Disciplinary Agendas and Analytic Strategies of Research on Immigrant Transnationalism: Challenges of Interdisciplinary Knowledge

Ewa Morawska
University of Pennsylvania

To be successful, an interdisciplinary approach to the study of immigration and transnationalism should begin by making different disciplinary languages about this phenomenon informed by mutual understanding of the conceptual frameworks, epistemological assumptions, and explanatory strategies used in research in particular academic fields. Drawing on studies in anthropology, sociology, history, and political science, I review here these taken-for-granted assumptions about "what is knowable and how" that underlie research on immigration and transnationalism in these disciplines. In conclusion, I suggest some avenues for mutual education in different disciplinary approaches and the epistemic gains derived therefrom.

Since its emergence in the early 1990s, research on transnationalism has become part of the mainstream agenda of immigration studies in several social science disciplines. After the wave of critiques and reformulations of the original propositions, concerning in particular the supposed novelty of this phenomenon, the heterogeneity of its forms, and its contingency on changing macro- and micro-level environments (see Foner, 1997; Smith and Guarnizo, 1998; Glick Schiller, 1999; Vertovec and Cohen, 1999; Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt, 1999), a multidisciplinary research on immigrant transnationalism has entered "the third phase" (Cordero-Guzman, Smith and Grosfoguel, 2001) or the recognition of the need for an interdisciplinary approach to the study of this subject.

Such studies already exist (e.g., Foner's [2000a] successful combination of anthropological and historical perspectives; Faist's [1998] bringing together of political science and sociology; or Morawska's [2001] historical sociology). The challenge is to make such attempts a common practice among students of immigration and, of concern here, immigrant transnationalism. To be successful, I argue, this collective project should begin by making different disciplinary languages about immigrant transnationalism interdisciplinary, that is, informed by mutual understanding of the conceptual frameworks,
epistemological assumptions, and explanatory strategies used by researchers in particular academic fields. A recent volume, *Migration Theory: Talking Across Disciplines*, edited by Caroline Brettell and James Hollifield (2000), which contains discussions of transnationalism, is the first step in this direction. In the introduction to the volume, the editors identify different analytic strategies used by immigration scholars in different disciplines, but because individual chapters do not address these differences, rather than “talking across,” their authors talk “together.” Exposing these taken-for-granted presuppositions is necessary, I believe, for our interdisciplinary conversations to allow meaningful “translations” of concepts and approaches used in different disciplines. By meaningful translations I mean appropriations and exchanges based on familiarity with the epistemological bases of different disciplinary research agendas and the implications thereof for interpretations of findings. Such translation knowledge will allow, in turn, for well-informed modifications of field-specific analytic strategies and for interdisciplinary projects.

Drawing on studies of immigration and transnationalism in the disciplines of sociology, anthropology, history and political science and on collections of essays by scholars reflecting on leading concepts and customary epistemological approaches informing research on international migration in their respective fields (Foner, Rumbaut and Gold, 2000; Brettell and Hollifield, 2000; Bommes and Morawska, forthcoming), I review here these implicit assumptions about “what is knowable and how” that underlie studies on transnationalism. Selection of the four disciplines identified above certainly does not exhaust the list of area studies devoted to immigration, but it captures the fields in which research on transnationalism has been particularly voluminous. My comparison of the different analytic strategies of these disciplines focuses on the main trends represented in each of them.

Two premises inform this undertaking. First, its purpose is not a creation of the unidisciplinary study of immigration, but learning from each other discipline-specific ways of conceptualizing problems and analytic strategies. In other words, the aim is to build up a knowledge of differences so that immigration scholars in different academic fields become interdisciplinary polylogues, conversant in many languages and, thus, capable of “translating” into and in-between disciplines. Second, the recognition by researchers and accounting for such founding concepts and epistemological positions does not undermine but, to the contrary, enhances scholarly work by making it more trustworthy and, of particular concern here, more amenable to accurate interdisciplinary “translations.”
This review comprises three sections. I consider first the major concerns framing research agendas and levels of analysis typical of transnationalism research in each of the four disciplines and the impact these prevalent frameworks have on the ways of studying this phenomenon. Next, I identify the dominant explanatory strategies in each of these fields. Finally, I examine the perceptions of scientific knowledge as "pure" or contextually embedded that have informed contemporary research on immigration-and-transnationalism in the four disciplines and the impact on research of these representations. In conclusion, I suggest some avenues for mutual education in different disciplinary approaches and the epistemic gains derived therefrom that I have found useful in my own research, combining sociological, historical and anthropological perspectives.

