The New Immigration

An Interdisciplinary Reader

Edited by

Marcelo M. Suárez-Orozco,
Carola Suárez-Orozco, and
Desirée Baolian Qin

HISTORY / AMERICAN STUDIES / POLITICAL SCIENCE

"This book is an essential reference for social scientists, policy makers, educators and other human service professionals. It contains an indispensable collection of informative, well-researched, engaging, and theoretically rich chapters and articles by the leading scholars in the field, from a variety of disciplines. The range of issues and perspectives presented—as well as the cutting-edge scholarship it contains— make it a must read."

— **James A. Banks**, Russell F. Stark University Professor and Director, Center for Multicultural Education, University of Washington, Seattle

"Though the United States is a nation of immigrants, we often have not welcomed new arrivals with open arms. This collection, featuring some of the leading experts in the field, will serve as a useful antidote to the ignorance, resentment and confusion that characterize much of the media coverage and public policy on this topic. For those seeking to understand immigration and the process of adaptation that immigrants go through, this book will serve as an invaluable resource."

— **Pedro A. Noguera**, Professor, Steinhardt School of Education, New York University

The United States is home to more immigrants than ever before. Consequently, immigration has re-emerged as a vital subject of scholarly inquiry and policy debate. Of course, immigration today is also a global and transnational phenomenon, affecting every region of the world with unprecedented force. *The New Immigration* collects the most influential and original conceptual and theoretical work on the subject, examining immigration within interdisciplinary and comparative frames. Scholarly perspectives from a range of disciplines, including anthropology, demography, psychology, and sociology, highlight areas of controversy as well as areas of consensus and analytic convergence surrounding this topic. *The New Immigration* is an indispensable resource, presenting an interdisciplinary breadth and comparative perspective rarely encountered in the field of immigration studies.

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Chapter 2

Principles of Operation: Theories of International Migration

DOUGLAS S. MASSEY, JORGE DURAND,
AND NOLAN J. MALONE

Most citizens and public officials *think* they understand the mechanics of international migration, of course, or they would not advocate such bold proposals or act with such assured abandon. In the North American case particularly, the reasons for Mexican immigration seem obvious. The prevailing wisdom begins with the commonsense observation that the United States is a rich country and Mexico, by comparison, is not. Although Mexico's 1997 GNP per capita of $3,700 places it in the upper tier of developing nations, it pales in comparison to the U.S. figure of $29,000., Nowhere else on Earth is there such a sharp contrast along a land border, much less one that is two thousand miles long.

As a result of this stark income differential, the standard of living is much higher north of the border. In per capita terms, Mexican private consumption is only 10 percent of that enjoyed in the United States. Obviously, simply by heading northward, crossing the border, and finding a job in the United States, the average Mexican can raise, often quite dramatically, his or her standard of living. Even at the current U.S. minimum wage, a migrant working full-time for a year would earn roughly three times the Mexican average income. Under these circumstances, what rational, self-interested Mexican would *not* want to emigrate to the United States? Simply by crossing a line, he or she would not only earn more income but gain access to better schooling, a richer infrastructure, improved social services, superior medical care, and a fuller array of consumer alternatives.

As far as most people are concerned, Mexican immigrants *choose* to come to the United States, making just such cost-benefit calculations. They believe that Mexicans rationally understand that the costs of migrating to the United States are more than offset by a variety of benefits. Even discounting for the costs of moving, crossing the border, looking for work, and adapting to a foreign culture, the material well-being of most Mexicans is substantially improved by relocating to the United States and pursuing work there, and each year hundreds of thousands of Mexicans seem to make precisely this decision. As long as the wage differential between Mexico and the United States is great, most people believe, workers south of the border have a strong incentive to move northward.

Although migration between Mexico and the United States goes back to the nineteenth century and has ebbed and flowed for more than a century, U.S. citizens and politicians have never been entirely comfortable with immigrants in general or Mexicans in particular (see Higham 1955; Espenshade and Calhoun 1993; Espenshade and Hempstead 1996). Public sentiment against immigrants has generally oscillated in tandem with expansionary and recessionary times and in conjunction with broader ideological currents (Meyers 1995). U.S. immigration policies have consequently swung back and forth between recruitment and restriction, acceptance and exclusion (Timmer and Williamson 1998).

