

International Migration in Macro-Stratification Perspective: Bringing Power Back In

Marcel Paret and Shannon Gleeson *

Abstract:

This paper challenges the inward looking perspective of recent immigration research by situating migration to the United States within a global and historical context. This macro-stratification perspective breaks out of the confines of national contexts to explore how international migration is shaped by global power divides. We argue that in order to fully understand international migration, it is necessary to account for both the emergence of global power structures and the historical domination of Europe. We develop our argument by first outlining the significance of global power divides, with a particular focus on the United States. We then demonstrate how patterns of movement and incorporation are shaped by these power divides. This sheds new light on inequalities between native born and foreign born individuals in the United States. We conclude by highlighting the implications of the macro-stratification perspective for both future research and social change.

While some of the earlier research on migration to the United States paid attention to dynamics at the global level (e.g. Portes 1978; Portes and Walton 1981), more recent immigration research has become increasingly inward looking. This trend manifests itself in two primary ways. First, there is large concern with the economic and cultural consequences of migration for American society (e.g. Huntington 2004; Borjas 2001; Smith and Edmonston 1997). Second, there is a substantial body of literature on the incorporation and assimilation of international migrants into American society, which has been particularly concerned with the opportunities, attitudes, and outcomes of the second generation children of immigrants (e.g. Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Portes and Zhou 1993; Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco 2001; Zhou 1997, 1997a; Zhou and Bankston 1998; Gans 1992; *International Migration Review* 1997). A third segment of the immigration literature examines the “push” and “pull” factors that cause flows of international migration to the United States and tends to focus on micro-level connections and family ties,

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information exchanges, economic decision-making, and American policy (e.g. Massey 1990, Stark and Taylor 1989, Todaro and Maruszko 1987). While this third segment of the literature is slightly less inwardly focused than the other two sub-literatures, all three segments share a common feature: they tend to ignore global structures of power.

The importance of the global context for issues of international migration is highlighted by two patterns over the past several decades. First is the persistence of extreme economic inequality between the countries of the Global North and the countries of the Global South (e.g. Arrighi, Silver, and Brewer 2003; Arrighi 1991; Guillen 2001). Guillen (2001) points out that between 1870 and 1990 the income gap between “rich and developing countries” increased fivefold, and Arrighi (1991) highlights “a major widening of the already large income gap that fifty years ago separated the peoples of the South from the peoples of the organic core of the capitalist world-economy.”¹ A brief perusal of United Nations data confirms this inequality between nation-states (See Table 1). Second, not only is international migration on the rise – with 175 million people, or 2.9 percent of the world population, living outside of their country of birth in 2000 (United Nations 2004) – but much of this migration is characterized by movement from the Global South to the Global North.² For example, one out of five international migrants in the world resides in the United States, and eight of the top ten countries of origin are located within the Global South.³ Similarly, international migration to Europe has consisted of substantial flows from Africa and south Asia, and increasingly from China (IOM 2005; Laczko 2003; ONS 2006).

¹ Arrighi (1991) defines the organic core as the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Britain, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg, former West Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and France.

² Though our argument focuses primarily on the widespread South to North migration, we do not wish to discount the large amounts of migration taking place within the Global South, such as the migrant labor flows to South Africa (IOM 2005). Though we pay less attention to this movement, we do not view them as contradictory to our larger argument. For example, regional migration often reflects long-term conflicts in the post-colonial era (as is the case with Africa), as well as rapid industrialization in a globalized era which displaces formerly rural populations (as is the case in China); and it is difficult to understand these patterns outside of the context of global power divides.

³ The top ten countries of origin, in order starting with those countries that sent the most people, are: Mexico, China, Philippines, India, Vietnam, Cuba, Korea (North and South combined), Canada, El Salvador, and Germany (Migration Information Source 2006). Canada and Germany are the only countries on this list identified by the United Nations as developed countries (United Nations 2004).

Table 1. Social and Economic Disparities Between Countries

Country*	Per capita GDP	Expected years of schooling	Years of compulsory education	Infant mortality rate	Life expectancy	Percent rural
United States	36,924	16	12	7	77	20
UK	30,355	22	12	5	78	11
Australia	31,187	20	11	5	80	8
Canada	27,097	16	11	5	79	19
France	29,222	15	11	4	79	24
Germany	29,137	16	13	4	78	12
Mexico	5,945	12	10	21	74	24
China	1,100	Unavailable	9	35	71	60
Philippines	1,005	12	7	28	70	38
India	555	8	9	68	63	72
Vietnam	471	10	9	30	70	74
Ghana	354	7	9	62	55	54
Kenya	444	9	8	68	46	59
South Africa	3,551	13	9	43	46	43

Source: United Nations Social Indicators database, and United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) country profiles.**

*Due to space constraints we are unable to present data for all countries. We have chosen to highlight the top receiving countries of international migrants in the Global North, the top five sending countries of international migrants in the United States, and three countries with available data from Africa.

**<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/socind/default.htm>
<http://www.uis.unesco.org>

These patterns suggest that international migration flows reflect more than just micro-level processes and national policy decisions. In this paper we will argue that it is impossible to understand issues surrounding international migration—including economic and cultural impacts and processes of incorporation and assimilation—without situating them within a socio-historical context characterized by European expansion and domination. With this orientation the theme of power—a theme paid little attention in the immigration literature—looms large. We aim to demonstrate that international migrants occupy a particular social location within global power relations that is defined by the nexus of capitalism, nation-states, and racial classification systems, all three of which stem from European expansion and domination. A *macro-stratification perspective* is one that situates international migration within the context of these global power structures.