**DISCIPLINARY CONCERNS, MAJOR CONCEPTS, AND LEVELS OF ANALYSIS**

All four disciplinary studies of international migration and transnationalism considered here take for granted the basic epistemological assumption that the world "out there" exists and that it is knowable. But sociologists, anthropologists, historians and political scientists, including students of international migration and transnationalism in these disciplines, want to know different aspects of this world "out there" which they then represent using different concepts and examine with different analytic tools. I first consider anthropology and political science (including political sociology), the two disciplines that, although from quite different perspectives, initiated the interest in transnationalism in the field of immigration studies. Then, against this comparative framework, I review the main research agendas and approaches of the remaining two academic fields: sociology and history.

Anthropology's traditional concern has been with local societies conceptualized holistically at multiple and interrelated phenomenal levels (from material, technological and economic infrastructures to social and cultural organizations) that are (re)constituted by meaningful actors through everyday interactions. As anthropologists followed their actor-subjects from traditional settings first to urban-industrial centers in their own societies and then across state-national borders, they have developed interest in international migration and, specifically, in multilocal or transnational spaces created by immigrants. The idea of translocal spaces linking home and host communities of immigrants accommodates the anthropologists' traditional interest in
"far away," now, sending societies (see Foner, 2000b; Brettell, 2000 for reviews of this discipline-specific approach and shifting agendas).

In accord with the holistic approach to the study of human societies specific to this discipline, the anthropologists conceive of the trans- (or multi-)local as the arena and mobilizer of political, social, economic and cultural agency, individual and collective, and the source of "creolization" of meanings and identities. The notion of creolization as mixing-and-blending is akin to the concept of assimilation as ethnicization, that is, the combining by immigrants of home- and host-country traditions in different, context-contingent constellations (Sarna, 1978; see also Kivisto, 2001) or as the cultural pluralism used in sociology. This affinity, however, has thus far not been theoretically pursued by immigration anthropologists. More commonly, the idea of transnational spaces created by immigrants is viewed as an opportunity of a "conceptual escape" from the hegemonic national academic-political frameworks within which international migration issues are typically formulated (the most explicit formulation of this perspective on immigrant transnationalism can be found in Kearney, 1991 and forthcoming). Although recent empirical studies challenging this conceptualization (see, e.g., Ong and Nonini, 1997; Ong, 1999 on Asian successful businessmen-global "astronauts" from the Pacific Ring) have been recognized in the field, no attempts have yet been made to use these findings toward a theoretical "opening up" of the base concept of "transnationalism from below" informing anthropological research.

Three factors are likely to hinder reformulations of these discipline-specific concepts and approaches. One is a continued confusion, recognized by the anthropologists themselves, regarding the meaning of the founding concept of "transnationalism from below." The definitions of immigrant transnationalism currently used in the anthropological research include its understanding as "social fields" or support networks extending across state-national borders (Basch et al., 1994); "creolized cultures" (Hannerz, 1996) or "bi-(or multi-)focal" identities (Glick Schiller, 1999; see also Kearney, 1995); civic-political "citizenship as a sense of belonging" (Laguerre, 1998); and "ethnoscapes" as encompassing translocal lifeworlds (Appadurai, 1991; Holston and Appadurai, 1996). This conceptual confusion, for that matter, is by no means unique to anthropologists (see Smith and Guarnizo, 1998; Portes, 1999; Kivisto, 2001; and several essays in this volume on a similar problem in the sociology of immigrant transnationalism).