For a variety of reasons, the late 1980s and early 1990s were a time of restrictive sentiment. The most obvious way to accomplish the assumed goal of reducing Mexican immigration, based on the understanding outlined earlier, was to lower the incentives by raising the costs and reducing the benefits of entry from Mexico. Unfortunately, the principal benefit—higher income—is not easily manipulable through policy mechanisms. No politician could ever vote to lower U.S. income as a means of reducing the incentives for immigration, and while U.S. political leaders might support efforts to raise incomes in Mexico, its economy is not under their direct control.

Given these constraints, U.S. policymakers focused on other, more malleable, costs and benefits. On the benefit side, the United States sought to reduce access to employment by criminalizing the hiring of undocumented workers and barring immigrants, undocumented and sometimes even documented, from receiving public services. On the cost side, the government hired more Border Patrol officers, increased their resources, and granted them new powers to detain, prosecute, and deport unauthorized aliens. By increasing the costs and lowering the benefits of undocumented migration, authorities hoped to deter Mexicans from entering and staying in the United States.

That something is seriously wrong with these policies and their underlying premises is suggested by the fact that they have not worked very well. As we document later, American attempts to raise the costs and lower the benefits of living and working in the United States have had little effect on the likelihood of undocumented migration, on increasing the odds of migrants returning home, on decreasing the odds of unauthorized employment, or on reducing the probability that migrants will undertake a successful border crossing. Other, more perverse consequences, however, have followed from these policies. The fundamental problem is that current policies are based on a rather narrow conceptualization of migration. The reality of contemporary immigration is considerably more complex than a simple calculus of costs and benefits.

A full understanding of international migration requires facing up to four basic questions: What are the forces in sending societies that promote out-migration, and how do they operate? What are the forces in receiving societies that create a demand for immigrant workers, and how do they function? What are the motivations, goals, and aspirations of the people who respond to these forces by migrating internationally? And what are the social and economic structures that arise in the course of migration to connect sending and receiving societies? The commonsense understanding of migration as a simple cost-benefit decision deals only with the third question, and it offers only one of several possible motivations for movement. In this chapter, we seek to develop a comprehensive explanation for international migration that addresses all four questions.

WHY PEOPLE MIGRATE

The conceptualization of Mexican immigration widely shared by legislators and the public as a cost-benefit decision corresponds to the theoretical apparatus of *neoclassical economics.* According to this theory and its extensions, international migration stems from geographic differences in the supply of and demand for labor (Ranis and Fei 1961). Countries with large endowments of labor relative to capital have low wages, while those with limited endowments of labor relative to capital have high wages. The resulting international differential causes workers from low-wage countries to move to high-wage countries. As a result of this movement, the supply of labor falls and wages rise in the former while they do the opposite in the latter, leading, at equilibrium, to an international wage differential reflecting the costs of international movement, pecuniary and psychic.

Associated with this macro theory is an accompanying microeconomic model of decision-making. Rational actors choose to migrate through a cost-benefit calculation that leads them to expect positive net returns, usually monetary, from international movement. Migration is analogous to investment in human capital (Sjaastad 1962), where human capital consists of personal traits and characteristics that increase a worker's productivity. Early in their lives, people invest in education to make themselves more productive and later reap benefits in the form of higher earnings.

Where one lives can be viewed as an individual trait that rational actors change by investing in a move. Migrants seek to go to places where, given their skills, they can be more productive and earn more money. Before they can reap this benefit, however, they must undertake certain investments: the material costs of traveling, the costs of sustenance while moving and looking for work, the effort involved in learning a new language and culture, the difficulty experienced in adapting to a new labor market, and the psychological burden of cutting old ties and forging new ones (Todaro and Maruszko 1987). According to neoclassical theory, migrants estimate the costs and benefits of moving to various international locations and then go to wherever the expected net returns are greatest (Borjas 1989, 1990).

In stylized terms, actors estimate expected net returns by taking the earnings anticipated in the destination country and multiplying them by the probability of obtaining and holding a job there, thus deriving an estimate of "expected destination earnings." These are then subtracted mentally from those projected for the community of origin (observed earnings multiplied by the probability of getting and holding a job there), and the difference is summed year by year over the individual's expected working life (with future years being discounted because money earned now carries more utility than money earned later). From this integrated difference the estimated costs of the move are subtracted to yield the total expected net return to international migration, and migrants go to wherever they expect that total return to be greatest (Todaro and Maruszko 1987; Massey and García España 1987).

