Sociological Theories of International Migration: The Case of Refugees[1]

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Sociological theories of international migration (including refugees) should be capable of explaining the scale, direction and composition of population movements that cross state boundaries, the factors which determine the decision to move and the choice of destination, the characteristic modes of social integration in the receiving country and the eventual outcome, including remigration and return movements. Studies of international migration have not attempted such an ambitious agenda. Research has generally focused on specific aspects, such as the demographic characteristics of immigrants, migration decision-making, economic and social adaptation in receiving countries, the policies of sending and receiving countries, or global trends in population movement. Empirical studies have been conducted on an ad hoc basis, largely uninformed by developments in general sociological theory.

Typologies

Early writers utilized simple typologies to classify migratory movements. Fairchild (1925) distinguished invasion, conquest and colonization from immigration as such. He classified societies as 'peaceful or warlike' and 'low or high culture'. He endeavoured to show that the types of migration and their consequences were influenced by this distinction. Later writers emphasized the difference between *voluntary* and *involuntary* movements. Included in the former were seasonal, nomadic and other temporary moves as well as more permanent migrations which were largely economic in nature. Involuntary movements included slaves and those impelled by war and other political pressures (Price, 1969).

Petersen (1958) developed a more elaborate typology using several dimensions. The first involved the relation of 'man' to nature, the state, norms and other men. The second concerned the migratory force linked to each of the former, i.e. ecological push (nature), migration policy (state), aspirations (norms) and what he called 'social momentum'. These elements generated different classes of migration which he labelled (i) primitive, (ii) forced/impelled, (iii) free and (iv) mass. Petersen introduced a

further classification, based on the consequences of the movement, into 'conservative' and 'innovating' types. For example, group settlements were essentially conservative, enabling the migrants to preserve a traditional life-style in varying degrees. In contrast, individuals choosing to migrate on their own led to 'pioneer' situations and larger-scale voluntary movements to urbanization and social change.

Typologies of this kind fail to go beyond the descriptive level and have little explanatory or predictive value. Advances in the sociological analysis of developmental processes throw doubt upon the validity of distinguishing evolutionary stages or postulating essential correlations between technology, economic growth, political systems, social institutions and demographic behaviour. To the extent that there are causal relations between these variables, they are more complex than such simple typologies would suggest. Furthermore, as is shown below, the distinction between movements of population that are 'voluntary' and 'involuntary', or 'forced' and 'free', is of doubtful validity.

Theories of Migration

Theories of international migration can be broadly classified as *macro* and *micro* in their level of analysis. In the former category are those which focus on migration streams, identifying those conditions under which large-scale movements occur and describing the demographic, economic and social characteristics of the migrants in aggregate terms. The macro level also includes most theories concerning the immigrant adaptation process, economic and social integration, assimilation, etc., when regarded from a structural or cultural perspective. The micro level includes studies of sociopsychological factors differentiating migrants from non-migrants, together with theories concerning motivation, decision-making, satisfaction and identification. It may also include some aspects of immigrant adaptation, when regarded from a strictly individualistic perspective as distinct from the broader societal consequences.

Space does not permit a comprehensive review of all theories concerning migration. Reference may be made to a number of texts, cited in the bibliography, which examine various approaches e.g. Eisenstadt (1954), Rossi (1955), Mangalam (1968), Jackson (1969), Jansen (1970), Kosinsky (1975), Simmons (1977), de Jong

and Gardner (1981), Kubat and Hoffman-Nowotny (1981) and Kritz et al. (1981). However, a brief summary of the more important contributions is appropriate. It should be noted that almost all the theories are addressed to the phenomenon of 'voluntary' migration. In most cases economic factors are assumed to be predominant, both in determining the out-flow and in interpreting the experience after migration. Often the writers explicitly state that they are not concerned with refugees or politically motivated migrants. Whereas it is taken for granted that some regularity can be detected in the flows of economic migrants, it is generally assumed that refugee movements are spontaneous and unpredictable, although there is growing evidence that this is not the case. When questions of absorption in receiving countries are considered, the experiences of refugees are rarely distinguished from those of economic migrants.