By ignoring the ways in which international migration shapes and is shaped by global power dynamics, inwardly focused immigration research can be misleading. Our goal here is to challenge this inward looking perspective by situating migration to the United States within a global and historical context. In doing so we hope to shed new light on processes of international migration and provide a framework for future research in this area. We believe this macro-stratification perspective adds to the immigration literature in two primary ways. First, it contributes to a better understanding of inequalities that develop within receiving countries. By exploring how processes of immigrant incorporation are shaped by unequal power relationships in the international arena, this perspective will illuminate key factors and elements that have not been previously addressed. In order to fully understand inequalities between native-born and foreign-born individuals, we argue, it is necessary to understand the global context in which they originate. Second, this perspective reverses the direction of concern. For example, while most immigration research in the United States focuses on the well-being of the United States—that is, the health of the economy, and the well-being of immigrants *as members* of the United States—the macro-stratification perspective redirects the concern towards the well-being of the entire world. In contrast to previous research it is much more outward looking. Indeed, one might view this approach as contributing to the broader research agenda set by scholars seeking to break out of the confines of national contexts to recognize global inequalities and power dynamics (e.g. Beck 2005; Sanchez 1999; Ngai 2004).

Elaboration of the macro-stratification perspective proceeds in three sections. In the first section we outline our basic argument regarding the significance of global power divides. While we believe this argument to have broad reaching implications, for the purposes of this paper we focus mainly on the United States. We then bring this argument about

global power dynamics to bear on the case of international migration, demonstrating how patterns of movement and incorporation are shaped by the global context. In the concluding section we summarize our position, highlight potential directions for future research within the macro-stratification framework, and discuss implications for social change.

European Dominance and Power in the Modern World

Our basic argument is the following. The simultaneous rise of capitalism, nation-states, and racial classification systems created new spaces for the hierarchical domination of disempowered peoples in the modern world. The emergence of all three global structures was characterized by European domination in the form of territorial expansion, colonization, conquest, and enslavement. As a product of this historical development, stratification in the modern world tends to reflect the general power of Europe, Europeans, and European descendants over non-European nation-states, non-Europeans, and non-European descendants. As an extension of Europe, the United States and Euro-Americans are therefore dominant players in the global arena. We of course recognize that this is an oversimplification of the situation—there are certainly exceptions to these patterns—but nonetheless believe these claims to be a fairly accurate portrayal of the modern world.

Before elaborating on these claims, it is necessary to briefly define what we mean by power. Here we adopt Mann's (1986) "IEMP" framework, which defines social power with respect to four types of relationships: ideological (I), economic (E), military (M), and political (P). These four types of relationships reflect "overlapping networks of social interaction," and are also "organizations, institutional means of attaining human goals" (Mann 1986: 2). Power in the various spheres is likely to be correlated, and may become concentrated in specific groups and institutions. Mann also distinguishes between distributional power—power of actor A over actor B—and collective power—the power A and B harness together, either against actor C, or nature. We focus on the distributional element of social power, giving the following definition: *Power is a relationship in which one actor has an ideological, economic, military, or political advantage over another actor.*

This definition of power raises the crucial question of who the actors are, and our argument hinges upon the interplay between actors at different levels of aggregation—individuals, groups, and nation-states. For instance in the case of economic power, one may choose to focus on individual actors, classes (e.g. Wright 1997), or nation-states (e.g. Arrighi, Silver, and Brewer 2003; Wallerstein 1974). But it is also

important to recognize that these levels are mutually reinforcing: some nation-states are wealthier than others (e.g. Arrighi, Silver, and Brewer 2003), and the wealth of individual nation-states depends partially on the strength of dominant classes within them. Conversely, there are diverse class structures among nation-states (Wright 1997), and the nature of class relationships is shaped by state apparatuses (Burawoy 2000). Similarly, racial groups vary across national contexts (e.g. Davis 1991), but racial groups also tend to form around national distinctions (Lie 2004). In sum, our goal here is to illuminate how class and race interact to create power divides in the global arena via the modern nation-state.

Throughout the essay we often refer to the existence and influence of global power divides, by which we mean unequal distributions of power, or relations of domination (Patterson 1982), that relate to the three global power structures of capitalism, nation-states, and racial classification systems. Modern capitalism allows for the class domination of workers by capitalists, racial classification systems allow for the racial domination of subordinate racial groups (e.g. Wacquant 1997), and the nation-state political system allows for domination of less powerful states by more powerful states. These relations of domination highlight inequalities of power and therefore reflect global power divides in the modern world. Because these power divides tend to reflect the historical context of European domination in which they developed, we also refer more generally to a global power divide between Europeans and non-Europeans.