A variety of anomalous observations suggest, however, that motivations for migration go beyond such cost-benefit calculations. Under neoclassical theory, migration should not occur in the absence of a wage differential, yet such flows are frequently observed. Moreover, if there are no legal barriers to movement, migration should continue until the wage differential between two areas is eliminated, yet migration streams commonly end well before wage gaps disappear. Widely observed patterns of circular migration are also difficult to explain from a strict neoclassical viewpoint; each year thousands of undocumented migrants and even many legal immigrants decide to return to Mexico (Warren and Kraly 1985; Jasso and Rosenzweig 1982, 1990; Lindstrom 1996; Reyes 2001). If the world really worked according to neoclassical principles, why would anyone migrate abroad temporarily to remit money back home in anticipation of an eventual *return?* A rational utility-maximizing actor logically should want to stay abroad permanently to enjoy forever the higher wages and consumption available in the United States, yet each year billions of dollars are remitted back to Mexico by migrants to improve their lives at home (Massey and Parrado 1994; Lozano Ascencio 1993, 1998).

These anomalies occur because the lifetime maximization of expected income is only one of several potential economic motivations for international migration, and not necessarily the most important. Neoclassical economics *begins* with the assumption that markets for goods and services exist, that they are complete and function well, that information and competition are perfect, and that rational individuals enter the market with exogenous tastes and preferences in order to maximize their utility (that is, they look out for number one). Given these assumptions, deductive logic is employed to discover what the world would look like if it indeed functioned according to neoclassical principles.

Yet reality is considerably more complex than the enabling assumptions of neoclassical economics. Markets for goods and services may not exist, they may be imperfect, and sometimes they may fail entirely, especially during the early phases of economic development. In addition, information is usually scarce and constrained by an individual's position in the social structure, and competition is far from perfect. Finally, even if individuals are rational and self-interested, they do not enter markets as atomized individuals but as members of families, households, and sometimes larger communities, social groupings that allow for *collective* strategies, which at times may dovetail with those of individuals and at other times be at odds with them.

If we imagine a world where families and households face the prospect of poorly functioning, missing, or failed markets, we come to a very different line of theoretical reasoning known as the *new economics of labor migration* (Stark and Bloom 1985). Unlike the neoclassical model, it does not assume that migration decisions are made by isolated actors, but that they are taken within larger units of interrelated people, typically families or households but sometimes entire communities. Within these units, people not only act individually to maximize expected income but also work collectively to overcome failures in capital, credit, and insurance markets (Taylor 1986, 1987; Stark 1991).

In most developed countries the risks to a household's material well-being are managed through private markets and government programs. Crop insurance and futures markets give farmers a means of protecting themselves against natural disasters and price fluctuations, and unemployment insurance and welfare programs protect workers against the vagaries of the business cycle and the dislocations of structural change. Private and government-sponsored pension systems allow citizens to minimize the risk of poverty in old age.

In relatively poor countries like Mexico, markets for futures and insurance are not well-developed, and the Mexican government is in no position to fill the gap by offering substitutes. As a result, Mexicans are not only poorer than other North Americans, they are also exposed to substantially greater *risk*. If society were indeed made up of atomized individuals acting solely in their immediate self-interest, then Mexicans probably would just have to suffer the risks quietly. However, most Mexicans do not live as solitary individuals but within households united by powerful family ties that precede the market (Vélez-Ibañez 1983; Lomnitz 1977; Adler-Lomnitz and Pérez Lizaur 1987; Camp 1989). Unlike atomized individuals, households can manage risk by diversifying their allocation of productive resources, one of which is labor.

Just as investors diversify risks by purchasing stocks across a range of firms, households diversify risks by sending out members to work in different labor markets. While some members (say, the wife and younger children) remain behind to work in the local economy, others (say, older sons and daughters) move to work elsewhere in Mexico, and still others (perhaps the household head and oldest son) migrate to work in the United States. As long as conditions in the various labor markets are negatively or weakly correlated, a household can manage risk through diversification. In the event that conditions at home deteriorate through rising unemployment, falling wages, failing crops, sagging prices, or high inflation, households can rely on migrant remittances as an alternative source of income.