Macro-theories

Ravenstein (1885, 1889) put forward so-called 'laws of migration', based on empirical observation of internal migration in the nineteenth century. Some of his generalizations have stood the test of time, such as the fact that most migrations are over short distances, that they generate counter-streams and that they are related to technological development. Others have been contradicted, including the suggestion that urban populations are less migratory than rural, that females predominate among short-distance movers or that migration proceeds by stages from rural areas to small towns, and from the latter to larger cities and metropolitan areas.

Stouffer (1940, 1960), also considering internal migration, related mobility and distance, while introducing the concept of 'intervening opportunities'. Lee (1966), building on Ravenstein's observations, offered a model of migration which linked positive and negative factors at the areas of origin and destination with the decision to migrate, taking into account intervening obstacles and personal factors. He related the volume of migration to the diversity of the territory and the composition of its population, to fluctuations in the economy and to difficulties in surmounting intervening obstacles.

Mabogunje (1970) developed a 'systems model', recognizing an interdependence between sending and receiving areas. He identified four components in migration movements: economic,

social, technological and environmental. He described migration as a 'circular, interdependent, progressively complex and self-modifying system'. A 'systems' approach was used also by Tos and Klinar (1976), in examining the experience of Yugoslavian temporary workers, including the return migration question. A theory of societal systems was applied by Hoffman-Nowotny (1981) to generate a general theory of migration based on the relation between power and prestige in a society. It emphasized the importance of 'structural tensions' derived from inequalities and status inconsistencies in the sending country, which generated anomic tendencies. The tensions may be resolved by emigration to a country where status aspirations can be attained. He uses the term 'under-casting' to describe a process where structural tensions in the sending country are relieved by emigration but may be transferred instead to the receiving country, which must find ways of integrating the newcomers. Although the model was developed with economic migration largely in mind, Ferris (1985: 17) suggests that it may be applicable also to the movement of refugees.

The question of immigrant adaptation has generated a variety of theoretical perspectives at the macro level. Richmond and Zubrzycki (1984) identified six different models of migration and occupational status, each derived from alternative theoretical premises. The classical approach focused on assimilation and was 'functionalist' in orientation. It contrasted with a Marxian, or 'conflict', model which emphasized class differences between immigrants and indigenous populations. Colonial situations gave rise to a form of elite migration, whereas the more common experience in the twentieth century has been cross-sectional in terms of occupational status, and pluralistic from a cultural point of view. Recent theories have focused upon the phenomenon of stratification and segmentation of labour markets, leading to ethnic enclaves. Finally, the importance of structural changes generated by technological innovation and postindustrial developments have also influenced the flow of migrants and their modes of integration in advanced societies. Comparative studies of Canada and Australia suggested that none of these models, by itself, was sufficient to account for the experience of post-Second World War immigrants in these countries, although each throws some light on particular aspects of adaptation. (Burnley and Kalbach, 1985; Rao et al., 1984; Richmond and Zubrzycki, 1984). Studies of the labour market and other experiences of Cuban and Haitian refugees in the United States also demonstrated the heterogeneity of the

experience. They pointed to the need for alternative theoretical models to account for different modes of incorporation, which were not always disadvantageous to the newcomers, despite an initially unfavourable economic and social climate (Pedraza-Bailey, 1985; Portes and Mozo, 1985; Portes and Stepick, 1985).

Global Systems

It is generally recognized that in the study of international migration the reality of a global economy, polity and social system must be recognized, however much conflict and contradiction there may be in the interface between quasi-sovereign states (Richmond, 1988). Wallerstein (1974) traced the origins of the present world system to the mercantilist period in the seventeenth century. Contemporary economists and sociologists have shown that there is a global labour market in the modern world economy (Amin, 1974; Petras, 1981; Portes, 1983). They distinguish 'core', 'semi-peripheral' and 'peripheral' areas and relate the flow of labour to capital investment and resource development. Drawing on Marxist theory, they identify a 'reserve army' of labour in developing countries which may be exploited by wealthier imperialist powers. Richmond and Verma (1978) suggested a 'global system of international migration' with four sub-systems, each of which may also be internally differentiated according to level of development. The most advanced postindustrial societies have high rates of 'exchange' migration, particularly of highly qualified people, but they note that tremendous pressures towards emigration have built up in less-developed areas of the world. They predicted that 'this process will only be contained by increasingly restrictive immigration policies in the more advanced countries which will be compelled to adopt punitive measures to combat illegal immigration' (Richmond and Verma, 1978: 32).