Another hindrance to theoretical reformulations of the concept of transnationalism from below, and, in particular, to its linking to other phe-
nomena informing immigrant lifeworlds, is the lingering notion in anthropological studies that “transnational spaces” are the subject proper of any adequate study of present-day immigration and the resulting inattention to other phenomena. Originally formulated by Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc (1994; see also Glick Schiller et al., 1996), this idea has been empirically refuted by recent studies documenting the simultaneity of immigrant transnationalism and assimilation (on immigrants’ political participation in both home and host countries, see, e.g., Mahler, 1998; Guarnizo, 2001; Smith, 1997; Graham, 2001; on the coexistence of assimilation and transnationalism in the sociocultural sphere, see Levitt, 2001; Morawska, 2003.) But no attempts to construct theoretical linkages between these two phenomena have been made thus far. It may be that although they are by now well established in the immigration studies, anthropologists still feel a need to justify their presence by claims to their unique and fundamental contributions.

The traditionally local focus of anthropological research has been the third factor slowing down the “translation” into it of the ideas and approaches its practitioners now recognize as useful, such as the modes of operation and impact on “transnationalism from below” of the economic and political macro-structures. Two recent attempts to link theoretically globalization and transnationalism by Appadurai (1996) and Ong (1999) can be useful in a discussion of the how-to of such link building. A discussion of Appadurai’s assumption that it is transnationalism as the cultural field that has been the primary force of the economic and political globalization and of Ong’s social-anthropological analysis of the transnationalism-globalization “dialectics” should also engage sociologists and political scientists whose discipline-specific explanatory priorities tend to be different.

Worth noting in a separate statement, particularly in the context of anthropology’s traditional holistic approach to the study of human societies, has been the failure to integrate the issue of gender relations (not just sex or household as a variable) and its effects into the basic conceptual and analytic “tool kit” of this discipline’s research on immigrants’ transnational involvements. This “gap” contrasts with the taken-for-granted attention received in this research by two other major “organizers” of immigrant activities, namely socioeconomic position and race. This problem and possible avenues of remedying it in anthropological research on immigration and transnationalism are treated by Patricia Pessar and Sarah Mahler in this volume. Since this enduring bias-by-default has been equally common, but little analyzed, in other disciplinary research considered here, Pessar and Mahler’s essay may
serve to initiate an interdisciplinary conversation about mechanisms of the persistence of this neglect and ways to eliminate it (see also Pessar, 1999, for a review of the treatment of gender relations in immigration and transnationalism studies).

In contrast to the actors-in-their-(trans-)local-environments focus of anthropologists, the primary concern of political scientists has been operation of institutional structures (public policymaking, public administration, international relations). A newcomer to political science research, the issue of international migration has already become well integrated into this discipline's mainstream agenda in Western Europe where immigration policy constitutes part of the system of laws and regulations binding the member-states of the European Union. It still remains somewhat marginal in American political science studies, although scholars such as Aristide Zolberg (1999, 2000), Myron Weiner (1995), Gary Freeman (1995, 1998) and James Hollifield (2000a) have brought this problematic closer to the forefront in recent years.

The "politics of immigration" studied by political scientists involve two major issues: control of exit and entry and the integration of immigrants understood in terms of citizenship and political participation. These two concerns informing political science studies of immigration have been traditionally founded on the notion of the bounded nation-state, whose claim to sovereignty has been taken for granted. Challenged already in the 1970s by scholars of international relations who examined transnational politics of nonstate organizations (see, e.g., Keohane and Nye, 1971; Kaiser, 1971; Mansbach, Ferguson and Lampert, 1976), this premise was further undermined in the 1990s by political scientists' arguments that the boundaries and authority of nation-states are being diluted by processes of globalization (see Soysal, 1994; Jacobson, 1996 for the original propositions; for reviews of current agendas in political science studies of immigration, see Zolberg, 2000; Hollifield, 2000a; Freeman, forthcoming.) The "decline of the nation-state" proposition has been subject to a much livelier debate among European than among American political scientists/political sociologists. In view of the felt presence of the European Union as the emerging supranational political authority, this difference is understandable (see Joppke, 1998 for a comparative discussion of European and American political science studies of the demise vs. transformation of the nation-state; see also Aleinikoff, 2001 for a discussion of this issue in the United States).
Related to this debate, transnationalism in the political-scientific discourse has been conceptualized not, as in anthropology, as the creation "from below" by immigrant actors of "transnational spaces" that stretch across nation-state boundaries, but as a shift beyond or, as it were, vertically past (rather than horizontally across) or "post" the accustomed territorial state/national-level memberships derived therefrom. Such more-encompassing commitments and civic-political claims are based on universal humanity/human rights, suprastatal membership/entitlements (e.g., in the European Union), or panreligious solidarities (e.g., Muslim in Western Europe and, broader, globally). Reflecting this understanding, political scientists have used the concept of postnationalism rather than transnationalism. Unlike anthropologists who tend to either prioritize transnationalism as the social-cultural space or posit an interface, however under-elaborated theoretically, between transnationalism and globalization of the economic and political structures, political scientist-advocates of postnationalism conceive of it as an outcome of globalization (see, e.g., Hollifield, 2000a; Castles, 2000; Castles and Davidson, 2000).

