Key Concepts in
Migration

DAVID BARTRAM, MARITSA V. POROS
AND PIERRE MONFORTE

§SAGE

Key Concepts in
Migration

The SAGE Key Concepts series provides students with accessible and authoritative knowledge of the essential topics in a variety of disciplines. Cross-referenced throughout, the format encourages critical evaluation through understanding. Written by experienced and respected academics, the books are indispensable study aids and guides to comprehension.

Key Concepts in
Migration

DAVID BARTRAM, MARITSA V. POROS
AND PIERRE MONFORTE

SAGE

⑤SAGE

Los Angeles | London | New Delhi
Singapore | Washington DC

contents

about the authors

David Bartram received his PhD in sociology from the University of Wisconsin–Madison following a BA from Kenyon College. He is currently Senior Lecturer in Sociology at the University of Leicester. His current research explores the connection between migration and happiness; other topics include migrant workers in Israel and migration to Israel more generally. He has held grants from the Economic and Social Research Council (UK), the Social Science Research Council (USA), the Nuffield Foundation (UK), and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Maritsa V. Poros is Associate Professor of Sociology and International Studies at The City College and Graduate Center of the City University of New York. She received her PhD from Columbia University, followed by a postdoctoral fellowship at the US Census Bureau. Her research has been funded by the US National Science Foundation and examines the social networks of immigrants and the inequalities they experience in the labour market, their communities and everyday life.

Pierre Monforte is Lecturer in Sociology at the University of Leicester. He received his PhD from the European University Institute in Florence (Italy) and was a postdoctoral fellow at the Université de Montréal. His research explores the dynamics of protest of migrants in different political contexts. He has carried out empirical research in France, Germany, Canada and the UK. He also explores the process of construction of European immigration and asylum policies.

1 Introduction

Few if any topics are more fundamental to the social sciences than international migration. We cannot usefully speak about a 'society' without knowing something about its membership and boundaries. That point has particular force in the contemporary period when most societies are defined in relation to nations: one usually thinks by default of *British* society or *American* society. Matters might be simpler if the membership of societies were fixed, static, and thus obvious and uncontested – if we all could easily know who counts as 'British', etc. But when societies experience immigration in non-trivial numbers (as virtually all countries now do) it becomes plain that societies are inevitably quite fluid and perhaps even chronically indistinct. The observation holds not just for social science research but for the experience of everyday life: the basis for social solidarity and cooperation is sometimes less secure than some would like, though the point has as much to do with the preferences (and sometimes the prejudices) of some natives as it does with the inflows of immigrants themselves.

For research and teaching in the social sciences, then, immigration and immigrants are ignored at one's peril even when focusing on topics that might at first glance appear to have nothing to do with immigration. The study of entrepreneurship cannot overlook the strong tendency of immigrants to create their own businesses. Research on elections and voting behaviour would flounder in many contexts without attention to the distinctive patterns of particular immigrant groups; Florida and California are obvious examples in this respect, but the assertion is no less true of France – to say nothing of the emphasis some parties put on immigration as a campaign issue. Perhaps a sociologist could investigate the Amish in the USA without worrying too much about immigrants – but that suggestion demonstrates by way of contrast a broader point about the sociology of religion. In each case, immigrants are not simply a distinctive group: they are a key part of the whole, with far-reaching implications for how we understand important aspects of 'us'.

The centrality of migration in the social sciences is of course matched by its political salience. Migration is a highly challenging policy area in most wealthy countries (and in some poorer ones as well). In many countries there is widespread public opposition to (or, at a minimum, uneasiness about) immigration that reaches any significant numbers. Many people fear, usually with little justification, that migrants will 'take our jobs'. Having defined migrants as not 'part of us', some people also worry about provision of certain public services: instead of seeing the issue simply in terms of numbers (additional demand that can be satisfied via expanded supply, drawing on the added economic contributions immigrants make), many natives identify immigrants as the source of any and all difficulties they experience in gaining access to health care, education, public housing, etc. Political leaders in democratic countries then face a difficult choice: either be led by public opinion, or attempt to lead by trying to educate voters

about a highly complex and emotive topic. As in many policy areas, politicians often punt (in the American-football sense), trying to manage expectations by creating an appearance of acting on voters' concerns about immigration, while bending policy to the wishes of powerful interests such as lobbyists and campaign donors. It is usually difficult to describe the resulting policy approaches as rational and coherent.

