

Ellie Vasta

**Australia's Post-war Immigration –
Institutional and Social Science
Research**

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**Australia's Post-war Immigration -
Institutional and Social Science Research**

This paper, which is *work-in-progress*, provides an initial review of the theoretical traditions adopted by immigration researchers in Australia over the past fifty years or so. Many researchers have played a vital role in the development of both entrance and settlement policies while others have carried out social science research that has remained quite distinct from policy needs. The social sciences have not only contributed ideas and systematic knowledge to the development of policy, they have also provided systematic data and critical analysis which has countered misleading populist beliefs about such issues as economic growth, unemployment and institutional racism. In Australia, social scientists have been influenced by the theoretical paradigms that are dominant in their disciplines at the time of their research. In some cases, a theoretical tradition such as that of assimilation (following the Chicago School) coincided with the common sense ideologies held by the society at large. At other times, as with the introduction of multiculturalism, social scientists provided the theoretical foundations for what was considered a necessary basis for a culturally plural society.

Keywords: immigration research, Australia, theoretical traditions, social sciences, disciplinary traditions

1. Introduction

This paper briefly presents the findings of a major international comparative social-scientific project entitled *Intercultural Relations, Identity and Citizenship (IRIC): a Comparative Study of Australia, France and Germany*. The work has been carried out by leading research centres in the three countries concerned. Virtually all highly developed countries have experienced large-scale immigration and growing ethnic diversity since 1945. This was largely unexpected and unplanned, and had quite unforeseen effects on society, culture and political institutions. The project attempts a systematic analysis of the way in which immigration changed western societies, based on three detailed case-studies: Australia, France and Germany. The interest in these cases lies in the very different historical contexts and policies characteristic of the three countries. Any general trends or convergence tendencies observed in these cases may hold general lessons for a wide range of immigration countries.

One of the key findings to emerge from the project concerns the crucial role of the social sciences in defining the issues which arise through immigration and informing public opinion and policy development in the area. Still in preparation, this is the central theme of the book on which this paper is based, *Immigration and the social sciences: the experience of Australia, France and Germany*. The researchers reviewed social science research in each country since 1945, looking at relevant disciplines and paradigms. The comparison showed a high degree of national specificity with regard to theoretical and methodological approaches as well as

underlying assumptions on the relationship between migration, the state and society. It became evident that social scientists are heavily influenced by national traditions and historical experiences—such as colonialism, previous migration experience and assumptions on race, ethnicity and culture. Social scientists are also influenced by disciplinary fashions of the times in which they research and write. Moreover, policy makers have tended to structure research-funding mechanisms to select and privilege the types of research seen as politically or administratively desirable.

This paper, which is *work-in-progress*, is based on the work of the Australian team. In Australia, from the early post-war years, social scientists have been engaged in academic research and political debates about the social and economic consequences of immigration. Some have worked closely with governments producing data that would support government cuts to migrant numbers or cuts to welfare programs. Others have lent their expertise to develop a non-discriminatory policy. Over the years, many have played a vital role in the development of both entrance and settlement policies. On the other hand, some researchers have carried out social science research that has remained quite distinct from policy needs. These have concentrated more on a critical analysis of the effects of migration and on all aspects of the settlement process experienced by migrants and other groups in the society.

As will be noted more fully below, often the social scientists were influenced by theoretical paradigms that were dominant in their disciplines at the time of their research. In some cases, a theoretical tradition such as that of assimilation (following the Chicago School) coincided with the common sense ideologies held by the society at large. At other times, as with the introduction of multiculturalism, social scientists provided the theoretical

foundations for what was considered a necessary basis for a culturally plural society.

Typically, the state has played a central role in the regulation of immigration, the management of racial/ethnic differences and the construction of ethnic pluralism. On the whole, the relationship between the institutional needs of government and academic research has been a fruitful one for immigration in Australia. The social sciences have not only contributed ideas and systematic knowledge to the development of policy, they have also provided systematic data and critical analysis which has countered misleading populist beliefs about such issues as economic growth, unemployment and institutional racism.