With this definition of power in place, it is now possible to turn to our argument regarding global power divides in the modern world and the dominance of the United States as an extension of Europe. This argument stems from three main observations. First, European domination of non-European regions simultaneously achieved global integration and laid the foundation of European power in the modern world. At the end of the 18th century, the Industrial Revolution sparked unprecedented levels of economic growth in the countries of Western Europe through the introduction of new machinery, the increased division of labor, and the building of transportation and banking systems (Berend 2001). This development was also characterized by what is commonly referred to as the “expansion of Europe” (e.g. Wallerstein 1987). Not only did improved technology facilitate travel and trade, but the growing European economy required both raw materials and labor to feed its growing need for capitalist accumulation. The European economy expanded to all reaches of the globe and would eventually consume all peoples within a world capitalist system (Berend 2001). But not everybody benefited equally from this expansion, as the peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America were incorporated into the realm of the European economy as subordinates. Indeed, the very expansion of Europe

was achieved through conquest, colonization, and slavery, in which non-Europeans provided the labor and materials necessary for reproducing the new capitalist system (Winant 2001). The details of this expansion are beyond the scope of this essay, but the general point we seek to make is well-established in the literature: that this defining moment of global integration was characterized by unequal power relationships between Europe (in particular Western Europe) and the regions of Africa, Asia, and Latin America.⁴ In other words, the modern world was founded on a relationship of domination (Winant 2001).

Second, the modern state represents the primary political unit of the modern world: nation-states define and shape the identities of individuals and groups and create a guideline for interaction in the global arena (e.g. international migration). The modern state is a political form associated with clearly defined geographic boundaries and state bureaucratic systems; in essence, an apparatus with complete political and military control over a given territory (Lie 2004: 99). While there is considerable debate over exactly how and why modern states developed (e.g. Anderson 1974; Wallerstein 1974; Tilly 1992; Downing 1992; Gorski 2003), most agree that they emerged along with industrial capitalism to play an important role in shaping social life. As capitalism developed, European states emerged simultaneously (Gruhn 2001: 14971) to govern political interaction across geographic space, facilitating economic expansion and economic competition (both between European regions, and between Europe and non-European regions). During colonialism the regions of Africa, Asia, and Latin America were incorporated into the European system, with different regions occupied by different European states. Thus, during the 18th and 19th centuries the emergent capitalist economy and political system of modern states became intimately entangled (Reinhard 2001). The international state system eventually reached its height in the 20th century, as Europe's former colonies gained independence and formed states around the European-defined boundaries and identities (Reinhard 2001).⁵

⁴ John Lie highlights this point: "A moment's dip into world history should allow us to see that the fundamental force of globalization in the last half millennium has been colonization, that globalization and nationalism evolved together, and that nationalism and diaspora did so as well" (2001: 361).

⁵ There is some doubt as to whether the modern state system will retain its significance. For example, Reinhard (2001) points out that many states – particularly those in the ex-colonial and ex-communist regions – are suffering from internal political disintegration. Some globalization scholars also argue that states are undermined by fluid movement and interaction across borders (Guillen 2001). On the other hand, though, some macro-sociologists and world-systems scholars contend that states remain important actors in an increasingly integrated world society (e.g. Wallerstein 1974; Tilly 1992; Meyer et al. 1997). The modern state plays a key role in the current investigation, as the very process of immigration implies the importance of political units defined by clearly delineated borders. Without the state apparatus and national boundaries, the processes of international migration

Third, power in the modern world is highly racialized.⁶ The economic and political transformations described above were accompanied by simultaneous developments in the realm of ideology, culture, representation, and thought, which in turn facilitated the construction of racial divisions. As Europeans spread across the globe identities began to develop around geographic distinctions, and dialectic representations of Self and Other emerged to define groups in opposition to each other (Miles and Brown 2003). Faye Harrison explains that “Europe’s very sense of itself depended on an oppositional relationship to an invented antithesis, primitive savagery. The black, sub-Saharan African came to epitomize the most extreme variant of that cultural and racial alterity” (1995: 51). Capitalist expansion was heavily associated with skin color⁷ and characterized by the commonly recognized domination of darker skinned non-Europeans by lighter-skinned Europeans (Winant 2001).⁸ Bonds and antagonisms formed as conquest and enslavement continued, and despite their national differences Europeans (e.g. British, Portuguese, French) came to be united as “masters” and “whites” (Winant 2001). As the Enlightenment and modern science made available new ideological and scientific tools, European superiority translated into racial discourses and systems of racial classification (Lie 2004); Europeans began to represent non-European Others “as biologically distinct, a ‘race’ apart, with fixed capacities” (Miles and Brown 2003: 39). Racial classification systems positing a white-over-nonwhite hierarchy were then used to justify continued domination and exploitation of non-Europeans (Winant 2001). In sum, European expansion and domination paved the way for the development of an international racial discourse that became embedded in both science and common sense (Miles and Brown 2003).

and incorporation would be very different. Our discussion therefore seeks to establish the continuing significance of nation-states.

⁶ Here we borrow Miles and Brown’s definition of racialization as “a dialectical process by which meaning is attributed to particular biological features of human beings” (Miles and Brown 2003: 102). Further, though we do use the term “race” to refer to socially defined groups, we do not distinguish here between race and ethnicity, which we believe sets up a false distinction between biology (race) and culture (ethnicity) (Lie 2004; see also Wacquant 1997). Racial groups are a cultural product of power struggles within society, and just like ethnic groups are constructed through a combination of processes that are both internal and external to individuals (Nagel 1994).

⁷ Capitalism expanded across the globe at a time when – due to previously limited technology and the corresponding lack of geographic mobility – genetic variation in any given region was fairly homogeneous (Wallerstein 1987). Thus, there were clear skin color differences between dominant Europeans and dominated non-Europeans.

⁸ Despite the apparent links there is disagreement regarding the centrality of race in the formation of the modern world – while some view race as a primary causal factor (e.g. Winant 2001), others warn against this approach (e.g. Lie 2004). Regardless of whether they view the early stages of conquest and slavery as racial, though, most scholars agree that capitalism and modern states are highly entangled with notions of racial distinction (Miles and Brown 2003; Winant 2001; Lie 2004).

