics of New York City as in Grenada. In fact, they were able to transfer–and build on–the political capital they gained in New York to Grenada, and vice versa. Grenada's ambassador to the United Nations has been a leader in the New York Caribbean community for 20 years. And so often did these political actors travel between Grenada and New York, that it became difficult for the anthropologist to recall where she had last seen them.

Well-established Filipino migrants are also periodically visited by representatives of the Philippines government urging transnational activities including strong encouragement to reinvest their American earnings into Philippine agriculture. The role of the Philippines state in contributing to the construction of transnational migrant fields extends even further.

At a desk, an employee was helping a customer close her box and complete

the listing of items it contains. We were in the offices of a company in New Jersey (the only company where boxes can be delivered directly to the warehouse rather than being picked up for delivery). A regular flow of such boxes leaves every day from seven to eight major Filipino shipping companies. Anything can be sent back door-to-door and with limited taxes—appliances, electronic equipment and the like—as long as it fits the weight and size prescriptions defining a *Balikbayan* box.

President Marcos had created the term *balikbayan* (literally homecomers) during a major national speech encouraging immigrants to visit their home country once a year during the holidays. He developed economic and legal means to facilitate their return and allowed each of them to bring yearly two *Balikbayan* boxes duty-free. Mrs. Aquino restated her concern for the numerous silent "heroes and heroines of the Philippines." She then enabled them to purchase gifts of up to $1,000 duty-free upon entering the Philippines. Contracting for overseas labor and the system of sending remittances, so very important now for the country's economy, has been similarly institutionalized. The existence of transnational migration is thus officially sanctioned and highly regulated by the Philippine state.

We thus see how the transnational social field is in part composed of family ties sustained through economic disbursements and gifts. At the same time this field is sustained by a system of legalized exchanges, structured and officially sanctioned by the Philippine state.

As these examples show, transnational migrants arrive in their new country of residence with certain practices and concepts constructed at home. They belong to certain more or less politicized populations and hold particular class affiliations. They then engage in complex activities across national borders that create, shape and potentially transform their identities in ways that we will begin to explore in this paper and in these conference proceedings. This is not to say that this phenomenon has not been observed by others. However, an adequate framework for understanding this phenomenon or its implications has yet to be constructed. Building on our own research with transmigrants from Haiti, the English-speaking Caribbean, and the Philippines[2] as well as the earlier observations of others, we seek in this paper to develop such a framework. This framework we argue allows an examination of how transmigrants use their social relationships and their varying and multiple identities generated from their simultaneous positioning in several social locations both to accommodate to and to resist the difficult circumstances and the dominant ideologies they encounter in their transnational

fields. We start our analysis by identifying and developing six premises that situate transnationalism in time, space, world systems and sociological theory.

The six premises central to our conceptualization of transnationalism are the following: 1) bounded social science concepts such as tribe, ethnic group, nation, society, or culture can limit the ability of researchers to first perceive, and then analyze, the phenomenon of transnationalism; 2) the development of the transnational migrant experience is inextricably linked to the changing conditions of global capitalism, and must be analyzed within that world context; 3) transnationalism is grounded in the daily lives, activities, and social relationships of migrants; 4) transnational migrants, although predominantly workers, live a complex existence that forces them to confront, draw upon, and rework different identity constructs—national, ethnic and racial; 5) the fluid and complex existence of transnational migrants compels us to reconceptualize the categories of nationalism, ethnicity, and race, theoretical work that can contribute to reformulating our understanding of culture, class, and society; and 6) transmigrants deal with and confront a number of hegemonic contexts, both global and national.[3] These hegemonic contexts have an impact on the transmigrant's consciousness, but at the same time transmigrants reshape these contexts by their interactions and resistance.

SOCIAL SCIENCE UNBOUND

For the past several decades descriptions of migrant behavior that could be characterized as transnational have been present in the migration literature, but these descriptions have not yielded a new approach to the study of migration. Students of migration did not develop a conceptual framework to encompass the global phenomena of immigrant social, political, and economic relationships that spanned several societies.

There was a certain recognition that the constant back and forth flow of people could not be captured by the categories of "permanent migrants," "return migrants," "temporary migrants," or "sojourners." In fact, Richardson, whose own work documents Caribbean "migration as livelihood" states that "students of the movements of Pacific islanders have found human mobility there so routine that they now employ the term circulation rather than migration" (1983:176). Chaney astutely noted that there were now people who had their "feet in two societies" (1979:209). Noting that many Garifuna "today have become United States citizens, yet they think of themselves as members of two (or more) societies," Gonzalez described migrants from Belize as forming "'part societies' within several countries" (1988:10).