There have been three types of academic involvement in immigration research. One type of research has been on consultancy commissioned by the government of the day either to provide them with necessary statistical data, with descriptive material covering a wide range of issues regarding migrants, their communities and policy matters. Typically, the commissioning body would shape the research questions depending on their needs. Although much of this research was necessary in order to build up appropriate information, in the 1980s consultancies became a lucrative area of research for social scientists and concern developed over their ability to maintain a critical stance to their work. A second type of related involvement concerns social scientists' input to government boards and policy development. Over the years, social scientific knowledge has been legitimated through the invitation of academics onto government review boards, advisory committees and the like. Again, this has raised the age-old contradiction for social scientists of ensuring that a critical distance is maintained when they enter the political arena.

The third type of research, which is what I will concentrate on, was mostly conducted by researchers in the academy. This research is mostly funded by university research funds and the Australian Research Council (ARC). Some of this research not only helped provide migrants with a voice, but also influenced government policies. Unfortunately, academic research has become more and more dependent on ARC and industry funding, both of which have control over such matters as methodology that is highly influenced by the amount of funding available. For example, longitudinal research is not readily funded by government or university funding bodies.

The theoretical traditions that influenced immigration studies in the social sciences have moved through four major policy phases. The first phase is the period of assimilation and exclusion that lasted from 1945 to 1972. During this phase, the main concern in Australia was to assimilate the vast numbers of groups arriving from Europe. This was a politically conservative time in Australia when politicians and the population generally agreed with a policy of assimilation, the continuation of the White Australia Policy and with massive racism against Australia's indigenous people. Much research of this time was heavily influenced by this dominant ideology.

The second phase, from 1972-1982, introduced the period of multiculturalism based on a welfare state model. In the early to mid 1970s a number of changes occurred in terms of our understanding of the position of migrants in Australia that influenced both policy and the theoretical frameworks adopted by researchers. First, there was a growing body of research that indicated that large groups of migrants were falling into a poverty trap (see *Henderson Report* 1970). Secondly, the new social movements of the 1960s and 1970s asserted that gender and ethnicity and other social characteristics, which had previously been ignored, were sources

of disadvantage for numerous social and cultural groups in Australia. Thirdly, in the early 1970s the conservative government of 22 years' standing was voted out of office. The change of government opened the way for a reformist social and political agenda. This resulted in a flourishing of research on immigration that continued until 1996 with the return of a conservative government.

The third phase from 1982 to 1996 was concerned with multiculturalism as a model for citizenship that provided the opportunity to fine-tune a policy that need to adapt to certain global changes. With the end of the cold war, there emerged an international debate on citizenship that brought into sharper focus the social and political rights of citizens. The effects of globalisation led to major debates on national and ethnic identities and the role of the nation state in these relationships. Much of this research continued to contribute to the nation-building process of the migration program.

The fourth phase, although tentatively based on a notion of multiculturalism, is still unfolding though it is already clear that multicultural policy has been watered down and immigration research has lost much funding and institutional support. Immigration research has tapered off due to the return of a conservative government where activists and intellectuals alike are compelled to re-think their political actions as well as theoretical analysis and language.

In the following sections I will provide an overview of the theoretical trends that emerged from the research carried out in the field of immigration in Australia since the end of World War II.

2. Theoretical traditions in migration research 1945-1972

Assimilation

In the early post-war years, a close working relationship was established between social scientists and the federal Department of Immigration (Wilton and Bosworth 1984: 21). Such relationships were influential in devising policies for immigration and assimilation for Australian society. Demographers like Price (1956) and Borrie (1954) promoted the dispersal of immigrants to prevent ethnic segregation and the quick learning of English thus discouraging the use of native languages. They also promoted the idea that immigrants should be permanent settlers who would bring their families and strongly supported the notion that migrants become Australian citizens. Schooling was seen to have pivotal role in ensuring that the second generation would reflect only the culture of Anglo-Australia.