The race-concept has also been important in processes of state formation. The strength of the modern state is premised on the idea of internal unity, and most states claim to represent an entire group of people with a common national identity. The merger of state and nation gives rise to the modern notion of the nation-state. Historically European states sought to consolidate their national identity by defining themselves in opposition to non-Europeans (as discussed above) (Winant 2001). Factors such as language, religion, culture, race, and nation are often appropriated and employed after state formation to consolidate national identities (Lie 2004). But the impossibility of complete unity creates constant conflict, and the eternal presence of cultural diversity gives rise to notions of race: race and racism develop to explain and exclude the “outsiders within,” or individuals that “deviate from national norm” (Lie 2004). Racial divisions and hierarchies are therefore highly associated with the attachment of individuals to certain nation-states.⁹

Pulling this discussion together, Henry summarizes the development of power in the modern world: “The bases for the current system of international and ethnic stratification can be seen to derive from the process of emergent capitalism, the creation and consolidation of nation states in Europe, and imperial expansionism, colonialism, and competition among European nations” (1999: 449). As our discussion suggests, it is impossible to disentangle the rise of capitalism, state formation, and the emergence of racial classification systems. The world systems approach attempts to bring all three together, classifying nation-states and racial groups with respect to capitalist production processes (Wallerstein 1974, 1987). In this scenario certain nation-states and racial groups are associated with core production processes (reflecting the economic center), while others are associated with peripheral production processes (providing labor and raw materials) – that is, they occupy different social locations within the global division of labor. While this may be a crude treatment of the overlap between capitalism, nation-states, and race, it is clear that certain nation-states (Arrighi 1991) and racial groups (Oliver and Shapiro 1995; Wright et al. 1982) are wealthier than others, pointing to the presence of “an international hierarchy in which wealth, power, and advanced development are associated largely with whiteness or ‘honorary whiteness’” (Harrison 1995: 50).

With this backdrop, it makes sense that the United States has emerged as major global power in the post-World War II era (e.g. Wallerstein 1983; Sanchez 1999; Ngai 2004). The United States was founded by British settlers and is dominated by European whites who remain the numerical majority. As an extension of Europe, it is economically, politically, culturally, and militarily dominant in the

⁹ Lie (2004) has termed this phenomenon – the grouping of individuals in relationship to the modern state – “modern peoplehood.”

international arena (Winant 2001). At the same time the United States is peculiar because it embodies many of the power relationships that exist at the global level (Winant 2001). For example, the unequal power relationship between Europe and Africa manifested itself on a local scale between European settlers and African slaves in the United States. Racial and ethnic diversity in the United States was indeed founded upon a similar history of slavery, conquest, and exploitation of labor that gave rise to the modern world system (Steinberg 2001). While the United States may be inhabited by a variety of different racial and ethnic groups from different countries, it remains dominated by European descendents.

One might argue that economic globalization—defined as “a set of changes in the international economy that tend to produce a single world market for goods, services, capital, and labor” (Berger 2000: 44)—is serving to mitigate these unequal power relationships that were founded on European expansion and domination; for example, by reducing the importance of the nation-state (e.g. McMichael 1996; Strange 1996), or equalizing opportunities for individual economic actors (e.g. Wolf 2005). But evidence suggests that global economic corporations rely on state governance for creating favorable profit-making conditions (Evans 1997), and also that the spread of markets is in fact exacerbating inequalities in wealth and status between ethnic groups within nation-states (Chua 2003). Further evidence indicates that globalization is not altering the well-established inequalities between the Global North and the Global South (Arrighi, Silver, and Brewer 2003). For the most part, European dominance appears to remain intact. While the general structure of power around race, class, and nation-states is fairly stable, some things are clearly changing—globalization does mean greater flows of capital and labor across national borders (Silver 2003; Massey 1998). This pattern highlights the importance of international migration, to which we turn our attention now.

Bringing Power Back Into Immigration Research

At the heart of our critique of immigration research is that this literature tends to ignore global structures of power, and in particular the various ways in which migrant populations fit into these structures. Above we argue that power structures in the modern world developed around the capitalist mode of production, a political system founded on nation-states, and the division of people into racialized categories.¹⁰

¹⁰ These are not, of course, the only dimensions of power in the modern world. Perhaps most importantly, we have not dealt with male domination, which interacts with race, class, and the state in a variety of ways. A more complete elaboration of the macro-stratification perspective would have to take gendered structures of power into account. This task is beyond the scope of the current project. See Enloe (2000) for a persuasive account of the

Although the literature on immigration does reflect some of the inequalities inherent to these global power structures, there is less attention to the structures themselves. As mentioned above, this is misleading for two reasons: 1) this approach does not fully account for the factors shaping processes of migration and incorporation, and 2) it ignores the role of international migration in reproducing global power divides. We focus on the former in this section, and return to the latter in the conclusion.