It hardly needs saying that efforts to improve policy-making on migration depend heavily on the development of a better understanding of migration, among policy-makers and the public alike. A well-known example illustrates the point. In 2006, the American government began extending a large fence (in certain places, a 21-foot-high steel wall) along its border with Mexico, reinforced by electronic sensors, cameras, etc. (Previously, only limited portions of the border had anything more than basic barbed wire.) The logic was simple: to reduce 'illegal immigration', one simply had to prevent entry, making it more difficult to cross the border except at designated places. What the politicians didn't know – indeed, what they failed to learn despite the efforts of migration researchers to help them learn – is that a fence inhibiting entry would discourage the tendency of many migrants (especially those lacking authorization) to engage in 'circular migration'. Some migrants are employed in seasonal jobs, and they often return home of their own accord – and then re-enter the USA for the next relevant season. When the fence was built, many migrants worried that they would be unable to re-enter, and so they refrained from returning home: their presence in the USA became *more* permanent rather than less. On top of that, many 'illegal immigrants' do not acquire that status by sneaking across the border; instead, they enter by posing as tourists, or they begin with a temporary work permit but then do not leave when it expires. It is not difficult to see, then, that the Americans' fence did little if anything to inhibit illegal immigration; at best, its simple logic was beneficial only in giving the impression that the government was responsive to voters' concerns. One might say that we are still waiting for American policy-makers to absorb some lessons readily available in migration research.

The demands we as citizens and voters try to impose on policy-makers are rooted in our own understanding of migration, and in that respect social science research has a great deal to offer. Courses on migration have become a staple of degree programmes in most social science disciplines, and in addition to the primary research there is now a good selection of texts designed to help students gain entry to the field. The exposition in most instances is historical and /or explanatory (i.e., with respect to particular historical or sociological developments). There is usually direct treatment of a limited number of core concepts (e.g. integration, ethnicity), but in general the concepts relevant to the study of migration are embedded in historical or analytical discussions and are thus not readily accessible to those seeking to understand the concepts themselves. Indeed, in some instances the historical/analytical discussions presume an understanding of the concepts, and so a neglect of concepts per se potentially results in an underdeveloped appreciation of concepts and history/analysis alike. The logic of a 'key concepts' book is thus quite attractive: one can have direct access to a focused (and relatively brief)

treatment of a wide range of the concepts that underpin more conventional forms of writing. We say 'wide range' and not 'complete set' because the porous boundaries of migration studies as a field mean that any claim we might make here for the latter would inevitably run up against someone's sense that we have omitted something important.

Writing this book was a much less onerous task than we initially imagined. While it took a great deal of work, the work was rewarding insofar as it led us to read more widely than we normally would in our more circumscribed research efforts. In certain instances we found ourselves asking questions like 'Okay, what *does* integration mean?' We suspect that sort of experience is quite common, given the wide range of concepts migration scholars use together with the tendency to do quite specific research. This reasoning leads us to expect that the book will be useful not only for students but for other researchers as well; we have each learned a great deal from contributions written by the others.