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[3] The concept of hegemony, long embedded in Marxism but developed by Gramsci (1971), facilitates the discussion of the relationship between power and ideology.

In part, the recognition by social scientists that many migrants persist in their relationship to their home society, not in contradiction to but in conjunction with their settlement in the host society, did not develop beyond the descriptive level because migrant experiences in different areas of the world tended to be analyzed as discrete and separate phenomena rather than as part of a global phenomenon. For example, students of Caribbean migration noted the tendency of generations of migrants from the Caribbean to spend long periods away from home, yet support their families and often family landholdings or small enterprises with the money they sent home. They identified Caribbean nations as "remittance societies" and viewed this as a Caribbean phenomenon (Wood and McCoy 1985; Rubenstein 1983). Yet remittances are now part of the economies of nations in disparate parts of the world.

In all the social sciences, analyses of immigrant populations, their patterns of social relations and systems of meaning have continued to be enmeshed within theories that approached each society as a discrete and bounded entity with its own separate economy, culture, and historical trajectory. That the study of immigrant populations should have been built upon such a bounded view of society and culture is not surprising considering that all social sciences had for decades been dominated by such static models.

Anthropologists, for example, were long constrained by the closed models of "structural functionalism" (Radcliffe Brown 1952) that endowed populations, variously designated as "tribes," "peoples," "ethnic groups," or simply "cultures," with given, "natural," and group-specific properties. Each population was studied as a bounded unit, living in one place, bearing a unique and readily identifiable culture.[4] Sociology, meanwhile, had fastened on Parsons' emphasis on "social system" and the development of systems theory, and political scientists created models of "traditional" versus "modern" societies (Parsons 1951). In the comparative study of "social systems," all fields of scholarship projected an ethnographic present in which the stasis of tradition was broken apart only by 19th and 20th century European or American "contact," resulting in migration, urbanization, and acculturation. Anthropologists may have expressed uneasiness about the consequences of the very same processes that produced the political scientists' quintessential goal of modernization, but until the 1970s all disciplines remained constrained by their bounded categories of social analysis.

For the past two decades, such views have been subject to powerful critiques generated by several different analytical paradigms. But these critiques have yet to lead to new approaches to the study of immigrant populations. In anthropology, efforts to break free from bounded thinking have gone in

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[4] While the concept of uniform patterns of culture (Benedict 1959) has been thoroughly critiqued by numerous anthropologists it persists in the profession and is a basic building block of most introductory texts.

two directions. Some analysts "deconstruct" culture, recognizing the artifice of the bounded unit of analysis by replacing conceptions of a single uniform "pattern" with multiple visions of individual, gendered and particularized experiences. By and large, as Marcus has noted, "ethnographers of an interpretive bent—more interested in problems of cultural meaning than in social action—have not generally represented the ways in which closely observed cultural worlds are embedded in larger, more impersonal systems" (Marcus 1986:166). The emphasis is on the formulation of the ethnographic text as a product of the interaction between the individual ethnographer and the "informant" (Rosaldo 1989). For those writers who, in their discussion of "text construction," acknowledge a global context the question becomes "once the line between the local worlds of subjects and the global world of systems becomes radically blurred, . . . (h)ow, . . . is the representational space of the realist ethnography to be textually bounded and contained in the compelling recognition of the larger systems contexts of any ethnographic subjects?" (Marcus 1986:171).

Others, such as Wolf (1982; 1988) and Worsley (1984), building on a Marxist-influenced anthropology which decades earlier had expressed disquietude about the reification of the concept of "tribe,"[5] have called for a global level of analysis. Sectors of sociology and political science share this global vision and look to the "world capitalist system" as a unit of analysis. Wallerstein, a sociologist, developed a "world systems theory" in which different geographic regions of the world performed different and unequal functions in a global division of labor (Wallerstein 1974; 1982). World systems theory allowed social science to move beyond the examination of the structures of individual economies and to link the penetration of capital into previously non-capitalized sectors of production to the movements of people into the labor market.[6]

However necessary this global perspective, it has proved to be insufficient on several counts.[7] Little has been done by world systems theorists to explain the continuing significance of nation-states within these larger global processes, and world systems theorists have tended to ignore the legal, military, and ideological basis for the continuing existence of nations. In fact, the international flow of capital and distribution of labor takes place in a world that continues to be very much politically divided into nation-states that are un-

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[5] The authors represented in *Essays on the problem of the tribe* (Helm 1975) and Morton Fried's (1975) insightful work on primordial state formation and the tribe made seminal contributions to the effort to move anthropology beyond the conceptualization of cultures as tightly bounded, and discrete.