In developing countries such as Mexico, markets for capital and credit are also weak or absent, preventing families from borrowing to smooth consumption or undertake productive activities (Taylor et al. 1996a, 1996b). In the absence of an efficient banking system, international migration becomes a reasonable strategy that poor families can use to accumulate cash in lieu of formal borrowing for consumption or investment. Households simply send one or more workers abroad to take advantage of higher wages to build up savings over a short time horizon.

CONTEXTS OF DECISION-MAKING

Individuals and households are almost always embedded within broader social systems that have their own organization and values, such as kinship networks, class hierarchies, ethnic and racial groupings, occupational sectors, and industrial or bureaucratic organizations. As social scientists have repeatedly shown, an individual's position within the social structure determines the context in which decisions are made. A person's structural position strongly influences his or her tastes, preferences, values, information, learning, resources, and, ultimately, the relative costs and benefits of any action being considered. By altering the context within which micro-level decisions are made, structural change in society can have rather pronounced effects in raising or lowering the probability of international migration.

Social and economic structures are commonly transformed through powerful macro-level forces that are *exogenous* to actors within any particular family or community, and social scientists have thus developed *structural theories* of international migration to acknowledge this fact. Building on the work of Immanuel Wallerstein (1974), a variety of theorists (Portes and Walton 1981; Petras 1981; Castells 1989; Sassen 1988, 1991; Morawska 1990) have linked the origins of international migration not so much to the decisions of individuals or households as to the changing scope and structure of global markets, a line of reasoning that is generally known as *world systems theory*. In this scheme, the expansion of markets into peripheral, nonmarket, or premarket societies creates mobile populations that are prone to migrate.

Driven by a desire for higher profits and greater wealth, owners and managers of large firms in developed nations enter poor countries on the periphery of the world economy in search of land, raw materials, labor, and markets. Migration is a natural outgrowth of the disruptions and dislocations that occur in this process of market expansion and penetration. As land, raw materials, and labor come under the control of markets, flows of migrants are generated. For example, when farmers shift from cultivating for subsistence to cultivation for markets, competition pushes them to consolidate land holdings, mechanize production, introduce cash crops, and apply industrially produced inputs. Land consolidation destroys traditional tenure systems based on common usufruct. Mechanization decreases the need for labor and makes unskilled agrarian workers redundant to production. The substitution of cash crops for staples undermines traditional social and economic relations, and the use of modern inputs, by producing high crop yields at low unit prices, drives out peasant farmers. All of these forces contribute to the creation of a mobile labor force: agricultural workers, displaced from the land, experience a weakened attachment to the community and become more prone to migrate internationally (Massey 1988; Hatton and Williamson 1998).

The extraction of raw materials for use in developed economies likewise requires new industrial methods reliant on paid labor. Offering wages to former peasants also serves to undermine traditional forms of social organization based on systems of reciprocity and fixed role relations, creating instead incipient labor markets based on new conceptions of individualism, private gain, change, and adaptation. Multinational firms enter poor nations to establish assembly plants and take advantage of their relatively low wages, often within special export-processing zones created by modernizing governments. The demand for factory workers strengthens local labor markets and further weakens traditional productive relations.

The insertion of foreign factories into peripheral regions undermines traditional economies in other ways: by producing goods that compete with those made locally, by feminizing the workforce without providing sufficient factory-based employment for men, and by socializing women for industrial work and modern consumption without providing a lifetime career capable of meeting these needs. The result once again is the creation of a population that is socially and economically uprooted and prone to migration, typically with international spillovers.

The same economic processes that operate globally to create migrants in peripheral areas simultaneously make it easier for them to migrate to the developed world (Sassen 1991). To ship goods, deliver machinery, extract and export raw materials, coordinate business operations, and manage foreign assembly plants, firms in core nations build and expand transportation and communication links to the peripheral countries where they have invested. These links not only facilitate the movement of goods, commodities, information, and capital but promote an opposing flow of people by reducing the costs of movement along reverse paths. Because global investment is inevitably accompanied by the creation of transportation and communication infrastructures, the international migration of labor generally parallels the international movement of goods and capital, only in reverse.