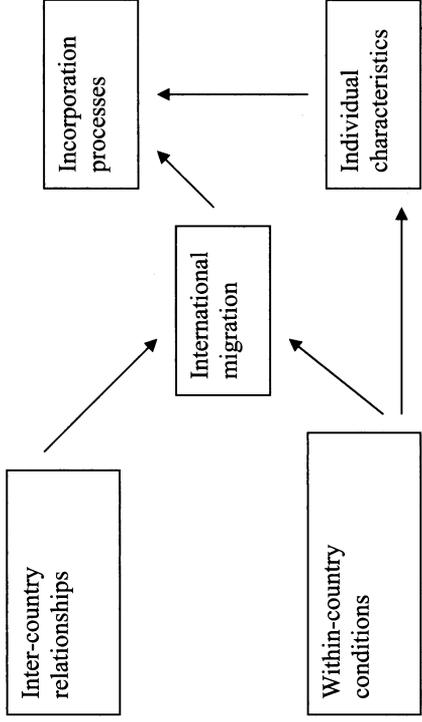
Figure 1 portrays what we view as the dominant approaches within the immigration literature. In general this research tends to be narrowly focused on individual, family, and community decision-making, how individual characteristics and policies in the host society impact modes of incorporation, and the connections that migrants retain with communities in their country of origin.¹¹ Migration to the United States is often understood as resulting from individuals attempting to increase their standard of living or reunite with family (Arango et al. 1998); this locates economic inequalities and cultural connections between countries, as well as transnational networks as key variables. Migrant incorporation into host societies is often viewed as a function of individual human capital (Borjas 2001; Chiswick 2005) or community networks and social capital (Aguilera and Massey 2003; Zhou and Bankston 1998; Portes and Stepick 1987). This research is important because it provides a foundation for understanding how migration processes play out at the micro level. It is also important to recognize that this focus is consistent with the interests of United States policymakers who are more concerned with the domestic impacts of immigrants than their social positioning within global structures of power.

But this more micro-level focus ignores the extent to which global integration and global inequality are underpinned by global power divides, which in turn shape processes of international migration and incorporation. In other words, the immigration literature has become dissociated from the socio-historical development of global power structures. Reflecting this development, Figure 2 adds in several variables and pathways that are representative of the macro-stratification perspective. As the figure suggests, the macro-stratification perspective is not necessarily at odds with the dominant approaches within the immigration literature; rather, we seek to demonstrate that these approaches provide an incomplete picture. The left side of Figure 2 represents the emergence of global power divides, and their relationship

ways that global power structures rely on systematic, legitimized, and sustained power inequalities between men and women.

¹¹ See, for example, the Winter 2005 issue of the *International Migration Review*. For another critique of this literature see Lie (1995).

Figure 1. Dominant approaches within the immigration literature



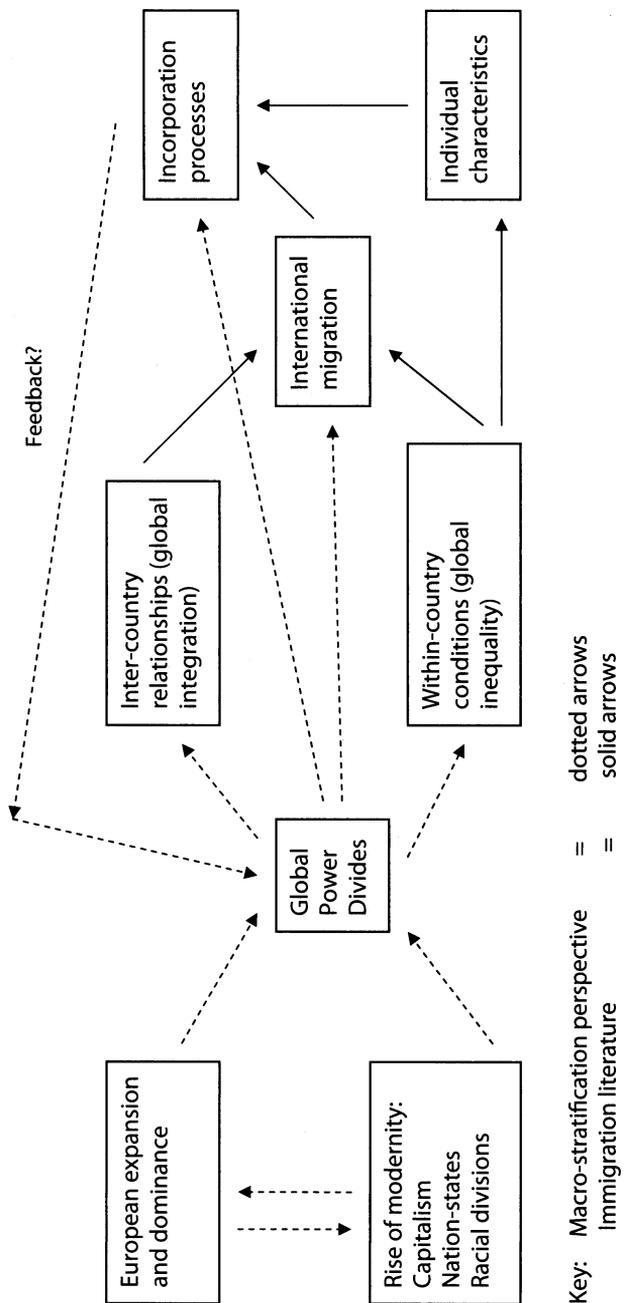
to European expansion, global power structures, global integration, and global inequality. This reflects the discussion in the previous section. Moving towards the right side of the figure, we will argue that these power divides in turn shape processes of international migration and incorporation. The remainder of this section is devoted to establishing these links. We deal first with the causes of international migration, and second with processes of migrant incorporation.