In addition to our own research and teaching, the book is informed to a degree by our own personal histories of migration, which have been useful insofar as we have tried to write about concepts in a way that connects to lived experience. After all, concepts (and theories) do not exist for their own sake but to help us understand the world we live in and our place in it. While our own migration experiences are distinctive in that most migrants are not academics moving with relative ease among the world's wealthiest countries, all three of us have a 'grounded' sense of what at least some of these concepts mean. For what it's worth: Bartram is originally from the USA but has lived in the UK for twelve years; he is now a British citizen, after passing the 'Life in the UK' test, participating in a citizenship ceremony and paying an extortionate fee to the British government. He also lived for extended periods in Israel, and for part of that time he was arguably an 'illegal immigrant' by virtue of doing paid work (editing someone else's manuscript), probably in violation of the student visa he then held (again, though, hardly a typical illegal immigrant). Poros is a second-generation American, born to Greek parents; her partner lives in London and holds Greek citizenship, which has afforded her an EEA (European Economic Area) permit and residence in the UK on the basis of European Union mobility provisions. Her pursuit of Greek citizenship has turned out to be far more complicated. And Monforte is originally from France but now lives in the UK (having also spent an extended period in Canada) on the basis of EU mobility provisions.

We have benefited enormously from the feedback and suggestions of colleagues in a wide range of countries. We are particularly grateful to Rutvica Andrejasevic, Loretta Baldassar, Paolo Boccagni, Richard Courtney, Antje Ellermann, Russell King, Peter Kivisto, Marco Martiniello, Laura Morales, Aubrey Newman, Mary Savigar, Kelly Staples, Carlos Vargas-Silva, Gustavo Verduzco and Catherine Wihtol de Wenden. Poros also wishes to thank Taressa Dalchand for her diligent assistance on several chapters. Finally, we are very grateful for the support and forbearance of our editors at SAGE – especially Martine Jonsrud and Chris Rojek – who responded with unfailing patience to our messages about the competing demands of very small children.

> *Definition: international migration is the movement of people to another country, leading to temporary or permanent resettlement; in the aggregate it commonly raises questions about national identities and social membership.*

In a perspective that is content with common sense, migration is the relocation of individuals to some distant place, i.e., at least beyond one's own city or town. In these basic terms, it is primarily a geographic phenomenon. It is also a very common experience: as is often noted, migration is a universal feature of human history, reaching back many thousands of years.

This book focuses mainly on international migration, however, and the definition in the previous paragraph is then too broad. What really matters about international migration – the reason many people find it interesting (and some find it challenging) – is the international part. Internal (domestic) migration is much more common, especially in the USA: every year significant percentages of Americans move between cities or states. But migration to another country is different – often more difficult, more fraught, and arguably more consequential despite the lower numbers of people who do it (relative to internal migration). The geographic nature of migration is hardly unimportant, but international migration is better understood more broadly as a *social* phenomenon that connects with a comprehensive range of life domains – politics, economics, culture, identity, etc.

To understand international migration at a conceptual level, consider that at the heart of the word 'international' is the word 'nation'. Migration from one country to another is usually consequential because of differences in nationality, or because of differences among people that are understood to correspond to nationality. An immigrant in any particular destination country is often noticeable, meriting attention as unusual, for being 'foreign'. This is a form of difference typically perceived as highly salient, one that marks 'immigrants' as distinct from those who migrate within a country; in some cases this perception contributes to a feeling that people who are immigrants are 'out of place' and really belong elsewhere (i.e., not 'here').

The word 'perceived' in the previous sentence is important. Immigrants are not different from natives in some sort of essential or inherent way; in many respects they can have a great deal in common with natives.[1] But in modern societies where nation-states are core institutions, nationality and 'foreignness' are *constructed* as central points of difference (Waldinger and Lichter 2003). People latch onto these points of difference, endowing them with meaning and significance, often reinforcing them in the process (see Gilroy 1993). As Martin et al. (2006) argue, international migration is a *response* to differences between countries (e.g. economic inequality, or variations in political freedom or repression): individuals migrate

because they want something not available in their own country. But the point can be taken further: the concept of international migration is *animated by* (perceptions of) difference. Again, differences are identified and labelled in terms relating to nationality but are understood to correspond to other forms of difference – social, economic, cultural, etc. As a matter of intuition, someone moving to New York from El Salvador is defined as different in ways that someone moving from Cleveland (Ohio) is not.