Political Economy

A central issue in the study of refugee movements is the relation between economic and political determinants of population movement. The theories considered so far have been generally applicable to movements of people from poorer to richer areas, from regions of economic underdevelopment to those experiencing

growth, or to the exchanges of skilled and highly qualified migrants between advanced societies to which the term *transilience* has been applied (Richmond, 1969). Although the de jure definition of refugee status (a 'Convention refugee'), used by the United Nations[2] and adopted by various countries in determining eligibility for admission, emphasizes 'a well-founded fear of persecution', it is no longer possible to treat 'refugee' movements as completely independent of the state of the global economy.[3] Complex questions of sovereignty, perceived interests, international relations and ideological considerations are also involved (Weiner, 1985).

The situations which most commonly give rise to large refugee movements and requests for asylum include external and civil wars, political unrest and revolution, terrorism, the expulsion of ethnic minorities, ethnoreligious and communal conflict, displacement of populations through technological developments such as mechanization of agriculture and hydroelectric schemes, land reforms and resettlement programmes, famines and other 'natural' disasters, as well as a wide variety of human rights violations and oppressive state regimes.[4] In all these cases economic, social and political factors are interdependent. It is not necessary to invoke Marxist assumptions concerning the ultimate determining influence of modes of production on state formations, or to attribute all forms of political oppression to the interests of 'bourgeois capitalism', to recognize that the crises which have occurred in the Middle East, Central America and Asia are not unrelated to the ideological and military confrontation of the superpowers, the competing interests of multinational companies and the problems of development facing Third World countries (World Bank, 1984; Sivard, 1985).

Zolberg (1986) has pointed out that refugee movements 'do not constitute a collection of random events' but form distinct patterns which are related to political transformations, such as the break-up of former colonial empires. The formation of new states and nation building are rendered more difficult by economic underdevelopment. Even the economic aid and refugee policies of the wealthier and more powerful countries are dictated by the narrowly defined interests of the countries 'imposing aid' (Harrell-Bond, 1986). Dowty (1987: 183) notes that 'so-called economic migrants are often responding as much to political repression as to material deprivation'. He gives, as examples, refugees from Ethiopia where political pressures and war combine with famine to cause massive flight; Haiti where political repression and economic underdevelopment go together; and El

Salvador where would-be refugees have been returned because they are regarded as 'victims of generalized violence', rather than individual persecution. Dowty (1987: 236) states that 'in such circumstances, the distinction between "economic" and "political" refugees becomes meaningless'. From a sociological point of view this is true. However, it does not prevent governments from making a de jure distinction between 'Convention' refugees and others, refusing asylum to those who do not meet the strict criteria of the UN Convention.

Micro-theories

Social psychologists have addressed themselves to questions of motivation and the decision to move. In the last resort, migration is an individual choice although such decisions may be made in consultation with family members or others in a close-knit community or religious group. Most micro-level studies of migration decision making have been conducted among those whose main motivation has been economic or family related. An assumption of 'rational choice', following a considered evaluation of options available, is implicit in most theories of motivation. A distinction is generally made between 'push' and 'pull' factors, which must be taken into account and weighed in the balance. Human needs and aspirations are generally represented in terms of economic benefits, social mobility or family reunion. 'Costs' and 'benefits' of migration are then calculated according to the individual's own hierarchy of values and presumed net advantage. So-called 'place-utility' theories endeavour to explain why individuals decide to move, or to choose particular locations, in terms of their perception of the advantages they offer and anticipated satisfaction. Empirical studies using this concept have lent only partial support to it and suggest that a more generalized 'value-expectancy' model which relates goals to expectations in terms of subjective probabilities of achievement. It is a cognitive model which assumes the availability of adequate information on which to base decisions. More complex psychological explanations take into account the influence of 'significant others' in the decision-making process, the role of cognitive dissonance and the tendency to adhere to a decision once made despite negative feedback (de Jong and Gardner, 1981). Although theoretically elegant, such explanations are only weakly supported by empirical evidence and tend to overlook

the multiple cognitive and conative influences which prevail in a media-saturated information environment.