Global Power and Causes of International Migration

On a basic level, neo-classical economic theories of migration fit into the macro-stratification perspective. These theories posit that international migration reflects economic decisions regarding the costs and benefits of moving from one country to another (Todaro and Maruszko 1987; Jenkins 1977). Thus, migration occurs because there are greater economic opportunities in receiving countries than in sending countries. Though originally based on the economic decisions of individuals, scholars have updated the neo-classical economic approach to account for collective economic action within families, households, and communities (Mincer 1978; Borjas and Bronars 1991; Lauby and Stark 1988; Stark 1991; Taylor 1986, 1987; Stark and Taylor 1989, 1991). The common idea in both approaches, however, is that individuals and families migrate due to the presence of economic inequality between countries. As we have already shown, this economic inequality is rooted in a history of European imperialism and domination. Thus, the current economic inequality between European countries and European settler countries (e.g. United States, Canada, Australia) on the one hand, and non-European countries (e.g. most of Africa, Asia, and Latin America) on the other, reflects the application of European power during the building of the modern world. In other words, the macro-stratification perspective recognizes the sociohistorical significance of the current state of global economic inequality.

Further, there has been a strong link between global inequality and global integration (the interconnectedness of people in different regions and increasing interaction between nation-states). The unequal incorporation of the world's peoples into the capitalist world-economy discussed above was characterized by specific power relationships of colonization and conquest. Specific relationships of domination in the contemporary period tend to reflect a similar power divide between Europeans and non-Europeans. Taking these unequal power relationships into account, Sassen (1996) argues that international migration is shaped by specific migration systems connecting sending and receiving countries (see also Lie 2004; Sanchez 1999). These systems are shaped by both "past colonial and current neo- or quasi-colonial bonds," and economic

Figure 2. Comparing perspectives: Macro-s stratification perspective on international migration (dotted arrows) vs. Dominant approaches within the immigration literature (solid arrows)



links established through foreign direct investment¹² in an increasingly global economy (see also Ngai 2004). Put generally, powerful countries establish relationships of domination and exploitation with less powerful countries, and these relationships lead to specific migration flows.

Europe is a clear example here, as many European countries are currently experiencing large waves of immigration from their former colonies (Winant 2001; Sassen 1996). As a result, one will find many Algerians in France, Indians in Britain, Ethiopians in Italy, and Ecuadorians in Spain. The United States has developed similar migration systems through its own domination as a global power. As Sanchez explains, "the United States has clearly developed as an imperial power, and that imperialism (as well as previous colonial adventures) has directly and indirectly led to specific migrations to the United States" (1999: 5). The most obvious example in this case is the Philippines, as United States colonization has resulted in a situation whereby nearly all Filipino emigrants land in the United States (Sassen 1996; Sanchez 1999). Similarly, one may view the large waves of migration from Mexico to the United States as partially rooted in conquest and United States annexation of Mexican land (Saldivar 1997; Gonzalez 2003). Although specific power relationships with the United States may vary among countries, they are all characterized by the sociohistorical location of the United States as a global power (Sanchez 1999: 7).

The persisting global structures of capitalism and the nation-state are important components of these unequal power relationships. In an era of economic globalization, these relationships are often founded on the overseas involvement of capitalist actors seeking cheap labor and resources. Foreign economic involvement facilitates migration by establishing ideological and cultural connections between countries (Sassen 1999). Dominant economic classes are also likely to support international migration, as migrant labor systems have been crucial for the reproduction of capitalist economies (e.g. Wolpe 1972; Burawoy 1981), and international migration facilitates the reproduction of labor power in ways that are especially attractive to capitalist employers (Burawoy 1976). Nation-states often facilitate these international labor flows. For example, the United States developed the Bracero program to encourage labor migration from Mexico, and the Philippines has long supported a formal policy of labor exportation. But official migration flows are not the only source of labor, and it is equally as important to consider the holes that policies leave for certain flows (Zolberg 1989). In

¹² It should be noted that foreign direct investment in the contemporary period is similar in character to the economic exploitation of the colonial era. That is, economic headquarters remain in the core countries such as the United States and Britain, while the economy has expanded to incorporate the labor and resources of less developed and less powerful countries (Sassen 1996).

the case of Mexican migration to the United States, undocumented immigrants represent a particularly significant source of cheap labor for American capitalists. In sum, international migration is shaped by global power structures.

Global Power and Processes of Migrant Incorporation

Perhaps the most studied topic within American immigration research is the assimilation of migrants who land in the United States. This literature has evolved over time: early statements were based primarily on the successful assimilation experiences of the turn-of-the-century European immigrants (e.g. Gordon 1964; Glazer and Moynihan 1963); segmented assimilation approaches updated this model to better accommodate the experiences of the post-1965 immigrants from Asia and Latin America (e.g. Portes and Zhou 1993; Zhou 1997); and more recently scholars have extended the segmented assimilation framework to incorporate the race and class of incoming migrants (e.g. Bean and Stevens 2003). While these later approaches are helpful for thinking about the effects of global power on immigrant incorporation, assimilation research in general tends to miss a central idea: international migrants arrive in host societies as representatives of their nation's position within the global power structure, and in turn this socio-global location shapes their access to resources and opportunities in the receiving nation (Lie 2004; Ngai 2004; Henry 1999; Gimenez 1988).