Political science's main contribution to the field of immigration studies in general and, of concern here, to transnationalism research has been the sustained appeal, supported by overwhelming evidence, to "bring the ( supra ) state," and especially immigration politics and policies, into analyses of this phenomenon. There are signs that this message, for a long time unheeded by the anthropologists and sociologists who thus far have dominated the field, has been sinking in. The how-to of this operation does not yet seem clear, however, especially to the anthropologists for the reasons suggested in the earlier discussion of this field's disciplinary concerns. It has been the underlying argument of this discussion that such "translations," rather than a mere recognition of the impact, would be more effective if they were informed by familiarity with the other disciplines' concepts and approaches and through exchanges with hands-on practitioners of other disciplines.

Immigration policymaking – of interest here because of its impact on immigrant transnational engagements – has interested political scientists, in Aristide Zolberg's (2000) terms, as the "dependent" (more commonly) or the "independent" variable (see Hollifield, 2000a for a similar distinction between policy "outputs" vs. "outcomes"; see also Aleinikoff, 2003). In the former case, the making of immigration policy is conceived of in terms of the factors determining policymaking processes, which are a priori "bounded" by the theoretical models applied by the researchers. In standard political science
analyses of this type, the policy-determining factors are by default exclusively political, but recently the impact of other factors such as labor and market dynamics and cultural perceptions and insecurities, especially racial and religious "othering," has also been examined (see especially, Zolberg, 2000; Faist, 1998, 2000). This emergent interest of political scientists in multifactorial analysis provides a good opportunity for interdisciplinary conversation.

As the independent variable, immigration policy is examined in terms of its desired effects (or outcomes). Here, the so-called "gap hypothesis" (Cornelius, Martin and Hollifield, 1994), that is, the persistent discrepancy between the goals and outcomes of immigration policies, caused on the one hand by inconsistent policies and on the other hand by ever-inventive (re)adjustments by immigrant-actors, offers a particularly promising venue for bridge building via informed reciprocal translations between macrostructurally-oriented political science and micro-environment/human agency-focused anthropological and sociological analyses.

Thomas Faist's (1998, 2000) "translations" into the political science research agenda of other-disciplinary concerns have been unusually well informed by the concepts and approaches of other fields investigating immigrant transnationalism. Particularly to be recommended are Faist's systematization of the factors contributing to different types of transnationalism and his theoretical elaboration of the mezzo-level, constituted by social ties with their "symbolic contents," between macro- and microstructural mechanisms that generate and sustain immigrant transnationalism.1 His interdisciplinary innovations notwithstanding, however, Faist replicates his discipline's striking unawareness of the significance of gender relations (buried within the "kinship groups" that operate as consensual units) for the functioning and impact of political institutions and, in this case, for immigrant transnational engagements. On this issue, political science research, the most unselfconsciously male-centered field of immigration studies among the four disciplines considered here, has still the longest way to go.