Psychologists Taft and Richardson devised 'scales of Australianism' to allow individual measurement of the absorption process (Wilton and Bosworth 1984: 21). Thus, social scientists contributed to the process of migrant normalisation and social control by adopting and developing a framework of assimilation. In the 1950s and 1960s, social science research began to gain legitimate grounds because it presented itself as "scientific" in character. This notion of scientificity emerged as an integral part of the empiricist methodology of social science research engendering the idea of objectivity. In addition, social scientists throughout the fifties and sixties were informed by the theoretical perspective broadly defined as functionalism, heavily influenced by the Durkheimian and Parsonian models

of the social formation. The assumptions upon which this model rests are often drawn from commonsense knowledge that, with the aid of the notion of a scientific methodology, become legitimate sources of knowledge and produce what Foucault calls “truth-effects” (Foucault 1977 1980). Within this perspective, social scientists either have accepted or themselves constructed popular definitions of migrants and have become implicated in the processes of normalization and social control of Australian migrants.

One of the first analytical appraisals of the notion of ‘assimilation’ came from sociologist Morven Brown. He warned of the dangers of pushing migrants too fast into assimilation, for while it was a national objective that migrants should assimilate, it need not clash with the rights of migrants to maintain their own national cultures and identities (Brown 1961: 23).

Although Brown differed from most, the general position adopted by these early Australian social scientists is similar to the urban sociology of the Chicago School. The Chicago School’s thesis was that the host society has a generally accepted and coherent set of values, norms and behavioural patterns which vary from those of the newcomers which results in a lack of communication and is likely to cause conflict leading to problems of ‘race relations’. The process of re-socialisation is summed up in Park’s definition of the “race relations cycle” in which groups pass through several stages: contact, conflict, accommodation and assimilation (Park 1950: 82-84). The commonsense concepts that arise from this position are that migrants must assimilate to the dominant culture’s way of life, that maintenance of ethnic cultures is problematic and that it leads to ghettos. It was this theoretical position that informed the assimilation policy for the following twenty years.

By the mid 1960s the basic contradiction of assimilationism was becoming obvious. The operation of the labour and housing markets led to

high degrees of concentration in inner-city manufacturing areas. Together with the xenophobic climate, this partial segregation provided the pre-conditions for community formation, based on national groupings. Ethnic businesses, schools, churches, political organisations, social and cultural groups and media were clearly emerging. The various groups developed their own infrastructures and petit-bourgeois leaderships. At the same time, educational and welfare professionals were beginning to see the situation in terms of a problem of migrant deprivation or disadvantage.

A new generation of social scientists began to analyse the situation, basing their approach on the debate on ethnic identity, pluralism and the inadequacy of the melting pot model which was gaining momentum in the USA, as well as on debates on “race relations” in the UK. James Jupp, a political scientist, was one of the first social scientists to openly outline the problems migrants experienced in settling in Australia and to question the racist nature of assimilationism. Jupp’s *Arrivals and Departures* (1966) was significant in relating immigration and settlement to wider issues of social structure in Australia. He articulated the racism that informed the policy of assimilation. Social science discourse was moving from assimilation to integration: migrants were to be seen not as individuals to be absorbed, but as groups who were distinctive in socio-economic and/or cultural terms, and who would remain so for a transitional period. Social scientists were to bring to the attention of governments and inform policy that migrants were not assimilating, that it was no longer tenable, desirable nor advantageous for assimilationist policy to be continued.

The White Australia policy

In the early post-war years, numerous academic authors were aware of the problems created by the White Australia Policy, but many chose to find reasons which would legitimate it and so reproduced the racist ideologies articulated by the state.

Very little changed in the debate until the early sixties when one of the most informed arguments was published by the Immigration Reform Group (Rivett 1962) whose main organiser was Dr Rivett, an economist. They proposed a system that would accept non-European migrants through inter-governmental agreements of the kind Australia had with a number of European countries, with the same economic and assimilation factors taken into consideration. They attempted to demonstrate the false assumptions on which nationality was based (Rivett 1962: viii-ix).