We can appreciate the utility of the conception provided here by considering instances of international migration that depart in interesting ways from more typical cases. The population of Israel consists of a very high percentage of immigrants; almost one million people migrated to Israel in the 1990s alone, adding more than 20 per cent to the population. Israel is very keen to welcome Jewish immigrants, even to the point of offering virtually unconditional citizenship to Jews upon arrival, prior to leaving the airport. Jewish immigrants are then eligible for substantial benefits and support for integration and settlement. The apparent contrast with other countries, where quite restrictive attitudes and policies prevail, could hardly be greater. Even in Canada immigrants are desired only to a point: one's chances of admission are higher if one is relatively young, well-educated, etc. In Israel the age and education of immigrants are unimportant at least in policy terms, as are other characteristics that might affect one's economic prospects (Cohen 2009).

What is important, however, is being Jewish. The reason Jewish immigrants are welcome in Israel – indeed, are eagerly sought – is that Jews who live in other countries are not considered foreign. Instead, insofar as Israel is the 'Jewish state', Jews everywhere are already considered part of the Israeli/Jewish nation (what matters here is Jewishness not as religious practice but as national identity/belonging). This point is apparent in the way certain words are used to describe the immigration of Jews. Many people do not use the Hebrew word for immigration (*hagirah*) when discussing Jewish immigrants (Shuval and Leshem 1998). Instead, the term used in normal conversation and official discourse alike is *aliyah*, meaning ascent: Jews who move to Israel are 'going up'. The term has highly positive connotations, not least for the fact that it also describes the ancient practice of ascent to Jerusalem for religious festivals when the Temple was standing; it also denotes being called to recite a blessing before and after a Torah reading during synagogue services.

From this perspective, in being so welcoming to Jewish immigrants Israel is not quite the exception it might otherwise appear to be. Again, in most countries immigrants are 'foreigners', and the presence of large numbers of foreigners amounts to an anomaly that (for many) requires resolution, e.g. via departure or integration/naturalization. For Israel, it is the fact that Jews are living somewhere else that (for many) constitutes an anomaly, and immigration (of Jews) is the resolution of the anomaly.[2] The law regulating Jewish immigration to Israel is the 'Law of Return': Jews who move to Israel are understood to be 'returning' to the land of their ancestors. In English one sometimes speaks of the diaspora – but the Hebrew term *galut* (meaning exile) carries a stronger connotation of not being

where one belongs. From a mainstream Zionist point of view, Israel is where Jews belong, even if they are also members of other nations. From this perspective, the movement of Jews to Israel is hardly international migration at all.

That perspective is in certain respects a peculiar one, and it overstates the differences between Israel and other cases in some unhelpful ways. (Similar points apply to '*Aussiedler*'/'returnees' in Germany, where the notion of 'return' informs policies and attitudes but should not lead us to perceive something other than immigration.) From a point of view that does not begin with mainstream Zionism, Jewish immigrants in Israel are indeed immigrants, and they share certain characteristics and experiences with immigrants elsewhere. But the Israeli/Zionist way of looking at these matters is useful for our consideration here, because it shows how important perceptions of national belonging vs. foreignness are to the concept of international migration. If one already belongs to the nation, then perhaps one is not quite an 'immigrant' in the way 'foreigners' are. By the same token, foreignness is a key component of the definition of international migration. International migration is thus necessarily specific to the (modern) period characterized by the dominance of nation-states (Joppke 1999a).

Israel is not the only country that helps makes this point. At the risk of provoking ire among Canadians: consider whether migration from Detroit to Windsor is 'international migration' in the same way that that term applies to migration from China to Canada. In legal terms, the two flows are similar: the USA and Canada are distinct nation-states, and the citizens of one cannot legally migrate to the other without the latter's permission. But in some respects the differences between American and Canadian national identity are not so great, and someone who moves across the Detroit River into Ontario is perhaps less of an 'immigrant' than someone who moves there from Hong Kong.[3] (No doubt some Canadians and others with a broadly cosmopolitan outlook would disagree.) Legal status (e.g. citizenship) is not as important (for conceptual purposes, at least) as perceptions of culture and nationality – a point evident also in the experience of many immigrants in the UK who in earlier decades arrived from the 'New Commonwealth' as British citizens but who were nonetheless surely 'immigrants' (Entzinger 1990; see Hansen 2000). International migration involves crossing borders, but some borders matter more than others (and matter differently for different people as well).