When it first appeared in immigration sociology, research on immigrant transnationalism deviated from this field's dominant concern with the ways societal structures pattern international migration and the incorporation of immigrants and their children into mainstream American society (on the

1Faist's approach strikes this cultural sociologist (and, I believe, also anthropologists) as too rigidly Durkheimian or structuralist, to the neglect of immigrant actors and the meanings that move them to action, but it is an excellent base from which to start interdisciplinary discussions.
agenda of sociological research on immigration, see Hirschman, Kasinitz and DeWind, 1999; Schmitter Heisler, 2000; Morawska, forthcoming.) During the 1990s, paralleling (or sometimes opposing) the incorporation/assimilation-through-structures approach, another trend appeared in immigration sociology, namely, a shift to the study of immigrant adaptation "from below," from the perspective of immigrant actors. Two factors have influenced this new development. One has been the "insider" status (Merton, 1972) of immigration sociologists, many of whom are themselves foreign born or first generation native-born descendants of immigrants, for whom assimilation (incorporation) is a personal and, thus, interesting and important experience (see Rumbaut, 2000; Gans, 2000). The other factor has been the vocal entry into the field of anthropologists whose disciplinary agenda has traditionally focused on social actors and their local environments and whose concern with "transnational spaces" created by immigrants has quickly gained a following among sociologists.

The influence of anthropologists and their research agenda has also pluralized the base concepts guiding the sociological study of immigration. The concept of incorporation – now again called assimilation, although without the linear-progressive implication informing the classical model – of immigrants into the host, American, society has informed the bulk of late-twentieth-century sociological research on the facilitating and constraining structures embedding immigrants. A new concept of transnationalism, the main conveyors of which are immigrant-actors themselves, has shifted the research focus away from host society-centered assimilation to immigrant identities and commitments reaching across or "escaping" state-national borders. Following the identification of "transnational communities" as one of "the themes for a new century" by one of the most influential, trend-setting scholars in mainstream immigration sociology (Portes, 1997) has been a deluge of sociological studies on immigrant transnationalism.

As in anthropology, the concept of immigrant transnationalism has been assigned different meanings in sociological research, alternating between the structuralist understanding of this phenomenon, conceived of as translocal communities or social networks (see, e.g., Portes, 1997), and the agentic conceptualization, as cross-border engagements of social actors (e.g., Kivisto,

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2 Rather than "new," more accurately this recent interest represents a return to the Chicago School tradition in sociological research on immigration, dating back to the early twentieth century. W. Thomas and F. Znaniecki's classic The Polish Peasant (1918–1922) is probably the best example of such actor-focused approach. On a community study as a method and its main applications in American sociology, see Bell and Newby, 1973.
These different definitions delineate different research subjects and generate different research questions. For example, the social networks approach precludes the conceptualization and, thus, the investigation of the role of gender relations in immigrant transnationalism at the level of individual agency, while the actor-centered approach requires a theoretical elaboration of the relationship between gendered agency and gendered community structures before immigrant transnationalism can be sensibly investigated.

Following the initial fascination with immigrant transnationalism "from below" inspired by anthropological research, the sociologists quickly recognized the necessity to specify the "feedbacks" between immigrant transnational involvements and their surrounding societal structures. The task of a theoretical construction of the so-called macro-micro link — the longstanding challenge, for that matter, in the discipline of sociology at large — has thus far not been accomplished in the sociology of immigrant transnationalism. Attempts to relate globalization and transnationalism — for example, Portes's (1997) representation of transnationalism as "globalization from below" or Cordero-Guzman, Smith and Grosfoguel's (2001) distinction between globalization representing the economic and political forces and transnationalism the sociocultural ones — have not been convincing. The propositions of anthropologists noted earlier (Appadurai, 1996; Ong, 1999) may initiate an interesting interdisciplinary discussion of this relationship, especially considering that implied in the sociologists' search for the micro-macro link is a possibility of causal reciprocity between globalization processes and immigrant transnationalism.