[6] Important early work in a global analysis was carried out by André Gunder Frank (1966). Work to link world system theory to migration has been carried out by numerous authors including Bach (1980), Portes and Walton (1981), Pessar (1982) and Sassen (1988).

[7] For efforts to both critique and build upon a world systems framework see Smith (1984), Lozano (1984), Portes and Bach (1985).

equal in their power, and which serve differentially as base areas of inter-national capital. Wallerstein has addressed the constructed nature of nation-alism and has recognized the significance of nationalism in the development of states. Nevertheless, a great deal more needs to be said about the fact that nation-states, although they exist within the world capitalist system, continue to control armies and nuclear weapons. Much world system analysis has fo-cused on the economic rather than the political aspects of the system, espe-cially in discussions of migration.[8]

Another shortcoming of world systems theorists who have built upon Wal-lerstein has been their tendency to view migrants as essentially units of labor. While the direction has been set by authors such as Portes and Bach (1985) and Sassen (1988) who acknowledge that a global perspective must include the social, cultural, and political dimensions of migrant experiences, this work has yet to be done. Our observations suggest that the transnational context of migrants' lives develops from the interplay of multiplex phenomena—historical experience, structural conditions, and the ideologies of their home and host societies.

In developing the concept of transnationalism we wish to provide those studying contemporary migrating populations with a framework in which global economic processes, and the continuing contradictory persistence of nation-states can be linked to migrants' social relationships, political actions, loyalties, beliefs, and identities. At this juncture in the social sciences, it is es-sential that the study of migrating populations combine an emphasis on social relations, understood to be fluid and dynamic, yet culturally patterned, with an analysis of the global context. Such an approach is certainly necessary to elucidate the processes underlying the experience of those sectors of migrating populations who become transmigrants.

Transnationalism as a Product of World Capitalism

To analyze transnationalism we must begin by recognizing that the world is currently bound together by a global capitalist system. Such a perspective allows us to examine the economic forces that structure the flows of inter-national migration and to place the migrants' responses to these forces and their strategies of survival, cultural practices and identities within the world-wide historical context of differential power and inequality.

Because of the growing internationalization of capital, by the 1980s the structure of employment in the United States had undergone transformations often called "restructuring" or "deindustrialization" (Block 1987:136). Many stable industrial-sector jobs had been lost through the export of manufac-

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[8] Zolberg (1983) has emphasized the political and legal structuring of international migration.

turing industries and related jobs abroad, frequently to Third World countries. In many large urban areas in the United States well-paying, unionized, industrial employment was replaced by service sector and clerical employment. Sweat shops and home work proliferated. The newly created employment was characterized by low pay and little or no benefits or security.

At the same time, in the global restructuring of capital, the local economies of the Third World were disrupted by the intrusion of large scale agrobusinesses, the investment of transnational corporations in export processing industries, and tourism (Nash and Fernandez 1983). These economic shifts created a displaced, underemployed, labor force, not easily absorbed by the growing but still relatively small highly capitalized sector of the economy. The economic dislocations in both the Third World and in industrialized nations increased migration, yet made it difficult for the migrants to construct secure cultural, social or economic bases within their new settings. This vulnerability increased the likelihood that migrants would construct a transnational existence.

Understanding this global context has led to new perspectives on migration, perspectives that can contribute to an understanding that current migration is a new and different phenomenon. There is, however, no consensus among analysts on the character of the new migration. There are some who point to the invention of rapid transportation and communication systems, rather than the current state of the world social and economic system, as the reason why modern-day migrants are more likely than their predecessors to maintain ongoing ties to their societies of origin (Wakeman 1988). Others continue to view migrants within a classic "push-pull" model in which migration is seen as a product of separate and unrelated forces in the society of origin and the society of settlement (Lee 1966). Using recent historiography that has revised our picture of 19th century immigrants, one might argue that there has been no major change in migration patterns. Apparently many earlier migrants were, in some sense, transmigrants who remained in communication with their home country and participated in its national movement (Vassady 1982). We believe that current transnationalism does mark a new type of migrant existence and that only by more fully developing a global perspective on the transnational life experience of migrants, will social scientists be able to understand the similarities and differences between past and present migrations.