But just as assimilation, in the late sixties and early seventies was no longer tenable, for reasons already mentioned, so too was the ideology of a White Australia no longer feasible, especially since Australia was finding it necessary to open up trade negotiations with Asian countries. In addition, as reports emerged from anti-racist groups and from ethnic groups themselves, Australian racism began to be confronted openly. The Labor party agreed to abolish the White Australia Policy and this issue brought to an end the bi-partisan agreement between the two major parties on immigration matters. With the election of Labor in 1972 and the beginning of multiculturalism, the critical research that had begun in the mid 1960s began to flourish.

3. Theoretical traditions in immigration research 1972-1990

During the early 1970s as the new social movements continued their momentum, some social scientists (especially those of immigrant background) took on the Gramscian role of 'organic intellectuals', working closely with politically-mobilised sections of ethnic communities to achieve social and political change. The key theoretical issue of the period was the relationship between class and ethnicity. Left-wing social scientists, influenced by the Marxist tradition, tended to emphasise class, while others, influenced by Weberian theory, as well as ideas derived from anthropologists like Geertz, put more stress on ethnicity. At this stage, studies on gender issues were beginning to be carried out though the struggle to be heard was much more difficult. The class/ethnicity debate was also influenced by the ethnic background of the researchers: many of migrant background, while concerned with class also emphasised the importance of cultural hegemony, racism and discrimination as factors leading to marginalisation of migrants.

This period can also be seen as a period of institutionalisation of research on immigration and ethnicity, in the sense that the many government commissions and inquiries provided an incentive to academics to carry out research in this field, while at the same time providing them with definitions of the problems, influencing their methods and theoretical approaches. The institutional side of research will appear in the final chapter of the book.

4. Class position of Australian immigrants

Political economy

One of the first analyses of the political economy of Australian immigration of the 1950s and 1960s was conducted by political economist and sociologist Jock Collins (1975: 106) who argued that a link had emerged between the rise of a local labour aristocracy and a migrant reserve army of labour and therefore, migrants were structured into a segmented labour market. There was also a strong concentration of migrant women in this section of the labour market (Collins 1975: 111-113).

Collins' analysis of the 1972 recession concluded that it was recently arrived migrants who bore the brunt of unemployment with a rate of 10.9 per cent compared with 2.1 per cent for the Australian-born, while the overall migrant unemployment rate was 3.2 per cent - Southern European migrants had higher rates (Collins 1975: 117). He also connected labour market segmentation to 'race', ethnic and gender division within the Australian population, with high skilled jobs with good conditions and job opportunities occupied mainly by Australian, UK and northern European males. The low skill jobs with poor working conditions and associated high unemployment rates being occupied by southern European males; followed by females then male Aborigines and lastly female Aborigines (Collins 1978: 63, Collins 1984: 11-12).

According to Collins, migrant exploitation was functional for capital, and class was given a prime explanatory value. In a later article, Collins (1978: 52). again used a reductionist model by claiming that the function of

education and the family was to reproduce capitalist relations of production. With Collins' model, class retained prime explanatory value such that patriarchy was defined as emerging from the bourgeoisie, thus missing the deep-rooted and complex power of gender discrimination. Feminist analysis indicated that both gender and ethnic relations must be given equal analytical value in order to clearly understand their effects.

The reserve army of labour theory drew criticisms from both marxists and non-marxists. Some empiricists (for example, Evans and Kelley 1986; Evans 1984) claimed that migrants were not disproportionately disadvantaged in Australian capitalism. Birrell and Birrell (1981: 32-41) attempted to dismiss the reserve army thesis by suggesting that 'southern migrant workers' were specifically sought by Australian employers and that the purpose of immigration was as explicitly stated in government policy - simply to build up the Australian population.