Tracing the history of European, Japanese, Chinese, and African migration to the United States, Henry (1999) shows that the status of United States immigrants reflects the status of the corresponding country or region in the international status hierarchy. As demonstrated above, this international status hierarchy is related to the history of conquest, colonization, and slavery. Thus, "the high status held by Britain and other imperial European nations was conferred on their immigrant representatives," whereas low status has been afforded to immigrants from Africa, Latin America, and most of Asia. In order to understand this dynamic of reproduction, however, it is necessary to examine the roles of race and the modern state.

Lie (2004) has argued that racism develops within nation-states as an explanation for those who do not fit into the picture of national unity, and the most likely candidates for exclusion are immigrants. As outsiders, immigrants experience what he calls "political racism": exclusion from political life, and often denial of citizenship. Such exclusion is particularly potent during times of war when fear of "non-national Others" is heightened. An excellent example of such exclusion is the Japanese internment camps in the United States during World War II. But even further, the series of wars between the United States and Asian

countries—including the Philippines, Korea, and Vietnam—has led to the formation of an Asian racial identity associated with “foreignness,” and the loyalty of Asians Americans towards the United States is often questioned (Sanchez 1999). In general, such “political racism” or “horizontal exclusion” tends to fade over time because the forces of assimilation (e.g. intermarriage, acculturation) are strong (Lie 2004). Nonetheless, exclusion often persists due to the presence of extreme poverty, as in the case of African Americans in the United States or the Burakumin in Japan: “Racial domination is frequently a combination of political racism and economic racism. That is, racial hierarchy reproduces itself because of economic inequality” (Lie 2004: 183).

One of the key points here, which has been highlighted by other scholars as well, is that within host societies national origin becomes racialized (e.g. Gimenez 1988; Ngai 2004). In an analysis of United States immigration policy, Ngai shows how this process has played out in the United States. As she explains, the 1924 National Origins Act and other immigration restrictions during the 1920’s essentially barred Asians (including Chinese, Japanese, Indians, and other Asian groups) and Mexicans from attaining legal citizenship. As a result of this policy history, Asian Americans and Mexican Americans have been produced as “alien citizens” in the United States: “The legal racialization of these ethnic groups’ national origin cast them as permanently foreign and unassimilable to the nation” (2004: 8). Conversely, the law placed fewer restrictions on European immigration, and in doing so consolidated all of the European groups under a single white racial identity. Indeed, while some European immigrant groups experienced hostility and discrimination shortly after arrival in the United States, for the most part these groups have successfully merged into a single, dominant, white racial group (e.g. Henry 1999; Roediger 1991). Thus, racial classification is a crucial element of processes of racial domination (Wacquant 1997), and racial domination often reflects the historical development of European power. Whiteness studies scholars have highlighted the complex ways in which social advantages are distributed to those who are able to achieve status as whites (e.g. Harris 1996; Lipsitz 1995; Roediger 1991). In turn, the global continuity of white racial privilege (Winant 2001; Harrison 1995) is a primary mechanism by which global power dynamics and inequalities are reproduced within host societies.

World-systems scholars have highlighted how this racialization process overlaps with class distinctions within the global division of labor. Gimenez summarizes this perspective: “Such definitions depict in clear terms the division of the world between two classes of people: the white ‘majority’ and the rest, who have both a world-system level minority status as inhabitants of the periphery, and a latent minority status from the standpoint of core states, thus becoming minorities de facto

when they enter a core state” (1988: 42). While this may be an oversimplification of the situation—because racial categories do not map directly onto class categories (e.g. Omi and Winant 1994)—it is important to note that many international migrants arriving in the United States are up against multiple forms of oppression: not only are they oppressed as racial minorities, but they also occupy a subordinate position within capitalist production systems. As highlighted above, migrants represent a crucial source of labor power, and one that is particularly vulnerable to economic exploitation given their relationship to the state (Burawoy 1976).

Conclusions and Future Directions

We have proposed that international migration is best understood from a macro-stratification perspective. Such a perspective is grounded in the sociohistorical development of three global structures: capitalism, nation-states, and systems of racial classification. As these structures emerged, slavery, conquest, colonization, and exploitation constructed a power divide between Europeans and their former colonies and subjects. In turn this global power divide—along with the global inequality and global integration that accompany it—shapes international migration. We have argued that in order to understand migration flows and processes of incorporation, it is necessary to situate international migrants within global power structures. The disempowerment of non-European peoples in the global arena facilitates their movement to European host societies like the United States, and also limits their resources and opportunities when they arrive. We encourage future research to follow this macro-stratification perspective by situating international migrants within global structures of power and by paying attention to the links between global power divides and inequalities within host societies.

By way of conclusion, we would like to outline several directions for future research in this area. In general these suggestions call for a more historicized and outward looking approach that moves beyond focusing solely on particular sending and receiving states and the migrants that move between. Nation-states and international migrants need to be situated within the global power structure, rather than taken as contemporary givens. This does not necessarily mean that research in this area must take a macro approach; rather, case studies and nationally based studies must have an eye towards the global context. With this in mind, collaboration among researchers in different countries and regions of the globe will be particularly important. Likewise, sociology in particular would benefit from interdisciplinary work, as other disciplines (e.g. ethnic studies, political science, diaspora studies) have much to

contribute to the theoretical and empirical toolkit such a research agenda requires.

Substantively, future researchers working within the macro-stratification framework might take the following points of departure: 1) research that maps out the major actors and mechanisms of the global capitalist system, 2) research that addresses the linkages between diasporic communities across the globe, including connections based on race and class position, and 3) research that addresses the homology of inequalities between nations and individuals and the mechanisms that reproduce global inequality within host societies. Although there is certainly overlap among these research pathways, they might also be pursued separately. We briefly address each in turn.