Transnationalism as Cultural Flow or as Social Relations?

The word transnationalism has recently become popularized in the realm of cultural studies with references made to "transnational phenomena" and "transnational research" (Wakeman 1988:85). However, this usage of transnationalism stands conceptually apart from the entire bodies of literature on migration and on the world system. Instead, those who speak of "trans-

national phenomena" focus on flows of meanings and material objects in an effort to describe "transnational" culture, and put the discussion of culture in a world-wide framework.

Appadurai and Breckenridge seek to explain the recent development of a "public culture" in India, which they see manifested in public foods, entertainment, goods and services that largely transcend national boundaries. Such a public culture, they argue, is a response to India's cultural interactions and exchanges with other nations (Appadurai and Breckenridge 1988). They highlight the complexities, the back-and-forth transferences, and the contradictions that characterize transnational flows of objects and cultural meanings.

A similar approach to global cultural trends has been taken by Hannerz (1989). Critiquing those who see the diffusion of cultural goods and ideas only from powerful core nations to those on the economic periphery, Hannerz argues against notions of a "global village" or the "homogenization" of culture. Hannerz rightly emphasizes the constant tendency of people to creatively reinterpret, a process he calls "creolization." Focusing largely on movements of cultural items and flows of media images, he also emphasizes "cultural flows." The concurrent movement of peoples, and the activities, networks, relationships, and identities of transnational migrants have yet to be addressed.

In our task of developing a transnational framework that is of use in the analysis of migration, we can build on some ground-breaking work that has directed our attention to systems of social relations that are wider than national borders. In their 1975 description of Barbadian immigrants, Sutton and Makiesky-Barrow spoke of a "transnational sociocultural and political system" (1987).[9] They posited that migration provides "an important channel for the bi-directional flow of ideas such that political events at home (*e.g.*, independence) had an impact on the migrant communities abroad while migrant experiences were relayed in the opposite direction" (1987:114). Portes and Walton suggested that migration could be "conceptualized as a process of network building" (1981:60). Rouse introduced the concept of "transnational migrant circuits" that encompass several societies (1988; 1989).

As the work of these authors and our own research makes clear, to understand current day migrants we must not only map the circulation of goods and ideas, but understand that material goods are embedded in social relations. If someone sends home a barbecue grill to Haiti, the grill does not stand in and of itself as an item of material culture that will change the material culture of Haiti. While it is interesting to talk about the new development of cultural forms around imported items, something else needs to be said. The grill is a statement about social success in the United States and an effort to

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[9] See also Sutton's more recent discussion of "the emergence of a transnational sociocultural system" (1987).

build and advance social position in Haiti. It will be used in a fashionable round of party-going in which status is defined and redeemed in the context of consumption.

When someone from a small town in Haiti, St. Vincent, or the Philippines who now lives in New York sends home a cassette player, how are we to interpret this flow? The player can be used along with imported cassettes to bring the latest musical forms and themes from around the world into the most remote rural area. But on this same cassette those sitting on a mountainside in Haiti, in a rural village in the Philippines, or on a family veranda in St. Vincent send messages, warnings, information about kith and kin "at home" that influence how people behave and what they think in New York, Los Angeles, and Miami (Richman 1987). Connections are continued, a wider system of social relations is maintained, reinforced, and remains vital and growing.

Whether the transnational activity is sending the barbecue to Haiti, dried fruits and fabric home to Trinidad so these goods can be prepared for a wedding in New York, or using the special tax status of *Balikbayan* boxes to send expensive goods from the United States to families back home in the Philippines, the constant and various flow of such goods and activities have embedded within them relationships between people. These social relations take on meaning within the flow and fabric of daily life, as linkages between different societies are maintained, renewed, and reconstituted in the context of families, of institutions, of economic investments, business, and finance and of political organizations and structures including nation-states.