Although refugee movements are usually represented as 'forced', they are only an extreme case of the constraints that are placed upon the choices available to an individual in particular circumstances. The choices facing a landless peasant displaced by a multinational company producing for export, may be unemployment, begging, stealing, sickness, starvation and death for him and his family. Choices facing an ethnic or political minority may be to join a dissident army, face political imprisonment, torture or death. In either case the limited options available involve excruciating choices. Flight is one of these options. Kunz (1973, 1981) put forward an explanation of refugee behaviour in terms of what he called 'kinetic models'. He distinguished 'anticipatory' from 'acute' movements and further categorized 'majority identified', 'alienated' refugees and 'reactive-fate groups', from those with a clearer purpose. The common denominator is a sense of loss of control over one's own fate. 'The borderline between political refugees and those dissatisfied economically,' he noted, 'can indeed be blurred when displacement occurs in reaction to events. Yet, the magnitude of the decision should be kept in mind as well as the pressures of the social forces which finally result in the seeking of exile' (Kunz, 1981: 50–1).

Keller (1975: Ch. 3) described the trauma of becoming a refugee, with illustrations from the experience of the fifteen million people displaced by the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947, when a million people died. The author suggested stages in the refugee generating process, starting with a rejection of the idea that disaster is imminent and a determination to carry on as normal a life as possible, followed by the trauma of flight, which in turn leads to long-term effects, including feelings of guilt, invulnerability and aggressiveness. A study of Vietnamese-Chinese refugees in Canada showed that the resettlement process often involved downward occupational mobility, fatalistic attitudes, a preoccupation with family reunification, and a profound desire to escape dependency (Lam, 1983).

Various studies have examined the psychological aspects of immigrant adaptation, emphasizing the more serious trauma faced by refugees and the mental health problems experienced (Cohon, 1981). A 'social displacement syndrome' can be identified. An incubation period may be followed by paranoid symptoms, hypochondria, anxiety and depression (Tyhurst, 1977). However

unrealistic, some may cling to the 'myth of return' or work politically for the 'liberation' of the former country (Zwingmann and Pfister-Ammende, 1973; Anwar, 1979; Stein, 1981; Luciuc, 1986).

Structuration and Voluntaristic Action

The relation between structural constraints and individual choice is a central problem in sociological theory. It involves fundamental questions of free will and agency, over against theories which imply behavioural determination by forces over which we have little or no control. The nature of the problem was expressed in oversimplified form by Marx when he wrote that 'men make history, but not in circumstances of their own choosing'. Almost all social theorists have recognized the paradox which this reflects. Is the recognition of structural constraint compatible with a voluntaristic theory of action?

Talcott Parsons addressed this issue throughout his work, commencing with his synthesis of the writings of classical theorists in *The Structure of Social Action* (1937). Recently, Sciulli (1986) noted that the term 'voluntaristic action', as used by Parsons and others, has several different meanings. First, it can refer to the actor's free will, or capacity to make choices despite constraints. Second, it can mean a capacity for self-initiated action, whether or not this capacity is realized. Third, it can refer to the concept of individual autonomy despite the limitations of ideal or material conditions. Fourth, it may represent individual autonomy as an unstable element in the social order. Fifth, voluntaristic action may be understood as the residual 'normative' elements not subsumed under 'behavioural', 'conditional' or 'material' categories. Scuilli himself prefers a reformulated distinction which Parsons implicitly developed when he distinguished 'purposeful rational action toward quantifiable ends' from 'non-rational action, directed toward transcendental ends', as in the case of religious rituals. This left a third type of social action which involved 'normative practices'. Although within the sphere of non-rational action the latter cannot be regarded as ultimate or transcendental. 'Voluntaristic action is comprised, therefore, of qualitative worldly ends as well as the shared symbols and norms which allow actors to simply maintain a shared recognition of these ends' (Scuilli, 1986: 748). It is the recognition of these shared values which provides a bulwark against an arbitrary exercise of power. Without

voluntaristic action, and the institutionalized values which support it, direct coercion, or the manipulation of belief by a dominant minority, is likely to occur.

In somewhat different terms the same point is made by Giddens (1984: 174) when he distinguishes various forms of constraint, which may be material, associated with sanctions or structural in form. The latter are derived from the 'given' nature of structural properties which the individual is unable to change and which limit the range of options. Giddens's concept of 'structuration', however, replaces a static view of social structures as completely external to the individual, with one which emphasizes the process by which social structures are created and changed through the exercise of 'freedom of action'. It is necessary to explore this idea further if we are to develop a satisfactory sociological theory of motivation that will account for the behaviour of migrants and refugees.