If a micro-macro connection is made at the "lower" structural level, the emergence of "transnational fields" in immigrant lives is interpreted either as a resistance "from below" to the "powers above" and, by implication, the weakening of the host nation-state, or as an expression of ethnic pluralism and, by implication, the support for the existing state-national structures. These propositions should be reconciled by specifying the circumstances responsible for each outcome. Related to this has been the need to theorize the relationship between immigrant transnationalism and assimilation. These two main concepts informing current research in the sociology of immigration and ethnicity have been either treated separately as if they were unrelated, or in research informed by the already mentioned assumption that "T because no A." Peter Kivisto's (2001) recent attempt to theorize this relationship by representing immigrant transnationalism as a form of ethnic-path assimilation, the first such attempt in the field, and the noted earlier empiri-
cal studies demonstrating the coexistence of these two processes should be useful in better elaborating this connection. Participation in this work may also interest anthropologists whose research interests have thus far concentrated exclusively on the transnational side of this relationship.

Immigration historians' initial preoccupation with transnationalism has been a reaction to or, more accurately, a well-documented with historical data critique of anthropologists' representation of this phenomenon as a "new" development (for reviews of current agendas in immigration history, see Gjerde, 1999; on the "old" vs. "new" transnationalism, see Gerstle, 1997.) Now that their critique of the supposedly novel nature has been accepted and the existence of immigrant cross-border connections in the past has been acknowledged in transnationalism research, historians have launched their own series of transnationalism studies (cf. recent articles in the Journal of American Ethnic History, the leading journal in the field).

As in sociology and anthropology of immigrant transnationalism, current historical research on this subject involves interesting studies on "women and (transnational networks; cross-border household management; transnational identities; etc.)," but transnationalism as a gendered process has not yet become incorporated into the field's agenda (see Weinberg, 1992; Gabaccia, 1992 on "womenful" but "genderless" studies in immigration history in general).

Immigration historians can make further contributions to transnationalism research not only in substantive studies, but also, and in particular, in methodology. Although as the result of their critique of the "new transnationalism" historians' research on immigrants' cross-border ties in the past has become a staple reference in sociological and anthropological studies, the historical approach to the study of immigration and transnationalism has largely gone unnoticed.

The primary concern of historical scholarship has been the reconstruction of processes of the "becoming" (Abrams, 1982) of societal formations, events, personae, or groups in changing economic, political and cultural contexts. Unlike anthropologists, for whom the contextualized (multi-)local is the main focus of analysis, historians' attention centers on the particular, as it were, in motion, in the making. Unlike sociologists, whose study of immigrant transnationalism is typically either "timeless" or captures change by artificially isolating and comparing selected points of time, historians examine processes of transnational engagements (see Zunz, 1987; Diner, 2000 for presentations of historians' approach). Considering the recognition by both soci-
ologists and anthropologists of the necessity to “embed” immigrant transnationalism in its context, the lack of interest shown by scholars in these fields in historians’ skills in demonstrating the time and place contingency of these engagements has been indeed surprising. Particularly interesting to consider in view of the challenge of a theoretical construction of the micro-macro link in immigrant transnationalism research should be the historians’ “epistemological comfort” with the notion of circular causality, derived from the conceptualization of social phenomena as ongoing interlocked processes.

**MODES OF ANALYSIS AND EXPLANATORY STRATEGIES**

The epistemological approach distinctive to anthropology has been comparative analysis and, on this basis, construction of typologies as the way to theorize similarities and differences in the functioning of communities (on the anthropological analytic strategies, see, e.g., Geertz, 1983; Comaroff and Comaroff, 1992: Introduction). Unlike other disciplines considered here (excepting history), anthropology does not aim to construct general theoretical models. Two factors preclude this analytic strategy: anthropologists’ concept of human action and the organization of its social surroundings as context-contingent and, thus, variant from place to place; and their ethnographic method of data collection that yields close-to-the-ground local findings.

In anthropological studies of immigration, this approach—construction of typologies—is applied to theorize about mechanisms and strategies of migration and social organization of immigration. The concept of transnationalism—referred to by one of the leading anthropologists in the field as a “theoretical construct” that articulates immigrant participation and identities between sending and receiving societies (Brettell, 2000:98)—currently informs anthropological studies of both strategies and social organization of immigration in America. Worth noting in this context is a confusion regarding the epistemological foundations of immigration research “from below” among anthropologists (used here as an illustration; sociologists share this confusion) engaged in this study. In her state of the art discussion of “theorizing migration in anthropology,” Caroline Brettell (2000) uses the term theory with at least three different meanings, each of which, she argues as they are introduced, describes the anthropological approach: “theory” as typology construction (pp. 99–102); theory as causal analytic models (pp. 102–108); and theory as research that “can be squarely situated in relation to analytic models” (p. 109). Clearly, some intra- and interdisciplinary clarification of the
basic analytic languages used in immigration studies is very much in order. Helpful in this task might be Alan Sica’s (1998) edited volume of essays, *What Is Social Theory? Philosophical Debates*.