The Complex Identities of Transnational Migrants

Within their complex web of social relations, transmigrants draw upon and create fluid and multiple identities grounded both in their society of origin and in the host societies. While some migrants identify more with one society than the other, the majority seem to maintain several identities that link them simultaneously to more than one nation. By maintaining many different racial, national, and ethnic identities, transmigrants are able to express their resistance to the global political and economic situations that engulf them, even as they accommodate themselves to living conditions marked by vulnerability and insecurity. These migrants express this resistance in small, everyday ways that usually do not directly challenge or even recognize the basic premises of the systems that surround them and dictate the terms of their existence.

As transmigrants live in several societies simultaneously, their actions and beliefs contribute to the continuing and multiple differentiation of populations. The creolization observed by Hannerz is not only a product of intensified

world-wide product distribution systems, but also of this dynamic of migration and differentiation.

In order for us to be able even to perceive, much less analyze, the role played by migration in the continuing differentiation of the world's population, we must add to the study of international migration an examination of the identities and aspirations of transmigrants. This perspective should accompany our understanding that such migrants compose a mobile labor force within a global economic system. This is a labor force that acts and reacts in ways that emphasize, reinforce, or create cultural differentiation and separate identities.

For example, the same individual may attend a meeting of U.S. citizens of the same "ethnic group," be called as a New Yorker to speak to the Mayor of New York about the development of "our city," and the next week go "back home" to Haiti, St. Vincent, or the Philippines and speak as a committed nationalist about the development of "our nation." A migrant may pray in a multi-ethnic congregation that identifies itself as a common community in Christ, attend rallies for racial empowerment that emphasize Black or Asian identities, and dance at a New Year's Eve ball organized for members of the migrant's "own" ethnic community. This same person may swear allegiance to his or her fellow workers at a union meeting in the United States while sending money back home to buy property and become a landlord. Through these seemingly contradictory experiences, transmigrants actively manipulate their identities and thus both accommodate to and resist their subordination within a global capitalist system.

Transnational social fields are in part shaped by the migrants' perceptions that they must keep their options open. In the globalized economy that has developed over the past several decades, there is a sense that no one place is truly secure, although people do have access to many places. One way migrants keep options open is to continuously translate the economic and social position gained in one political setting into political, social and economic capital in another.

Sometimes the transnational field of relations extends to the leadership of nation-states. The Aquinos rallied political support among Filipinos in the United States and brought many of them back to the Philippines in Cory Aquino's first government. Some of these people were sent back to the United States in turn to pressure American politicians with regard to key issues such as economic aid and the United States military bases in the Philippines.

Social scientists are only now beginning to comprehend the significance of these developments and to develop an appropriate analytical framework. What is needed is a reconceptualization of culture and society, work that is only now beginning (Wolf 1982, 1989; Worsely 1984; Rollwagen 1986). As a first step we must rethink our notions of nationalism, ethnicity and race.

RETHINKING CLASS, NATIONALISM,
ETHNICITY AND RACE

As we indicated above when we traced the link between transnationalism and world capitalism, transnational migrants are primarily proletarian in their placement within the host labor force if not in their class origins. At the same time each transmigrant population is class differentiated. The Chinese transmigrant population contains powerful elements of the Hong Kong capitalist class, for example, while the Indian, Caribbean and Filipino populations have important petit bourgeois and professional strata.

The identity of the transmigrant population is contested terrain. Both the capitalist class forces within the dominant society and the leading class forces of the migrating population collude and compete in their interests and outlook with respect to the domination of the migrant workforce. Note those Grenadian leaders who defined the entire transmigrant population in terms that minimized class stratification, yet reinforce their class position by emphasizing Grenadian transmigrants as both citizens of the Grenadian nation and members of a U.S. Caribbean ethnic group. Thus that sector of the migrant workforce that is proletarian whether in origin or in insertion is both subject/actor in a continuing discourse about not only how they should behave, but just as importantly about who they are. Their loyalty and sense of self, both individually and collectively, are the subjects of hegemonic constructions that emanate both from the place of settlement, such as the United States, and from their home society. Hegemony is at its root a conceptualization about the process by which a relationship is maintained between those who dominate within the state and those who are dominated (Gramsci 1971; Williams 1977; Brow 1988; Comaroff 1991). While ultimately relations of domination are maintained by force, the social order is enforced by the daily practices, habits and common sense through which the dominated live their lives, dream their dreams, and understand their world. By conceptualizing hegemony we are led to see, as Raymond Williams pointed out, that

> (Hegemony) is a lived system of meanings and values–constitutive and constituting–which as they are experienced as practices appear as reciprocally confirming. . . . It is . . . a culture which also has to be seen as the lived dominance and subordination of particular classes. (Williams 1977:110).