Turner (1987) reviewed various sociological theories of motivation, including that of Giddens which he sees as having a psychoanalytic basis in that it identifies both conscious and unconscious determinants of social action. Key elements are unconscious needs for security and trust in relations with others. Practical consciousness and reflective monitoring lead to routinization and social integration. Unconscious needs increase in salience when these established institutions break down (Turner, 1987: 20–1; Giddens, 1984: 4–7, 281–4). Turner incorporates several other social psychological traditions into his synthetic model, including those of social exchange, interactionist theories, and ethnomethodology. He postulates a hierarchy of 'needs'. These go beyond the primordial requirements of biological survival. They are socially determined and include needs for group inclusion, trust, security, symbolic and material gratification, self-conception and 'facticity', i.e. the shared understanding of inter-subjective and external worlds, which in turn is linked to power and the ability to achieve goals through negotiation and exchange with others. Turner's model involves complex 'feedback' loops and assumes that failure to achieve these goals leads to diffuse anxiety and strategies to avoid such feelings. One of these strategies may be exit from a situation which persistently fails to satisfy needs (Turner, 1987: 24).

The implications of this sociological theory of motivation for a studies of migration and refugee movements need more detailed explication than is possible here — a few key points are

highlighted. First, migratory decisions, even those taken under conditions of extreme stress, do not differ from other kinds of decision governing social behaviour. The same sociological model of motivation is applicable. Second, the distinction between 'free' and 'forced' or 'voluntary' and 'involuntary', is a misleading one. All human behaviour is constrained. Choices are not unlimited but are determined by the structuration process. However, 'degrees of freedom' may vary. Individual and group autonomy and potency are situationally determined. It would be more appropriate to recognize a continuum at one end of which individuals and collectivities are *proactive* and at the other *reactive*. Under certain conditions, the decision to move may be made after due consideration of all relevant information, rationally calculated to maximize net advantage, including both material and symbolic rewards. At the other extreme, the decision to move may be made in a state of panic facing a crisis situation which leaves few alternatives but escape from intolerable threats. Between these two extremes, many of the decisions made by both 'economic' and 'political' migrants are a response to diffuse anxiety generated by a failure of the social system to provide for the fundamental needs of the individual, biological, economic and social. Third, a reasonable hypothesis would be that when societal institutions disintegrate, or are weakened to the point that they are unable to provide a substantial section of the population with an adequate sense of group inclusion, trust and ontological security, a refugee situation is created.[5]

Structural Constraints and Facilitators

I have argued elsewhere (Richmond, 1988: 38) that an adequate sociological theory of migration must incorporate an understanding of social action and human agency, the question of conflict, contradiction and opposition in social systems, the meaning of structure and change, and the importance of power. A key element in structuration theory is the recognition that social structures not only constrain but they also enable. Constraint involves an asymmetrical distribution of power, which may involve naked force and physical coercion, material rewards, threats of deprivation or various forms of persuasion and inducement. However, Giddens (1984: 173) points out that sources of constraint are also means of enablement: 'They open up certain possibilities of action at the

same time as they restrict or deny others'. Parsons' use of the concepts of 'power' and 'influence' is relevant here. Power is not necessarily a zero sum concept (Parsons, 1960, 1963; Giddens, 1968). Its unequal distribution may lead to conflict but it must also be understood as a resource which facilitates the achievement of collective goals. It is notable that, in his review of the studies of 'place-utility' and intention to migrate, Simmons (1985–6) concluded that background variables (constraints and facilitators) had a stronger association with actual migration than expressed intentions.

Based on her experiences in an African refugee camp, Harrell-Bond (1986: 283–329) discussed the 'oversocialized concept of Man' which fails to recognize the extent to which, in critical situations, individual survival undermines social values including those which normally induce humane responses. Following Bettelheim's account of life in a concentration camp, Giddens (1984: 63) makes the same point when he notes that any sustained attack on the routines of social life produces a high level of anxiety and a stripping away of socialized responses. It takes time to rebuild social structures, and attempts to impose order often fail for lack of grassroots co-operation. Psychological stress and accompanying levels of depression and anxiety may reach pathological levels. Bereavement exacerbates the problem but crises can be perceived as a threat, a loss or a challenge. Adaptive and coping mechanisms can be generated, although outside help may be needed to do so.