This at any rate is how immigration figures in many people's experiences, and those experiences matter insofar as they form part of the context for the way immigration is identified as such a significant issue in social, political and economic terms. In modern societies, populations and socio-political processes are defined, to a great extent, with reference to nation-states. A key element of identity is one's nationality: individuals are different (via self-definition and/or perception) by virtue of being British, not French, or Korean, not Japanese. Moreover, nationality is often 'sticky': when someone migrates from France to Britain, one does not instantly become British. Indeed, some immigrants find that the identity associated with their country of origin becomes deeper after moving to another country (see Ryan 2010: 'Becoming Polish in London').

International migration is thus defined primarily with reference to national differences and a world of sovereign nation-states. Even so, these differences and institutions are not immutable. On the contrary: migration presents a significant challenge to the nation-state (Joppke 1998, 1999a), as well as a challenge to a wide range of other institutions in both destination and origin countries (Koslowski 2000). Mass migration to the wealthy democracies, in particular, has resulted in a diversification of legal statuses (e.g. citizenship) and identities; Castles (2010) argues persuasively that migration is a key component of 'social transformation' more generally. While some migration scholars perceive the emergence of a 'post-national' period (Soysal 1994), a more moderate view sees nation-states as altered by migration but nonetheless resilient in response to it (Joppke 1999a).

For many people, the salience of national identity is very much a matter of regret, in part because of its consequences for how immigrants are sometimes treated by natives. In addition, modern nationalism has fed vicious wars and other actions ranging from individual acts of cruelty to instances of genocide in Germany, Armenia and Rwanda. In a cosmopolitan orientation, national identity does not matter: we are all equal as individuals, as 'global citizens' – and nationalism is something to be resisted or suppressed, particularly when one considers its consequences in places like Bosnia. That orientation is perhaps normatively compelling (though some advocates of a 'liberal nationalism' believe it is utopian and even undesirable), but it does not describe the world as it is, even if there are certain trends in that direction. Again, however, the idea is useful by way of contrast to a counterfactual: if we lived in a world where national identities and national borders did not matter, then 'international migration' would not be what it is in the world as it is.

In application to particular cases, the general concept of international migration often requires qualifications of various sorts, e.g. 'transnational' migration (connoting that immigration is often not a 'complete' process, as migrants sustain ties with the country of origin). Most of these qualifications are dealt with here as separate chapters exploring the more specific concepts. Any number of additional cautions are useful, to avoid some common misconceptions. For example, many people in the USA believe that there is rampant 'illegal' immigration from Mexico – when in fact Mexicans are increasingly likely to migrate internally and net migration from Mexico to the USA in recent years has fallen dramatically, perhaps even to zero (Cave 2011, 2012). (Mexico itself is becoming a significant destination for migrants from other countries, including the USA, Germany and South Korea, Cave 2013.) Analogous concerns in the UK might be alleviated if there were better understanding that a large proportion of 'immigrants' are students, most of whom do leave the UK soon after their studies are completed. We would also want to avoid drawing 'global' conclusions via analysis of 'Western' countries only, and so many of the chapters to follow consider migration experiences in middle-income and poorer countries as well. As with any social phenomenon it is possible to discern patterns and trends, but contemporary international migration is characterized by relentlessly increasing complexity and change (Castles and Miller 2009), so that it resists simplification even at a conceptual level.