Hegemonic constructions and practices are constantly created, reenacted, and reconstituted. These conceptions and categories are in part internalized by both dominant and dominated alike and create a sense of common loyalty and legitimacy for the dominant classes. In the United States, hegemonic constructions speak little of class but much more directly of race, ethnicity, and nationalism. Simultaneously these constructions serve to discipline a "classless"

public into capitalist subjects through practices of consumption, leisure, and work.

The socially constructed nature of our entire repository of terms used to define and bound identity–"nationality," "race," and "ethnicity"–has just recently begun to be scrutinized adequately by social scientists. And the implications of transnationalism for hegemonic constructions of identity have yet to be analyzed.

The different hegemonic contexts to which these transnational migrants relate must be examined. Within both the United States and the home countries the state and the dominant classes attempt to establish and perpetuate control over their populations. They do this by elaborating systems of domination based on hegemonic constructions and practices in a process that is closely related to nation-building. These emergent formulations will speak to and build on the experiences and consciousness of the transnational migrants, directing the migrants' incorporation into the class relations of the nation states in which they are living–both home and host. As we have seen, the activities of the transmigrants within each state and across national boundaries are influenced by, but also influence, all aspects of this hegemonic process in each nation-state.

In the United States these hegemonic constructions, though not uniform, have certain basic themes. The possibility of class identities is not only negated but cross-cut by constructions of race and ethnicity. The racial categories of their new setting, in this case the United States, are imposed on those incoming populations, though this occurs in different ways and with different emphases if they are Caribbeans, Chicanos, or Asians for example. At the same time, demands are placed on those same populations to identify "ethnically." The hegemonic context imposes a discipline on newcomers who develop self-identifications, if not broader collective action, in accordance with categories and related behaviors that are not of their own making. But transnational migrants, with variation linked to their class background and racial positioning, have their own notions about categories of identity and their own conceptions of the rules of the hegemonic game. People live in and create a new social and cultural space which calls for a new awareness of who they are, a new consciousness, and new identities. However, both the actors and analyst still look around them with visions shaped by the political boundaries of nation-states.[10]

Nationalism has been identified as an early 19th century invention (Kedourie 1960; Kamenka 1973), resulting from the rapid replacement of existing absolute monarchies in Europe by units called nation-states and the subsequent establishment of such polities in other parts of the world. While the unifying content of nationalism varied from country to country, it was based

[10] For a more complete explanation of these processes see Basch, Glick Schiller and Blanc-Szanton, 1992; n.d.

on an ideology of the commonness of origins, purposes, and goals that allowed those in power to legitimate rule over large and diverse populations. Nationalism gave heterogeneous groups a sense of a shared common interest, and carried a vision of a nation-state as a "people," each nation making up a separate, equal, and natural unit.

Intellectuals provided these new formulations with their own rationality, describing religion, ethnicities, and kinship as archaic, whereas the new nations were seen as moving towards a rational and scientific modernity–part of an unending spiral of forward-looking improvements. Nations were defined as the necessary outcome of commercialism, scientific culture, and industrial progress occurring in Europe. By the 20th century the concept of nation-state embodied a series of ideological constructions including scientific rationality, the economic role of the State, the institutionalization of economic calculations, and modernism.

Only recently have intellectuals begun to approach the study of nationalism more critically, and a number of authors have conceptualized nationalism as a historically specific construction in which the country's leaders and populations play an active role (Anderson 1983; Worsely 1984; Chatterjee 1986; Kapferer 1988; Fox 1990). Some writers link the construction of nationalism to the colonial venture. This work has provided the social sciences with an analysis of nationalism that highlights its construction, through shared symbolism, of an imaginary common interest that may occasionally galvanize rebellion to existing authority or more often allow such authorities to control their national populations most effectively.

Despite the internationalization of capital and the transnationalization of populations, nation-states and nationalism persist and must be the topic of further analysis. For our purposes, it is important to recognize that transnational migrants exist, interact, are given and assert their identities, and seek or exercise legal and social rights within national structures that monopolize power and foster ideologies of identity. At the same time, it is clear that the identity, field of action, ideology, or even legal rights of citizenship of transnational migrants are not confined within the boundaries of any one single polity. The development of transnationalism challenges our current formulations about nationalist projects. We must ask whether transmigrants will continue to participate in nationalist constructions that contribute to the hegemony of the dominant classes in each nation state as they live lives that span national borders (Basch, Glick Schiller and Blanc-Szanton 1992).