Harrell–Bond goes on to point out that, in order to answer the question of how refugees survive, their relationship with the host society must be considered. Refugees are generally perceived as a 'problem' or a 'threat' to those countries whose borders they cross. However, they may also generate opportunities and become a source of positive social change. As in the case of other immigrants, they may bring human capital, skills or experience that benefit the receiving society. International agencies may become involved, attracting investment in transportation or new industries. Markets may be created, marginal land cultivated, schools started or health services established. Short-sighted interference by outside agencies pursuing policies dictated by the interests of foreign powers or private corporations, whether represented as well meaning or not, may have the opposite of the desired effect. Harrell-Bond (1986: 366) argues that humanitarians and researchers alike should become *facilitators*, using their resources to enable refugees to help themselves. Either way, the outsiders are necessarily agents of social change, as are the refugees themselves.

Conflicts and Contradictions

No society is without conflicts arising from the unequal distribution of resources, competing interests, opposing values and internal contradictions. Giddens (1984: 193–4) distinguishes 'existential contradiction' and 'structural contradiction'. The former concerns human existence in relation to the natural world. It comes to the forefront when people are faced with the question of absolute survival and must make choices that could mean sacrificing their own lives for the sake of others, a not unreal conflict in disaster situations and under oppressive regimes. More familiar are the structural contradictions which arise out of changing social systems. Giddens (1984: 196) notes that 'the emergence of state-based societies also alters the scope and pace of "history" by stimulating secondary contradictions. States bring into being, or at least greatly accentuate, social relations across considerable reaches of time and space'. One example of structural contradiction in this context is the provision of international law and the UN Convention on Human Rights (not observed in practice by all states), which provides the right to leave a country without any complementary right of admission elsewhere. The result is the creation of 'stateless persons' and 'refugees in orbit', i.e. reactive migrants who have escaped intolerable conditions in one place but can find no state willing to offer asylum or resettlement opportunities. Dowty (1987) has chronicled the 'contemporary assault on freedom of movement' which has led to the closing of borders and increasingly restrictive immigration and refugee policies in many countries. A further contradiction following from this is that it is mainly the poorest countries in Africa and Asia that presently shoulder the burden of providing shelter and aid for the millions of people displaced by wars that are fuelled by superpower confrontation and the arms bazaar (Myrdal, 1976; Sampson, 1977; Ferris, 1985; Sivard, 1985).

Refugee Movements: A New Paradigm

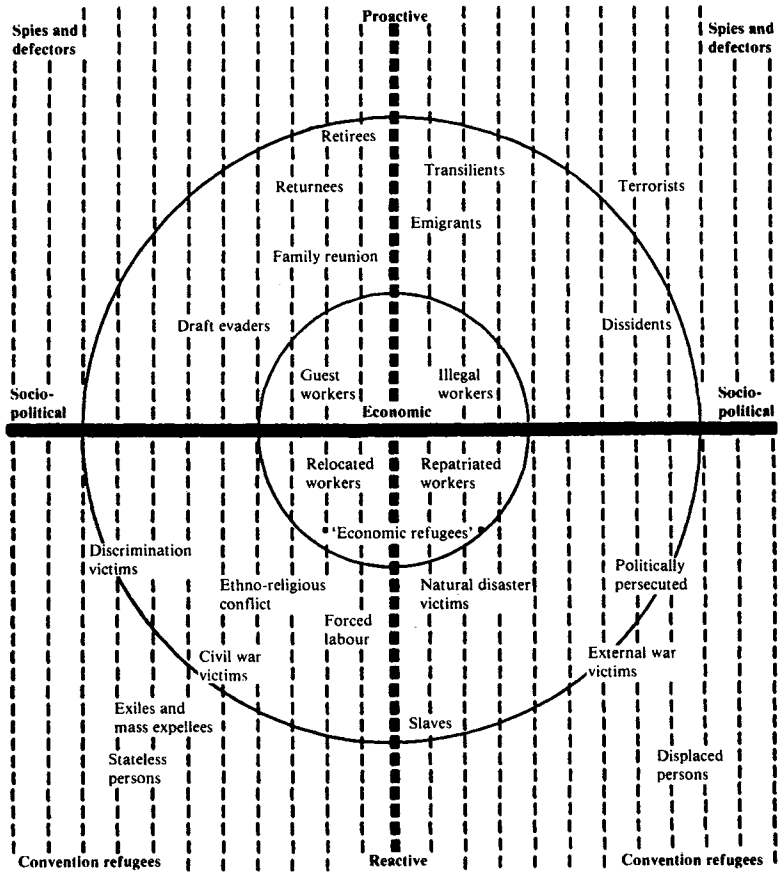
The above review of sociological and social psychological theories pertaining to international migration leads to two key conclusions. First, an absolutely clear distinction between the economic and the sociopolitical determinants of population movement is not