Economic globalization also creates cultural links between developed and developing nations. Sometimes the cultural links are longstanding, reflecting prior colonial relationships. Yet even in the absence of a colonial history, the cultural consequences of economic penetration can be profound. Although Mexico was colonized by Spain, Mexicans increasingly study at U.S. universities, speak English, and follow U.S. consumer styles, reflecting America's global economic hegemony. These cultural links naturally dispose them to migrate to the United States rather than other places, including Spain.

The world economy is managed from a relatively small number of urban centers in which banking, finance, administration, professional services, and research are concentrated (Castells 1989; Sassen 1991). In the United States these global cities include New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Miami; in Europe they include London, Paris, Frankfurt, and Milan; and qualifying for this status on the Pacific Rim are Tokyo, Singapore, and Sydney (Friedman 1986). Within these cities a wealth is concentrated to generate a strong demand for services from unskilled laborers (busboys, gardeners, waiters, hotel workers, domestic servants). At the same time the shifting of heavy industry overseas; the growth of high-tech manufacturing in electronics, computers, and telecommunications; and the expansion of services such as health and education all work to create a bifurcated labor market with strong demand for workers at both the top and the bottom of the occupational hierarchy, but with relatively weak demand in between.

THE DEMAND FOR IMMIGRANTS

The bifurcation of labor markets in global cities predicted by world systems theory dovetails with a larger line of theorizing known as *segmented labor market theory*, which grew out of institutional economics. Michael Piore (1979) has argued that international migration stems from a relatively permanent demand for unskilled labor that is built into the economic structure of developed nations. In his view, immigration is not caused by push factors in sending countries (such as low wages or high unemployment), but by pull factors in receiving societies (a chronic and unavoidable need for low-wage workers). The intrinsic demand for inexpensive labor stems from four fundamental problems faced by advanced industrial economies.

The first problem is *structural inflation*. Wages not only reflect conditions of supply and demand but confer status and prestige, social qualities inherent to specific jobs. In general, people believe that wages should reflect social status, and they have rather rigid notions about the correlation between occupational status and pay. As a result, wages offered by employers are not free to respond to changes in the supply of workers. A variety of informal social expectations and formal institutional mechanisms (such as union contracts, civil service rules, bureaucratic regulations, and human resource classifications) ensure that wages correspond to the hierarchies of prestige and status that people perceive.

If employers seek to attract workers for unskilled jobs at the bottom of an occupational hierarchy, they cannot simply raise wages for those jobs. Doing so would upset socially defined relationships between status and remuneration. If wages are increased at the bottom, employers will encounter strong pressure to raise wages at other levels of the job hierarchy. If the wages of busboys are raised in response to a labor shortage, for example, their wages may overlap with those of waitresses, thereby threatening the status of waitresses and prompting them to demand a corresponding wage increase, which threatens the position of cooks, who also pressure employers for a raise, and so on. As a result, the cost of raising wages to attract entry-level workers is typically more than the cost of those workers' wages alone. Thus, the prospect of structural inflation—the need to raise wages proportionately throughout the job hierarchy to maintain consistency with social expectations—provides employers with a strong incentive to seek easier and cheaper solutions, such as the importation of immigrants.

The demand for cheap, flexible labor is also augmented by the *social constraints on motivation* that are inherent to job hierarchies. Most people work not only to generate income but to accumulate social status. Acute motivational problems arise at the bottom of the job hierarchy because there is no status to be maintained and there are few avenues for upward mobility. The problem is inescapable because the bottom can never be eliminated from labor markets. Mechanization to eliminate the lowest and least desirable classes of jobs simply creates a new bottom tier composed of jobs that used to be just above the bottom rung. Since there always has to be a bottom of any hierarchy, motivational problems are inevitable. What employers need are workers who view bottom-level jobs simply as a means to the end of earning money and for whom employment is reduced solely to a matter of income, with no implications for status or prestige.