1 As Castles and Miller (2009) note, nation-states themselves are typically characterized by considerable internal heterogeneity. Benedict Anderson's (1983) analysis of nation-states as 'imagined communities' is an important corrective to 'essentialist' understandings.
2 By contrast, many Palestinian/Arab citizens of Israel experience a lesser degree of social membership in Israel despite having been born there: they are citizens with formal equality, but they do not share the 'nationality' that underpins the Israeli nation-state.
3 By the same token, an American who moves to China is arguably more of an immigrant there than someone who moves from Taiwan to China. The point does not depend on any inherent qualities of Chinese people but rather on the salience of national differences in particular contexts.

KEY READINGS

Castles, S. and Miller, M.J. (2009) *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World*. London: Macmillan Press.
Joppke, C. (1999a) *Immigration and the Nation-state: the United States, Germany, and Great Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Martin, P.L., Abella, M.I. and Kuptsch, C. (2006) *Managing Labor Migration in the Twenty-first Century*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

3 Acculturation

Definition: A process by which the cultural patterns of distinct groups change when those groups come into contact with each other – sometimes resulting in the groups becoming less distinct culturally.

The concept of acculturation has a long and contentious history in migration studies. One might say the concept grew up with the history of migration to the USA, especially beginning with the second great wave of immigration at the turn of the twentieth century. The term has been used widely in the North American and European contexts, though increasingly with criticism, especially in societies that identify with a 'multiculturalist' ideology.

Early anthropologists and sociologists took an interactive approach to the concept of acculturation, defining it as a process by which the cultural patterns of distinct cultural groups change over time as they have contact with each other. Noted anthropologists Robert Redfield, Ralph Linton and Melville J. Herskovits (1936: 149), working as a subcommittee to the Social Science Research Council, defined acculturation as occurring 'when groups of individuals having different

cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups'. These early definitions of acculturation were criticized in the 1960s by Milton Gordon in his seminal book, *Assimilation and American Life* (Gordon 1964). Gordon reviewed numerous definitions of the term acculturation and its close cousin, assimilation, concluding that most of these definitions lacked a structural perspective regarding how distinct groups interact. Gordon was expressly interested in prejudice and discrimination and therefore understood acculturation to be an unequal exchange or interaction between cultures where one culture holds a dominant structural position, i.e., a position of power. Unlike earlier investigators, Gordon conceptualized acculturation via emphasis on the social relationships of native and minority groups. Gordon's view had great influence on subsequent definitions of acculturation (not to mention assimilation), such as those in the work of Herbert Gans and Richard Alba, leading to the notion that acculturation was generally a one-way process in which ethnic minorities adopted the cultural patterns dominant in their host societies (e.g. Gans 1979, 1998; Alba and Nee 2003). Elements of those cultural patterns as described by Gordon ranged from language, dress, emotional expression and personal values to musical tastes and religion. The reference group for these cultural behaviours was middle-class, white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants.

Herb Gans and Richard Alba and his associates have been perhaps the strongest proponents of Gordon's legacy. Their studies built on Gordon's definition of acculturation to measure the acculturation processes of first-generation immigrants in American society. Language acquisition became the principal measure of acculturation among the first generation in studies since the 1970s. Although much of the early research argued that first-generation 'whites' had acculturated and, indeed, assimilated into American society by the 1970s, much of the debate today relates to the so-called 'new' immigration: people from Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and Africa, who have made up the vast majority of immigration flows to the USA since 1965. For instance, Alba and Nee (2003) found that the earlier generations of Irish, Italians, Eastern Europeans, etc., acculturated (and assimilated) over time by acquiring the practices and customs of the American 'mainstream' – principally, proficiency or even fluency in English. The 'new' immigrants, on the other hand, present a more mixed picture, with different rates of acculturation for different groups. Still, conventional views hold that acculturation precedes assimilation and that language acquisition is the first (and necessary) step towards creating and maintaining primary relationships with individuals and institutions in the host society. Along with this uni-directional process lies the notion that the binary relationship between the 'hosts' and 'minorities' of a society reflects social realities more accurately than a multifaceted approach.