appropriate. A multivariate approach is necessary. There may be exceptional cases where both the underlying and precipitating causes can be identified as 'purely' economic or political. However, in the modern world where states, religious leaders, multinational corporations and supra-state agencies (such as the IMF and the World Bank) are involved in decisions which affect the lives of millions of people, the majority of population movements are a complex response to the reality of a global society in which ethnoreligious, social, economic and political determinants are inextricably bound together.

Second, a distinction between voluntary and involuntary movements is also untenable. All human behaviour is constrained and enabled by the structuration process within which degrees of freedom of choice are limited. Individual autonomy is relative to opportunity structures which are themselves determined by social forces. The distribution of economic and political power is central to the decision-making process at the individual and collective level. 'Rational choice' within a means–end schema, in which individuals maximize net advantage, is a special case rarely found in isolation from decisions which are influenced by direct coercion, manipulated opinion and value systems, the non-rational pursuit of transcendental goals and normatively oriented voluntaristic action. In this context, decisions regarding migration are more appropriately designated *proactive* or *reactive*, according to the degree of autonomy exhibited by the actors involved.

The resulting paradigm of international migration is diagrammatically represented in Figure 1, in the form of a matrix.[6] The vertical axis represents decision-making on a continuum from maximum to minimum autonomy. The horizontal axis represents the interaction of economic and sociopolitical forces, reflecting that they come full circle as internal and external state powers converge. Proactive migrants include retirees, transilients, returnees, reunited families and ordinary 'emigrants'. UN Convention refugees, stateless persons, slaves and forced labourers are clear examples of reactive migrants. Between these two extremes, a large proportion of the people crossing state boundaries combine characteristics, responding to economic, social and political pressures over which they have little control, but exercising a limited degree of choice in the selection of destinations and the timing of their movements. The nearer the category falls to the vertical axis the more important are the economic determinants, while those closer to the horizontal periphery are more in the

FIGURE 1
Paradigm of International Population Movements



political domain, although no clear-cut boundary between these factors can be drawn.

The central core of international migration consists of those responding to the uneven development of the global economy, to the demands for labour in oil-rich and economically advanced societies, and to the displacement consequent upon urbanization in

the Third World. These economic determinants are not independent of the sociopolitical context in which they occur. Such migrants are vulnerable to cyclical fluctuations of the global economy as well as political instability and changing policies in sending and receiving countries alike. At times they find opportunities available as contract or 'guestworkers', but they are subject to repatriation or exclusion when the perceived interests of traditional receiving countries change. Many are treated as 'illegals' and are subject to deportation when discovered.

'Convention refugees' are the prototypical political migrants, although the historical circumstances in which the precise legal definition of a 'refugee' in the UN protocol was formulated limits its applicability to the contemporary world system. At the opposite extreme to those who qualify as 'Convention refugees', on the basis of their demonstrated fear of persecution, are those politically motivated proactive migrants who fall into the category of 'spies', 'terrorists' or defectors'. In some cases they may deliberately infiltrate genuine refugee movements. Furthermore, there is growing evidence of collusion between the intelligence agencies in various countries which have allowed actual or former agents, political activists and 'war criminals', to enter other countries under the guise of refugees (Deschenes, 1986; Rodal, 1987; Wright, 1987). Intermediate cases, also combining sociopolitical and economic determinants, include American draft evaders (Kasinsky, 1976), other political dissidents, victims of ethnic discrimination and those who may be persecuted because of their religious or political beliefs, together with a growing class of so-called 'economic refugees'. The extent to which they are regarded as admissible in other countries often depends upon ideological considerations and cross-cultural understanding (Kalin, 1986: 230–40).