Immigrants satisfy this need on a variety of counts, at least at the beginning of their migratory careers. Migrants generally begin foreign labor as target earners: they are seeking to make money for a specific goal that will solve a problem or improve their status at home (such as building a new house, buying land, or acquiring consumer goods). Moreover, the disjuncture in living standards between developed and developing societies makes low wages abroad appear generous by the standards of the sending country. Finally, even though a migrant may realize that a foreign job carries low status, he does not view himself as a part of that society but as embedded within the status system of his home community, where hard-currency remittances buy considerable social status.

The demand for immigrant labor also stems from the *duality of labor and capital.* Capital is a fixed factor of production that can be idled by lower demand but not laid off; owners of capital bear the costs of its unemployment. Labor, in contrast, is a variable factor of production that can be released when demand falls, so that workers bear the costs of their own unemployment. Whenever possible, therefore, industrialists seek out the stable, permanent portion of demand and reserve it for the deployment of capital, leaving the variable portion of demand to be met by the addition and subtraction of labor, a dualism that creates distinctions among workers and leads to segmentation of the labor force.

Workers in the capital-intensive primary sector get stable, skilled jobs working with good tools and equipment. Employers are forced to invest in their human capital through training and education. Primary-sector jobs are complicated and require considerable knowledge and experience to perform, leading to the accumulation of firm- and job-specific knowledge. Primary-sector workers also tend to be unionized or highly professionalized, with contracts that require employers to bear a substantial share of the costs of layoffs (in the form of severance pay and unemployment benefits). Because of these costs and continuing obligations, workers in the primary sector become expensive to let go; they become more like capital.

The labor-intensive secondary sector, in contrast, is composed of poorly paid, unstable jobs from which workers may be laid off at any time with little or no cost to the employer. During down cycles an employer's first act is to shed such workers to cut the payroll. The resulting dualism thus yields a segmented labor market structure. Low wages, unstable conditions, and the lack of reasonable mobility prospects make it difficult to attract native workers into the secondary sector. They are instead drawn into the primary, capital-intensive sector, where wages are higher, jobs are more secure, and there is a possibility of occupational advancement. To fill the shortfall in demand within the secondary sector, employers turn to immigrants.

Taken together, motivation problems, structural inflation, and economic dualism create a demand for a particular kind of worker: one who is willing to labor under unpleasant conditions, at low wages, in jobs with great instability and little chance for advancement. In the past, this demand was met by women, teenagers, and rural-to-urban migrants. Historically women tended to participate in the labor force up to the time of their first birth, and to a lesser extent after their children had grown. They were not primary breadwinners, and their principal social identity was that of a daughter, wife, or mother. They were willing to put up with the low wages and instability because they viewed the work as transient and the earnings as supplemental; the positions they held were not threatening to their main social status, which was grounded in the family.

Likewise, teenagers historically moved into and out of the labor force with great frequency to earn extra money, gain experience, and try out different occupational roles. They did not view "dead-end" jobs as a problem because they expected to get better jobs in the future, after completing school, gaining experience, and settling down. Moreover, teenagers derive their primary social status from their parents, not their jobs. They view work instrumentally as a means of earning spending money, which they use to enhance their status among their peers by buying clothes, cars, and music; the job is just a means to an end.

Finally, rural areas of developed nations for many years provided industrial cities with a steady supply of low-wage workers. Movement from social and economic backwaters to dynamic cities created a sense of upward mobility regardless of the modesty of the circumstances at the place of destination. Even menial jobs in cities provided access to housing, food, and consumer goods that represented a step up in the world for impoverished migrants from the countryside.

In advanced industrial societies, however, these three sources of entry-level workers have drastically shrunk over time because of four fundamental demographic trends: the rise in female labor force participation, which has transformed women's work into a career pursued for social status as well as income; the rise in divorce rates, which has transformed women's employment into a source of primary support; the decline in birthrates and the extension of formal education, which have produced small cohorts of teenagers entering the labor force; and the urbanization of society, which has eliminated farms and rural communities as potential sources for new migrants to the city. The imbalance between the structural demand for entry-level workers and the limited domestic supply of such workers has generated an underlying, long-run demand for immigrants in developed countries.