Critics of the concepts of acculturation and assimilation have identified faults associated with both assumptions. In general, these critical arguments promote the idea of ethnic difference and of multiple reference groups within society as against a binary relationship between host and immigrant/minority (Alba and Nee 1997). These criticisms have been based largely on ideologies of multiculturalism found most prominently in countries such as Canada and the UK. They argue that multiculturalist

societies have become so heterogeneous that the binary model of acculturation (and assimilation) hardly applies any more. Nor can one legitimately argue that acculturation must precede assimilation, as many 'new' immigrants have arrived in their host societies with greater human capital (education, English-language proficiency, etc.) than their predecessors upon which the older definitions of acculturation were based.

Questions about acculturation also arise for the native-born children of immigrants (the 'second generation'), though the concept takes on a different meaning for them. Alejandro Portes and his associates developed several acculturation concepts to capture differences in the ways the immigrant second generation managed acculturation, particularly as a relationship between themselves and their parents (Portes et al. 2009). Variants included 'consonant', 'selective', and 'dissonant' acculturation. Consonant acculturation occurs when parents and children simultaneously learn the language and become accommodated to the customs and culture of the host society. Selective acculturation occurs when parents and children learn the language and culture of the host society and, at the same time, retain significant elements of their 'original' culture or remain part of their ethnic communities (see also Waters et al. 2010). Finally, dissonant acculturation occurs when children reject the values and culture of their parents for those of the host society (Portes et al. 2009) or learn and adopt host society values and culture far faster than their parents (Waters et al. 2010). The perceived difficulties of second-generation adaptation through language acculturation and ultimately assimilation have been found to be much less problematic than is imagined by immigration sceptics. Indeed, Waters et al. (2010) found that 'selective assimilation' is by far the most common outcome of second-generation adaptation. The children of immigrants seem to be quite skilled at learning and adopting the host society language and culture while at the same time retaining important elements of their parents' culture, which provide them with sometimes crucial ethnic resources and social capital. This 'best of both worlds' position may even give them significant advantages over their native-born peers.

Still, whether applied to the first or second generation, these concepts of acculturation often remain static, especially as language and generational status remain the primary measures for assessing whether acculturation has taken place. Thus, both approaches to acculturation (the linear/binary version and the multicultural version) have been criticized. Critics argue that the concept of acculturation (and related ideas such as assimilation and ethnic retention) are inherently weak because they measure acculturation in terms of a set of static characteristics one must possess (Waldinger 2003). In contrast, Waldinger espouses a relational perspective (see Barth 1969; Brubaker 2004) in that he sees 'immigrants', 'natives', 'ethnics', etc., not as bounded groups that one can take for granted, but rather as parts of webs of relationships that form a multidimensional continuum describing the extent to which 'acceptability' of persons in society is a possibility. Social life, and indeed ethnic life, therefore, constitute dynamic processes that only rarely enclose categories of people in all situations. In particular, the relational perspective challenges the idea that there could be an identifiable 'mainstream' toward which one might be acculturating or assimilating (to say nothing of the underlying normative tone of the idea). After all, the term 'mainstream' seems to be just another way of talking about a white, middle-class reference

group, as Gordon unabashedly identified over fifty years ago. The relational perspective also challenges the idea that immigrants or minorities could belong to an 'authentic' or identifiable ethnic group without experiencing all of the usual cleavages of class, region, religion, etc., that are inherent in such groupings. The tendency (in the older views) to reify ethnicity in theories of acculturation and assimilation comes apart in favour of a more process-oriented, dynamic understanding of how individuals move in and out of 'groupness', in Waldinger's words. Acculturation, then, becomes a process by which individuals and groupings of individuals change through their exchange of culture (its practices, tools, symbols, ideas, values, etc.) over time.