Global Capitalism

As we have stressed throughout this paper, capitalist production systems are crucial for understanding the causes and byproducts of international migration. This is particularly true in the current era of increasing globalization, which is increasingly characterized by the presence of multinational corporations, foreign direct investment, free trade agreements, and organizations devoted to facilitating international trade and migrant labor (e.g. World Trade Organization). Not only does capitalism encourage movement across borders, but it shapes migrant living conditions and access to opportunities. Future research might explore these connections between global capitalism and international migration in more detail by addressing three sets of questions.

First, how does the organization of production facilitate specific movements across state borders? For example, how do capitalists encourage migration by building transnational links through outsourcing jobs and relocating production centers? At the same time, in what ways are people forced to migrate to take advantage of the concentration of production and wealth in core economic areas? Second, where are international migrants located within the global class structure (i.e. within the social relations of production; Wright 1979)? Although the majority of migrants are not owners of the means of production, there is still considerable class diversity among them. For example in the United States, most migrants from Mexico have very little control over the means of production, compared to many of the professionals who migrate from India. A class analysis that goes beyond simply identifying selection effects in the migration process is crucial for understanding the different opportunities and experiences of these two groups. Third, how does international migration facilitate the reproduction of the capitalist system? As highlighted above, migrant labor systems provide key sources of labor

for maintaining capitalist production. A key task for future research will be to understand how international migration systems organize the reproduction of labor power. The form of reproduction may vary with respect to arrangements among competing capitalists, state policies and resources, and the availability of labor.

Consciousness

The macro-stratification perspective suggests that individuals in different parts of the globe are linked in important ways, whether as workers, capitalists, racialized minorities, European descendants, or some combination of these social locations. If this is true, then struggles for social change in various countries and regions, and consequently the fates of peoples living in them, are likely to be intimately linked. A second direction for future research is to explore the subjective dimension of the global context through the consciousness of international migrants and the peoples with whom they interact. Do international migrants view themselves as being connected to various communities across the globe, and if so which communities?

An important issue to pursue here will be overlapping and intersecting identities. For example, how does the lived experience of being in a certain class location interact with the lived experience of being a racialized minority? Do international migrants view themselves in racial or class terms, or some combination of the two? Further, how do these forms of identity relate to nation-based identities? Gaining some purchase on this cultural and ideological dimension will help us to further understand current social movements and activist organizing, as well as the potential for future efforts towards social change.

Linking Inequalities Between and Within Countries

We have argued that global power structures shape inequalities between and within countries. We have also argued that international migrants arrive in host societies as representatives of their country of origin's historical positioning within the global power structure. It follows from these arguments that there is likely to be some consistency among inequalities between and within countries. Indeed, research on immigrant incorporation has for the most part ignored the fact that inequalities in the United States between native born and immigrant populations tend to reflect inequalities between the United States and sending countries. A third direction for future research is to explore this pattern in more detail.

This research pathway requires bringing together two existing literatures that have mostly remained separate: work on global

inequalities between countries (e.g. Wallerstein 1974; Arrighi, *et al* 2003) and the multitude of studies focused on immigrant incorporation (e.g. Zhou and Bankston 1998; Feliciano 2005). Substantial quantitative data on global inequalities (e.g. United Nations, World Bank, International Monetary Fund) and local inequalities (e.g. decennial census, economic surveys, longitudinal studies) is already available for this purpose, though qualitative data will be useful as well. The task at hand for researchers is to highlight the global and local patterns of inequality, and then use the historical and theoretical frame of macro-stratification to make sense of commonalities. For instance, researchers must begin to ask the question, how does the inferior global positioning of African countries connect to the inferior position of African-descendant peoples within Europe and the United States?

Final Thoughts

In sum, the global context is important—not just for understanding the patterns of international migration and its consequences for migrants, but for understanding the pathways towards achieving a more egalitarian global society. This argument is consistent with previous findings about the importance of global contexts. For example, evidence shows that social movements in the United States have been largely influenced by broader international contexts (e.g. Klinkner and Smith 1998; Dudziak 1988; Bell 2004; Skretny 2002). The Civil Rights Movement is an excellent example here: not only was the United States a key site in the worldwide push for justice and democracy, but the civil rights gains achieved in the 1950s and 1960s were made possible by the presence of simultaneous activist struggles across the globe (Winant 2001).

Our argument adds to this literature by highlighting the significance of international migration. We have argued that international migrants occupy a particular social location at the nexus of global capitalism, nation-states, and racial hierarchies. Due to their simultaneous association with multiple nation-states, the significance of the global context may be especially salient for these migrants. In this respect international migration (and economic globalization more generally) is bringing us closer to the Marxist vision of “universal intercourse” among workers across the globe, inspiring hope that workers of the world will at some point unite. But further, due to their location at the intersection of these global structures, international migrants may have a unique perspective on global power divides in much the same way that individuals at the intersection of multiple oppressions are able to clearly understand domination and inequality (Collins 1986). One only has to look to the recent struggles around immigrant rights in the United States to see that international migrants are at the forefront of global struggles of

resistance to power and domination. Framed simultaneously around issues of class, citizenship, and race, these struggles demonstrate both the intersecting nature of global power structures, as well as the potential for organizing around these intersections. Although international migrant populations may be socially located among the disempowered, they also represent one of our best hopes for social change.

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