As with nationalism, the constructed, manipulated, variable, flexible nature of ethnicity is only now becoming clear. *Ethnicity* first emerged as a key concept in social science in the United States during the late 1960s. Until that time, despite the multitude of indicators that sectors of populations of immigrant descent continued to maintain or even develop separate identifications, often including some ties to their country or region of origin, social

science maintained that the appropriate mode of analysis for the study of immigrant populations was "assimilation."

The assimilationist framework that envisioned the melting of the prior national identities of immigrants into a single new American nationality has been shown to be a construction reflecting and contributing both to a myth of social mobility (Omi and Winant 1986) and to the construction of American nationalism. The assimilationist framework and its concomitant popularization as an ideology, with America cast as a "melting pot," promoted a consistent message: a universal promise of mobility and success based on individual motivation and effort in a society in which there were no class barriers.

The assimilationist model had little to say about race. Often African-Americans were seen as a recently arriving immigrant group in the North, even though a section of this population had helped construct and then continued to live in these cities.[11] However, in the 1960s, as demands for civil rights and full assimilation changed to demands for Black Power, the entire nature of ethnicity in America was re-examined by social scientists. The result was the creation of new theoretical models. First, Glazer and Moynihan's (1963) effort to look "beyond the melting pot" took up and popularized pluralist ideology first articulated in the 1920s (Kallen 1956). The enthusiastic reception of the notion of cultural pluralism several years later by media, academics, and white "ethnics" (Greeley 1971; Novack 1974) seems linked to the development of minority demands for empowerment. A structuralist approach which emphasized the role of the larger society in fostering ethnic difference developed soon after as a critique (Alba 1985; Yetman 1985). Neither approach provided insights into racial divisions in the United States, however. Both were products of and contributed to the continuation of paradigms that conceptualize populations as divided into discrete, tightly bounded groups, and explain persisting identities as products of forces contained within separate nation-states.

In the United States, the cultural pluralists focus attention on cultural differentiation which they maintain divides the populace into separate, but equivalent, "ethnic groups," each with its own history, culture, and political interests. Central to the entire paradigm of cultural pluralism is the fact of persisting cultural differentiation traced by some pluralists to primordial sentiments described as virtually a "tribal" instinct (Isaacs 1975).

Pluralists have paid scant attention to differences within the populations labeled as ethnic. Jews and Italians, for example, are categorized as single

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[11] Classic assimilationist works are those of Wirth (1928) and Park (1950). This framework was extended to African-Americans in the work of Myrdal 1962 (1944) and E. Franklin Frazier (1957). Critiques of this approach have been made by numerous authors. For writers who specifically compare the experiences of immigrants and African-Americans see Stanley Lieberson (1980) and Omi and Winant (1986).

ethnic groups, whereas in both cases they in fact originated from different classes, regions, or countries, arrived with profound internal cultural differences, and in the course of settlement, developed new internal differentiations of class, region, and outlook (di Leonardi 1984; Gorelick 1974). National loyalties that link incoming populations to ancestral homes may be acknowledged by pluralists, but such relations are believed to fade over time.

The structuralists focus more on the economic and social forces within the polity that foster divisions between ethnic populations and thus the persistence of ethnic groups (Alba 1988; Glick 1975). They pay more attention to the constructed and manipulated nature of ethnic boundaries and ethnic differentiation. The term "ethnogenesis" is sometimes used to distinguish a process of cultural differentiation that develops from forces found within the larger society (Gonzalez 1988). In its extreme, all cultural differentiation is seen as not just "invented" but imagined, so that no actual cultural differences separate populations conceived to be culturally distinct. Bentley (1987) has labeled this the "empty vessel" approach to the study of culture to highlight the tendency of structuralist analysis to discount the role of the members of ethnically defined populations to actively employ ongoing cultural repertoires.

The current critique of pluralist and structuralist arguments has called for an analysis of ethnicity that leaves room both for "cultural practice" and human agency. There is an understanding that ethnicity is a product of the dialectic between continuities of cultural behavior and social constructions that are defined or reinforced by a particular nation-state (Blanc-Szanton 1985a,b; Basch 1985). However, a growing tendency in writing on ethnicity to focus on individual choice reduces rather than expands our analytical horizons (Cohen 1978). With the emergence of transnationalism the individual migrant is now embedded in a wider social field that spans two or more nations. A transnational perspective on ethnicity must be developed that includes an examination of culture and agency within this expanded social field.