Conclusion

Sociologists are still a long way from being able to explain all aspects of international migration within a single theoretical framework. The paradigm outlined above brings together certain key elements in structuration and social psychological theory, in order to explain certain broad features of contemporary international migration, particularly that of refugees. At the risk of gross over-simplification it may be stated that:

$$M = P + R$$

where: M is the total number of international migrants, P is the number of proactive migrants, and R is the number of reactive migrants.

In turn, $P_{a\ b\ t}$ is the number of proactive migrants from place a seeking entry to place b in time period t. It is likely to be a function of distance, intervening opportunities and obstacles, rationally calculated net advantages (not exclusively economic in nature), qualified by a variety of non-rational considerations derived from the voluntaristic nature of social action. The number actually admitted to country b will depend upon a variety of policy considerations, themselves combining rational and non-rational elements. Similarly, $R_{a\ b\ t}$ is the number of reactive migrants from place a seeking entry to place b in time period t. This is likely to be a function of the degree to which societal institutions in place a have disintegrated to the point that they are unable to provide a substantial section of the population with an adequate sense of group inclusion, trust and ontological security, qualified by the perception of place b as capable of reducing the anxiety thus created. The receptivity of those in place a to R will depend upon the same considerations applied to P, with additional non-rational elements, likely to be invoked as a consequence of a conflict between humanitarian values and strictly self-interested motives.

Certain policy conclusions can be drawn from the above analysis. First, the present UN definition of a 'Convention refugee' is inadequate in the face of the contemporary demographic realities. Even the adoption of a 'B' category, or designated class of persons who do not meet the de jure requirements, but are admissible on other grounds, does not do justice to the scale or complexity of the global situation facing reactive migrants. Attention needs to be given to a reformulation of the concept of 'refugee' to take into account a variety of crisis and disaster generating situations, which warrant international collaborative relief effort. It raises issues of sovereignty and international law which only jurists are qualified to address. Sociological theory can only point to the inadequacy of existing international codes.

Second, the right to leave must be matched by the right of asylum. Wealthy countries should not close their borders or adopt more restrictive immigration policies merely because the scale of reactive migration has increased or the racial and cultural

characteristics of those seeking refuge has changed. Finally, it is evident that, in the last resort, the 'refugee problem' is only a symptom of much more profound conflicts and contradictions within our global system. Ultimately, the flow of international migrants, both proactive and reactive, will be responsive to a more egalitarian economic order and to the creation of a more peaceful, demilitarized society.

Notes

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2. The United Nations Convention on Refugees, 1951, and the Protocol of 1967, define a refugee as one who 'by reason of a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion: (a) is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, by reason of such fear, unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or (b) not having a country of nationality, is outside the country of his former habitual residence and is unable or, by reason of such fear, is unwilling to return to that country'.

3. Although quite evident in the contemporary world, the connection between economic conditions and political persecution is not new. Marrus (1985: 31) notes that, in the case of the Jewish exodus from Eastern Europe in the nineteenth century, 'neither in the persecution policy nor in the motivation for emigration do we find forcible uprooting in the usual sense. Jews from the tsarist empire seem to represent an intermediate case...neither entirely refugees nor entirely voluntary emigrants, they included elements of both, sometimes to the confusion of outside observers'. He goes on to give other more recent examples of economic and political factors combining to induce migration.

4. Even 'natural' disasters involve a large element of human responsibility, to the extent that such events as earthquakes and volcanic eruptions can be predicted with some degree of probability, and appropriate building and other codes enforced. Floods, famines and fires are all preventable and in many cases are actually the result of human intervention. It goes without saying that chemical spills, mining disasters and nuclear 'accidents' are all man-made. Once the disaster has occurred, the speed and efficiency of remedial action is closely related to the economic and political context of the relief operations, and the degree of co-operation between government and non-governmental agencies.

5. By 'ontological security' in this context is meant confidence in the social world and one's ability to survive in it, physically, and in terms of social identity.

6. The figure is drawn in the form of a 'mercator' projection of a sphere, although no geographic connotation is intended. The distribution of types of