WHY PEOPLE CONTINUE TO MIGRATE

Immigration may begin for a variety of reasons, but the forces that initiate international movement are quite different from those that perpetuate it. Although wage differentials, market failures, and structural change may motivate people to move in the first place, new conditions arise in the course of migration to make additional movement more likely, leading to the perpetuation of international migration across time and space. There has been a great deal of work on the perpetuation of international migration under the rubric of *social capital theory*. According to Pierre Bourdieu and Loic

Wacquant (1992:119), "social capital is the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition." The key characteristic of social capital is its convertibility: it can be translated into other social and economic benefits (Harker, Mahar, and Wilkes 1990).

People gain access to social capital through membership in interpersonal networks and social institutions and then convert it into other forms of capital to improve or maintain their position in society (Bourdieu 1986; Coleman 1990). Migrant networks are an important source of social capital for people contemplating a move abroad. They are sets of interpersonal ties that connect migrants, former migrants, and nonmigrants at places of origin and destination through reciprocal ties of kinship, friendship, and shared community origin. They increase the likelihood of international movement because they lower the costs and risks of movement and increase the expected net returns to migration.

In keeping with the dictum that "social capital...is created when the relations among persons change in ways that facilitate action" (Coleman 1990, 304), migration itself serves as the catalyst for change. Everyday ties of friendship and kinship provide few advantages, in and of themselves, to people seeking to migrate abroad. Once someone in a person's network has migrated, however, the ties are transformed into a resource that can be drawn upon to gain access to foreign employment and all that it brings. Each act of migration creates social capital among people to whom the migrant is related, thereby raising the odds of their migration (Massey, Goldring, and Durand 1994).

The first migrants who leave for a new destination have no social ties to draw upon, and for them migration is costly, particularly if it involves entering another country without documents. After the first migrants have left, however, the potential costs of migration are substantially lowered for the friends and relatives left behind. Because of the nature of kinship and friendship structures, each new migrant expands the set of people with social ties to the destination area. Migrants are inevitably linked to nonmigrants, and the latter draw upon the obligations implicit in relationships such as kinship, friendship, and even community to gain access to employment and assistance at the point of destination.

Once international migration has begun, private institutions and voluntary organizations also arise to satisfy the demand created by the growing imbalance between the large number of people who seek entry into capital-rich countries and the limited supply of visas they typically offer. This imbalance and the barriers that developed countries erect to keep people out create a lucrative niche for entrepreneurs dedicated to promoting international movement for profit, yielding a black market in migration services. As this underground market creates conditions conducive to exploitation and victimization, humanitarian organizations also arise to enforce the rights and improve the treatment of both legal and undocumented migrants (Hagan and Gonzalez Baker 1993; Christiansen 1996). Such organizations offer migrants another source of social capital (Goss and Lindquist 1995) by providing a range of services, such as border smuggling, clandestine transport, labor contracting, counterfeit documents, information and advice, and lodging, credit, and shelter at the points of destination (Prothero 1990).

The way in which social capital accumulates over time to perpetuate international migration represents a specific manifestation of a broader process that has been described as the *cumulative causation of migration* (first identified by Myrdal 1957). The causation of migration becomes cumulative because each act of migration alters the social context within which subsequent migration decisions are made, thus increasing the likelihood of additional movement. Once the number of network connections in a community reaches a critical threshold, migration becomes self-perpetuating because each act of migration creates the social structure needed to sustain it (Hugo 1981; Taylor 1986; Massey 1990; Massey, Goldring, and Durand 1994; Massey and Zenteno 1999).

In any bounded population, of course, processes of cumulative causation cannot continue ad infinitum. If migration continues long enough, networks eventually reach a point of saturation within any particular community. More and more community members reside in branch settlements overseas, and virtually all of those at home are connected to someone who lives abroad or has substantial foreign experience. When networks reach such a high level of elaboration, the costs of migration do not fall as sharply with each new migrant, and migration loses its dynamic momentum for growth. The prevalence of migration in the community approaches an upper limit, and migratory experience becomes so diffused that the stock of potential new migrants becomes very small and is increasingly composed of women, children, and the elderly.

If migration continues long enough, labor shortages and rising wages in the home community may further dampen the pressures for emigration (Gregory 1986), causing the rate of entry into the international migrant workforce to trail off (Hatton and Williamson 1994). When observed at the national level, this trend may be difficult to detect as new communities are continuously incorporated into the migratory stream. As the rate of out-migration decelerates in places with longer histories of migration, new areas are drawn into transnational circuits and their rates of migration begin to accelerate. As a result, the total outflow from the nation as a whole may continue to grow as migration spreads from place to place.