Race is also a social construction but one with a different history and a different relationship to the growth of the global system. It is useful to recall that until recently race and nation often were used interchangeably, as in the construction "the British race," in order to make clear that race is no more a product of genetics than nationality or ethnicity.[12] Over time, however, in places like the United States, the set character of race was imposed by the insistence that biology rather than culture is to be determinative of differentiation. In other national settings, ethnic divides may be used as race is—in this sense both are social constructions used to order social and economic relations.

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[12] Park (1950), whose writings contributed to the assimilationist framework, spoke of the "race-relations cycle" and used the terms "nationality" and "race" interchangeably, thereby sidestepping the historic separation in the United States between people of color and white America.

At the same time, the historical construction of race is so firmly entrenched within the structure of global capitalism, and in the structures of inequality of particular societies, that some argue that social organization on the basis of race is best described as a "racial order" (Greenberg 1980), besides which ethnic categories seem ephemeral and fluid.

Eric Wolf has stressed the historical difference between the operation of ethnic and racial categories in the development of capitalism. "Racial designations, such as "Indian" or "Negro" are the outcome of the subjugation of populations in the course of European mercantile expansion" (1982:380). Formulations of cultural difference do not apply to race—as we saw in the 1990 census—when one could only be black, not African-American, West Indian, or Haitian. While ethnic or national terms stress cultural difference, Wolf makes it clear that racial terms disregard "cultural and physical differences within each of the two large categories, denying any constituent group political, economic, or ideological identity of their own."

The analytical mandate here is urgent and complex. Because race permeates all aspects of the transnational migrant's experience, it is important to analyze its several components. First of all, migrant identity and experience are shaped by the position of their country within the global racial order just as they are affected by the social location of their racial group within the nation state. Secondly internal class differentiation exists within the racial group to which transmigrants are assigned. For example, all those designated black in the United States can hardly be said to share the same class position. Moreover, the population designated as black in the United States is culturally differentiated (Basch 1987; Bryce-Laporte 1972, 1980; Foner 1983; Fouron 1983; Charles 1989; Glick Schiller and Fouron 1990). Migrants coming from the Caribbean, for example, confront an African-American population that shares several centuries of historical experience. At the same time the global construction of race provides the basis for affinity and communality.

Yet all of these factors do not encompass the complexity of the racial identity of migrants who are transnationals. An analysis of the conceptions of race of transnational migrants also must examine the constructions of race that persist "back home." Talking about "back home" emphasizes the necessity of examining how the several nation-states within which transmigrants reside influence constructions of identity that draw on race, ethnicity and nationalism and the manner in which transmigrating populations, with their own internal differences, process these constructions within their daily lives.

CONCLUSION

We have emphasized the constructed nature of the identities of nationality, ethnicity, and race, and stressed the necessity of looking beyond the

boundaries of existing analytical categories of social science. To conceptualize transnationalism we must bring to the study of migration a global perspective. Only a view of the world as a single social and economic system allows us to comprehend the implications of the similar descriptions of new patterns of migrant experience that have been emerging from different parts of the globe. At the very same time, it is in terms of these bounded identity constructs that migrants frame their individual and collective strategies of adaptation. In forging a framework of analysis capable of comprehending the life experiences of transnational migrants, social scientists cannot merely dismiss categories of identity as artificial and reified constructions that mask more global processes.

A focus on transnationalism as a new field of social relations will allow us to explore transnational fields of action and meaning as operating within and between continuing nation-states and as a reaction to the conditions and terms nation-states impose on their populations. Migrants will be viewed as culturally creative but as actors in an arena that they do not control. Transnational flows of material objects and ideas will be analyzed in relation to their social location and utilization – in relation to the people involved with them. This approach will enable us to observe the migrant experience in process, analyze its origins, monitor changes within it, and see how it affects both country of origin and countries of residence. Such a perspective will serve as a necessary building block for the reformulation of such key social science concepts as society and culture.

Ateneo de Manila University research project. Her subsequent work was carried out while living and working for many years in the Philippines and Thailand and most recently in the process of carrying out a research project for the Ford Foundation in the region. Additional funding was received from Columbia University and the New York Council for the Humanities.

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