Functionalist empiricism and neo-assimilationist construction of migrants

There was a competing analysis of the position of Australian migrants between the marxists who claimed that disadvantage had to be understood through the analysis of class and ethnic relations, and the empiricists, who attempted to show that neither ethnicity nor being a migrant were factors which brought about disadvantage. The empiricist construction of migrants and its political implications are best understood through the works of Kelley and McAllister (1984) and Evans and Kelley (1986). Their research mostly focused upon the social status of migrants compared with that of native-born Australians with status measured through a number of variables

such as occupation, labour market participation, income and occupational mobility. Within this discourse, social data assumed the role of facts in the tradition of Durkheim's "social facts".

Offering a significant and competing discourse on immigration, this grouping of social scientists concluded that migrants and Anglo-Australians have an equal chance of success in the Australian labour market. Not only did these authors ignore many significant issues such as the rate of unemployment among certain groups of migrant youth, but they also attempted to construct migrants and their children as people without cultural or political histories.

On the other hand, the research findings of historians and educationalists Kalantzis and Cope (1984) demonstrated that multiculturalism as interpreted by some schools had trivialised migrant student disadvantage by placing too much importance on cultural artefacts and practices. They argued that multicultural education needed to be improved by concentrating on developing migrant students' conceptual processes. In direct contrast, Birrell and Seitz (1986) and Bullivant (1986) suggested that all multicultural education, except English language classes for migrant children, should be dropped.

5. Ethnicity and multiculturalism

Within the state's hegemonic articulation of multiculturalism and ethnicity, the overdetermining feature was that ethnicity and hence multiculturalism were defined as primordial, static, homogeneous within a naturally stratified society, held together by an overarching set of values and reflected in a

dominant Anglo-Australian identity. This was signified as un-contested terrain based on common-sense knowledge of cultural identity (ethnicity) which informs liberal/functionalist ideology. As noted earlier, Zubrzycki had significant influence over the state's construction of ethnicity and multiculturalism during the period of conservative government from 1975-1982. His position was critically challenged by migrants, academics on the left, and in reports commissioned by government institutions.

The Weberians have been concerned with the social basis of social action, achieved and ascribed status especially as it relates to ethnicity and is mediated by ethnic leaders. The Marxists have been concerned with the structural disadvantages suffered by migrants and the role of the state, ideology and class relations in the construction of migrants through ethnicity and multiculturalism.

Here I will very briefly outline some of the influential academic debates on ethnicity and multiculturalism in Australia during the period from 1972-1990. These two perspectives, along with the feminist perspective, facilitated some of the most astute analysis of the relationship between class, gender and ethnicity, for these perspectives were concerned with the systematic analysis of power.

Weberian/Foucauldian

One of the first systematic critiques of Australian post-war settlement policy was conducted by Jean Martin (1978). She aimed to establish how and by whom public or social knowledge is created or generated and "how the distribution of knowledge is related to the distribution of resources and power ..." (Martin 1978: 11). Martin's theoretical position was based on a

notion of the construction of power and knowledge, drawing on Foucault, and on the idea of human agency and interests mostly from a Weberian approach, adopting a social construction of reality perspective where those with power are the chief definers and those with little power are defined on discriminatory and exploitative grounds on account of their structural position. Martin suggested that policy had moved from one of assimilation, where migrants were mostly ignored, to a “definition of migrants as a social problem” (Martin 1978: 36).

Weberian

McCall et al. (1985) adopted a Weberian framework, defining ethnicity as an ideology constituted by an “ethny” (ethnically based social category, a representation of belonging) which assumes five characteristics, namely: solidarity, common origin, language, history and beliefs for action (McCall et al. 1985: 17). Thus, ethnicity was defined as “that form of named rhetorical distinctiveness that emphasises a transgenerational commonality of symbolic meaning, sustained and reinforced by recurring social actions” (McCall et al. 1985: 13). Ethnicity, according to McCall et al., “represents a claim for the recognition of groups which are not based on class, occupation, organised economic interest or sexual dimorphism”. The ethnic group (which they prefer to call an “ethny”) is a status group which forms a type of social closure as defined by Weber (see Parkin 1982) and uses legitimate means, as any other status group, to compete for scarce resources (McCall et al. 1985: 30).