The concept of acculturation varies in use across disciplines and to some extent across place. It has been widely used in anthropology, sociology, psychology and social work and in North America, the UK and Europe. As noted, it has also frequently been criticized, most recently in the context of highly diverse immigration inflows in 'immigration countries'. A more apt and challenging way to understand acculturation lies with the relational perspective, which asks us to locate and observe the relationships within which cultural change takes place and to understand change as a process that itself continually shifts in time and place.

See also: *Ethnicity and ethnic minorities; Second generation; Integration; Assimilation; Multiculturalism*

KEY READINGS

Alba, R.D. and Nee, V. (2003) *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Barth, F. (ed.) (1969) *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*. Bergen and London: Little Brown.

Gans, H.J. (1998) 'Toward a reconciliation of "assimilation" and "pluralism": the interplay of acculturation and ethnic retention', in C. Hirschman, P. Kasinitz and J. DeWind (eds), *The Handbook of International Migration*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, pp. 161–71.

Gordon, M.M. (1964) *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion, and National Origins*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Portes, A., Fernández-Kelly, P. and Haller, W. (2009) 'The adaptation of the immigrant second generation in America: a theoretical overview and recent evidence', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 35 (7): 1077–104.

4 Alien/Foreigner

> *Definition: The terms alien and foreigner refer to a person who is a member of some* **other** *society, a non-citizen, someone who is a stranger or outsider, e.g. by virtue of having been born in another country.*

Referring to an immigrant as a foreigner or alien implies (in the case of alien, quite strongly) that that person is not in fact a member of their new society. Foreignness is not an inherent quality of a person; instead it is a relation, defined by particular contexts: I am only a foreigner there, not here (Saunders 2003). The concepts thus lead us to consider the basis for membership and belonging: who belongs, who does not belong, and how do we reach such determinations? Given that national identity is a primary basis for belonging in societies/countries defined as nation-states, the answers have much to do with whether it is possible for someone to join the nation that dominates in the country to which they have migrated. Etymology is revealing even if not all-determining: the word 'nation' derives from a Latin root connected with birth (compare the Spanish word 'nació', meaning 'he/she was born'). For someone born elsewhere – or born 'here' but to the 'wrong' parents – one's prospects for gaining a new national membership and shedding one's foreignness cannot be taken for granted.

The question of belonging is addressed to an extent via citizenship, but determining who is a foreigner or alien is not as simple as identifying those who are not citizens. As Georg Simmel long ago remarked in his essay on 'The Stranger', the condition of the stranger is to be *in* a society but not *of* it; the stranger is both insider and outsider simultaneously (Simmel 1964 [1908]). This peculiar position is the hallmark of the foreigner/alien, and it profoundly shapes their integration into a new society – it is a condition that for many immigrants is not remedied even with naturalization. There is a disjuncture between citizenship and foreignness with respect to immigrants: one can have formal citizenship and yet still be considered a foreigner, particularly if in racial or ethnic terms one stands out as different in a context where these characteristics are held to be significant. Or, one can lack formal citizenship and yet be considered essentially 'one of us', as with Jewish visitors to Israel.

At first blush, the terms imply a dichotomy: one is either 'one of us' or a foreigner. In reality, matters are more complex. The populations of most nation-states are far from homogeneous in regard to national identity; a dominant national identity is typically contested or rejected by members of subordinate groups. In that sort of context, immigrants might not feel or be defined as foreign to any great degree when living among those who arrived and settled earlier; examples include new Cuban immigrants arriving in Miami, or people from any number of origins arriving in London. National identity itself can change via mass immigration. Some natives in dominant groups might accept the redefinition of national identity entailed by immigration, such that new immigrants quickly become part of 'us' regardless of ethnic differences; others might feel that their 'own' country is itself becoming foreign to them.

For most immigrants, foreignness remains a key aspect of their encounters with the destination society. Many natives take for granted the notion that immigrants are 'different' in ways that really matter; foreignness is then normally a lower position in a hierarchy (Saunders 2003). Taking a longer historical view, Booth (1997) notes that ideas about alienage have become 'suspect', and it is indeed more difficult now than in earlier eras to assert that the treatment of outsiders is not a