A SCHEMATIC DIAGRAM

Because the theories discussed in this chapter posit causal mechanisms operating at multiple levels of aggregation, the various explanations are not logically contradictory. It is entirely possible for individuals to engage in cost-benefit calculations; for households to seek to minimize risk and overcome barriers to capital and credit; for both individuals and households to draw upon social capital to facilitate international movement; and for the socioeconomic context within which migration decisions are made to be determined by structural forces operating at the national and international levels, often influenced by migration itself. Thus, a synthetic approach to theory construction is in order.

As we see it, international migration originates in the social, economic, and political transformations that accompany the expansion of markets. The entry of markets and capital-intensive production into nonmarket or premarket societies disrupts existing social and economic arrangements and brings about a displacement of people from customary livelihoods, thus creating a mobile population of workers who actively search for new means of sustenance. One means by which people displaced from traditional jobs seek to ensure their economic well-being is by selling their services overseas. However, higher foreign wages are not the only factor motivating people to emigrate. Households struggling to cope with the jarring transformations of economic development also use international migration as a means of overcoming frequent failures in markets for labor, insurance, capital, and credit.

The absence of unemployment insurance in developing nations creates an incentive for families to self-insure by sending one or more members overseas for work. By allocating workers to different geographic regions—rural, urban, and foreign—households diversify their labor portfolios to reduce risks to income. Moreover, as households plunge into the risky and unknown world of capitalist production, the absence of crop insurance and futures markets leaves them vulnerable to economic disaster, providing yet another incentive to self-insure through international migration. Families seeking to increase agricultural production or establish new business enterprises need capital, and the shift to a market economy creates new demands for expensive consumer items. The financing of both requires cash, and the inability of poorly developed banking systems to meet the demand for loans and credit gives households one final motivation for international movement. By sending a family member temporarily abroad for work, households can accumulate savings quickly to self-finance production or consumption.

While the early phases of economic development in poor nations create migrants, later phases of economic growth in wealthy nations yield segmented labor markets that attract them. Primary-sector jobs provide steady work and high pay for native workers, while jobs in the secondary sector offer low pay, little stability, and few opportunities for advancement, repelling natives and generating a strong demand for immigrant workers. The process of labor market segmentation is most acute in global cities, where a concentration of managerial, administrative, and technical expertise leads to a concentration of wealth and a strong ancillary demand for low-wage services. Unable to attract native workers, employers turn to immigrants and often initiate immigrant flows directly through formal recruitment.

Although often instrumental in initiating immigration, recruitment becomes less important over time because the same market processes that create flows of immigrants also create links of transportation and communication, as well as of politics and culture, to make international movement easier and cheaper. Immigration also stems from the actions that developed nations undertake to maintain international security, protect foreign investments, and guarantee access to raw materials overseas. Foreign entanglements create links and obligations that generate ancillary flows of refugees, asylum seekers, and military dependents.

Eventually labor recruitment becomes superfluous; once begun, immigration displays a strong tendency to continue through the growth and elaboration of migrant networks. Over time the process of network expansion becomes self-perpetuating because each act of migration creates social infrastructure to promote additional movement. As receiving countries implement restrictive policies to counter rising tides of immigrants, moreover, they only create a lucrative niche into which enterprising agents move to create migrant-supporting institutions, providing even more social capital for international migration.

During the initial phases of emigration from any sending country, the effects of capitalist penetration, market failure, network formation, and cumulative causation dominate in explaining the flows, but as out-migration reaches high levels, the costs and risks of international movement drop and movement is increasingly determined by international wage differentials and labor demand. As developing nations grow economically, international wage gaps diminish and well-functioning markets for capital, credit, insurance, and futures come into existence, reducing the incentives for emigration. If these trends continue, the country ultimately becomes integrated into the global economy as a developed, capitalist society, whereupon it undergoes a migration transition: net out-migration ceases, and the nation becomes an importer of labor. Historically, this process of development, emigration, and transition took European nations eight or nine decades, but by the late twentieth century the process seemed to have been compressed into just thirty or forty years.

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