One problem with this analysis was that despite being concerned about notions of power and interests, their definition of status group

assumed that migrant groups had sufficient power or status to make adequate gains when competing for basic economic and social rights. This problem stemmed from Weber's own analysis where he suggests that ethnic status groups via social closure are able to gain high status and hence other forms of privilege (Parkin 1982: 99-100).

Marxist

In the early 1980s social scientists working in the area were concerned that multiculturalism and multicultural policy were too easily defined on the basis of 'cultural differences'. The concept or category 'ethnicity' was problematised and analysed in relation to class and gender relations. Marxist scholars were concerned that migrants would be seen as problems due to their migrant status, their language and other cultural characteristics, rather than basing analysis on the structural disadvantage to which migrants were subjected. Class and other social disadvantages were exacerbated for migrants due to their experience of institutional and personal racism. This problem could affect the delivery of multicultural policies in various sectors.

Jakubowicz (1981: 4) developed the argument that "ethnicity as ideology mediates Australian class relations, by reifying the history of peoples into a static category of theoretical labelling". Jakubowicz convincingly demonstrated how the state, through various policies and practices, undertakes this process. Jakubowicz also claimed that multiculturalism, due to its discursive primacy over class, became a means of social control of migrants but at the same time multiculturalism would threaten Anglo-Australian cultural dominance. While this analysis illuminated how "ethnicity" has taken on explanatory and political primacy

over class, there were two problems which emerged. First, although it is true that ideology of ethnicity and multiculturalism can mask or act as an explanation for class disadvantages, they seemed to ignore the dynamics of culture and consciousness.

The second problem was that migrants appeared to be totally constrained by their class location with a dominant ideology operating but with no room for them to construct their own (separate or communal) identities through struggle and resistance. For Jakubowicz, the primacy of power rested in class and state relations and how ethnic relations are played out on those two terrains (Martin 1988: 392-408).

Ultimately, the Marxist and Weberian analyses were both significant to the debates on ethnicity and multiculturalism in Australia. One suggested that there are dominant constructions of ethnicity and cultural differences that end up ignoring class issues. The other argued that the subjective and strategic construction of meaning and action is valid, and that migrants do not suffer from false consciousness to the extent that some claim.

6. Multiculturalism and national identity

Nevertheless, by 1988 multiculturalism had become the dominant discourse. This was the bi-centenary year and the question of identity had become prominent again. One group of researchers argued that national identity was either invented or weak. As early as 1981, Richard White argued that Australian national identity was an invention. In 1982, John Carroll attempted to rescue some of the traditional Australian national symbols of

national identity that had been relegated to the realm of invention by White. Castles et al. in 1988 in *Mistaken Identity* claimed that Australia had a weak national identity and that we were in a position to develop a post-national sense of communal identity. In other words, a 'community without nation' (Castles et al. 1988: 147). On the other hand, some argued that however one defined national identity, the dominant Anglo national identity was not weak, but strong given the prevalence of racism in the community, among many leaders and also at the institutional level towards indigenous and migrant Australians (Vasta 1993).

In this debate, Smolicz (1985) continued to argue that ethnic identity and ethnic diversity should remain and develop within the overarching set of values that go to form the national Australian identity. It is this framework that has continued to influence the Labor Party platform on multiculturalism until the Hanson backlash in 1996.

7. The analysis of gender relations

In 1976, Cox, Jobson and Martin (1976) produced one of the first reports that focussed specifically on the position of migrant women in Australian society. This report, based on the findings of a large survey, focussed on migrant women in the workforce and the problems they face, it also detailed their experience in the workforce of things such as cultural differences, family pressures, language skills, literacy, training, marital status, child care, socio-economic indicators, reasons for working.

Following and expanding on the pioneering work of Cox et al. (1976), other women researchers have all highlighted the specific need to consider

migrant women's experiences in the family, the paid workplace, with racism and the role of the state. All of these women social scientists have stressed the importance of the relationship between gender, class and ethnicity in the Australian context as well as in their country of origin. As producers of knowledge, feminist research on migrant women operates as a corrective to the marginalisation of women in most of the research work done on migrants until the 1980s and beyond.

Martin (1984) analysed the position of migrant women in production and social reproduction. She asserted that, as late as 1984, in the major debates on immigration and multiculturalism there was no independent analysis of migrant women nor any input from feminist thought (Martin 1984: 123). But she also showed how "in the ethnicist argument, the first conception is underscored by a tendency to list 'migrant women' as one of the many problems afflicting ethnic groups - for example, along with health, children, education, unemployment and so forth" (Martin 1984: 123).

8. The citizenship model 1990...

Although there was little interest in the notion of citizenship in the bi-centenary year of 1988, this was soon to change. Firstly, with the end of the cold war, there emerged an international debate on citizenship. Secondly, in Australia there were the periodic controversial debates again on multiculturalism. Stephen Castles and others began to analyse the relationship between multiculturalism and citizenship.

Stephen Castles has argued that there are three types of policies of migrant incorporation, classified as ideal-types, which need to be considered (Castles and Miller 1998). These are *differential exclusion* where migrants

are incorporated in to certain areas of the society, mainly the labour market and are excluded from other aspects of the society such as the political sphere; *assimilation* where migrants are incorporated through a one-way system of integration in that migrants are expected to become integrated politically and culturally; *pluralism* where it is acceptable that the migrant population retains its language and culture while ensuring that migrants have equal rights in all spheres of the society. His comparative analysis on this topic reveals that although Australia's citizenship laws are among the more liberal in western democratic states, in practice these laws remain both contradictory and incomplete leaving the path open for many forms of discrimination.

Nevertheless, over the past few years the notion of national identity has again become prominent in debates on migration, multiculturalism and globalisation. A number of social scientists have taken up the idea that we cannot concentrate on notions of ethnic identity in order to understand the crises in national identity.

9. Conservative backlash 1996...

From 1996 on, there has been very little research on immigration issues compared with the earlier period of the 1980s and 1990s. One major reason for this is that research funding has shrunk dramatically, both in the academy and from government institutions. Over the past five years or so, there has emerged a cultural studies research agenda – often no sense of history in that often past analyses are repeated as if they are a new idea or because some of it is too piecemeal, major factors are missing in the analysis.

Nevertheless, the research of the 1990s will be included in the full chapter at a later date.

10. Concluding overview

Since its inception, Australian immigration has challenged the concerns of a nation which has been built on the near genocide of its indigenous people, on the settlement of a penal colony and on the need to populate with immigrants from many other nations. The two main issues around immigration which continue to be contested are firstly, the ongoing concern with the state of the nation and our national identity and secondly, the social integration of migrants into Australian culture and institutions. In a broad sense, these two main concerns have formed the basis of policy and research. There have been a number of significant influences on the study of immigration:

The migration process itself - it is clear that the uneasy decision to become a country of immigration compelled Anglo-Australians to question the many facets of their national identity. This in turn influenced their desire to retain a British identity and to expect migrants to completely integrate into the Anglo-society which they had developed over the previous century and a half. Even the most liberal of social scientists, in the early post-war years, inadvertently revealed some adherence to the ideology of assimilation. There are some who continue to be influenced by this ideology. Social scientists on the left continue to support cultural pluralism both in terms of a national identity and in the delivery of social policy. Ethnic identities continue to challenge a dominant Anglo-Australian national identity.

The emergence of the welfare state – this made possible the development of a safety net for the disempowered groups in the community. Migrants and their children were among the most disadvantaged in the Australian community. The ideology on which the welfare state was based was on the left where the crippling aspects of capitalism were to be kept in check by a benevolent state. This lent itself to research on migrant poverty and other forms of social and political disadvantage. It also influenced the social policy aspect of multiculturalism where special programs were developed for migrants in order to redress the disparity between migrants and non-migrants. Equally, there was critical research which analysed the role of a reformist capitalist state and the problems which emerged from this.

Government regulation and management of policy – as stated earlier, policy has been one area in which there has been an interactive process between government policies and social scientific input and this became particularly so with the election in 1972 of a reformist Labor government. Consecutive governments have consulted social scientists not only for statistical and descriptive data, but also for policy development. Thus, social scientists have contributed not only to the development of parliamentary Acts, but also to entrance, refugee and settlement policies. The role of social scientists reached its heyday during the 1980s with a Labor government which provided strong support for immigration research.

The emergence of the new social movements – these created a reformist atmosphere of progressive politics where ethnic relations along, with gender relations, became important analytical aspects of daily political practice and of social scientific analysis. The importance of ‘ethnicity’ as a sociological

category revealed the complexity of various power relationships between class, ethnic relations and gender. It also provided the possibility for astute, critical analysis on the problems of relying simply on the primacy of ethnicity and on the need to always take into account the class position of disempowered groups.

Other models of incorporation – Australian policies have been influenced by models adopted in the US, Canada, and now the debate on citizenship has more of a global and transnational perspective.

Theoretical developments/fashions in the social sciences – typically, immigration research inherited the analytical problems inherent in the specific theoretical framework used. Since the time of the founding fathers, sociologists have analysed the issue of value-free research. The founding fathers, beginning with the early positivists Comte and Durkheim believed that objectivity could be attained through scientific methodology. Marx also argued that sociology could be objective and scientific though few would claim today that his work was free of his political beliefs, despite Althusser's attempt to convince us otherwise. Weber also recognised that our values would influence the topics we choose to research.

From the late 1960s to the early 1980s marxism had a very strong influence in the social sciences through sociology, political economy, socialist feminism, and in other disciplines such as geography and political science. Competing perspectives came from functionalists and empiricists. In immigration research in Australia, the politics of left social scientists were often clearly outlined, as many of them were also grass root activists.

Nevertheless, one of the main problems with the early marxist immigration research was its economic determinism. This, however, was clearly challenged by the debates within feminist theory and research and within immigration research, where the need to adequately theorise the notion of ethnicity and its place within broader power relations was hotly debated.

On the other hand, the functionalists and empiricists often hid behind the mantle of value-free sociology. The one main problem with empiricism is that the data collected is meant to explain all aspects of a phenomenon thus ignoring the complexities which are better understood through qualitative analysis as well. The functionalists also have problems in that they tend to analyse the society as always tending towards equilibrium, stability and order, ignoring difference and the complexities that result. Functionalism ignores the context of unequal power relations that gives rise to conflict. It is theological in that society is explained in terms of its consequences and not in terms of its causes. As a result, a stratified society is natural to functionalists because it already exists. Functionalism is still in disrepute, often referred to as 'establishment sociology' and as Adorno stated, 'establishment sociology is the science of resignation to the status quo'.

A more recent fashion is post-structuralist cultural studies which has produced a new set of problems. The post-structuralist preference for play, fragmentation and differentiation operates as a strategic device to unsettle the universal, foundational, essentialist power of the normalizing discourses of the grand narratives and theories. Theorists such as Foucault, Lyotard and Derrida have contributed their deconstructive project in order to make space for 'difference', for the 'subaltern', for local forms of everyday life. One problem that emerges from the fragmented pluralism of post-structuralism is

that racism and sexism end up being defined as discrete instances throughout institutions, or in the society, which can be discretely challenged. Post-structuralists, thus, abandon society-as-structure for a preferred society-as-process so as to move away from the notion of fixity and unitariness. But part of the problem with this discreteness and fluidity is that an analysis of unequal, enduring discriminatory practices and the continuity of ideological structures over time is abandoned. Although we are all working in a reformist capacity, it is vital that we continue to question and analyse a capitalist, patriarchal and racialized system that inherently generates inequality. This is part of the grand narrative which post-structuralism dismisses.

Over the past two years, immigration/multiculturalism research funding has diminished dramatically. Much of the research is piecemeal. Nevertheless, with the republican movement in full swing until the last election, citizenship, national identity and racism have become of major concern for the society, the state and for social scientists as well. Interdisciplinary research using a range of theories has become more prevalent ranging from pluralism to middle range theories as well as the more holistic grand theories.

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