Unlike anthropology, political science is general-theory-oriented. Thus, in contrast to largely untheoretical discussions among students of immigrant transnationalism “from below,” the political science debate about post-nationalism “from above” has been informed by competing theoretical models, the traditional modern vs. transformed in the global era nation-state (see Brubaker, 1996; Joppke, 1999; Hansen and Weil, 2001 for good discussions of these competing theories and Joppke, forthcoming, on the same in the context of mass international migrations).

Political science students of immigration identify basically two related tasks of political theory. One challenge, according to Gary Freeman (1998), is the construction of “a theory of immigration politics [that] accounts for the similarities and differences in the politics of immigration of receiving states and explains the persistent gaps between the goals and the effects of policies” (p. 2). The other task, according to James Hollifield (2000a), is to “develop theories of international migration that incorporate political variables [i.e., state interventions into immigrant transnational practices of concern here]” (p. 173; see also Zolberg, 2000).

Reflecting their discipline’s focus on macro-institutional actors, political scientists of immigration have not thus far displayed much interest in politics “from below” conducted by immigrant actors – the phenomenon studied by local environment/agency-oriented sociologists and anthropologists. James Hollifield’s (2000b) idea of “rights” as a necessary component of political science theory of international migration contains implications of such action from below, but it remains unelaborated. Thomas Faist’s (2000) attempt to integrate “from above” and “from below” levels of analysis in a multi- (macro-meso-micro) level theoretical model of international migration, global and state-national politics, and immigrant transnationalism has already been noted. Together with Hollifield’s propositions, Faist’s model could serve as a base for an interdisciplinary discussion of different explanatory strategies applied in immigration and transnationalism studies and the possibilities of mutual “translations.”

As in anthropological research, no theoretical model(s) of transnationalism *sensu stricto* informs the sociological studies of immigrant transnationalism. Instead, these studies use transnationalism as a “guiding concept” (Skocpol, 1984) or, like anthropologists, substitute typologies of immigrant
transnational engagements for the analytic models (e.g., Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt, 1999; for a critical review of immigration sociologists’ efforts to theorize their subject matter[s], see Kivisto, 2001).

Sociologists who apply in research the concept of transnationalism appropriated from anthropologists have, however, apparently been unaware of or have never explicitly considered the epistemological approach of the lender discipline and, in particular, its prescriptive notion of the holistic study of immigrant communities at multiple phenomenal levels. They have not assessed, either, the implications of this approach for their research questions and interpretation of findings. An interdisciplinary discussion about these issues should be helpful to both parties.

It should also be of interest to scholars in both fields to consider the epistemic gains and losses from using the anthropological analytic strategy – typologies – in lieu of theoretical (causal) models in the study of immigrant transnationalism. In their preference for “guiding concepts” and typologies as the analytic tools, sociologists of immigrant transnationalism have deviated from the standard explanatory strategies that inform sociological analysis: theoretical generalizations and testing of competing theoretical models for general applicability. Their research methods, primarily ethnographic, have also differed from standard sociological procedures whereby findings derived from quantitative analysis of large-set aggregate data and tested for statistical significance as the measure of evidence validity provide the scientific basis of and justification for proposed theoretical models. It is likely that the ethnographic nature of sociological data on immigrant transnationalism hinders the formulation of theoretical models thereof. Alejandro Portes’ and his colleagues’ (1999) recent recommendation of a middle-range, time- and place-specific theory (see Merton, 1968) of immigrant transnationalism offers a promising venue for the construction of a satisfactory theoretical model of this context-variable phenomenon.

The analytic strategy of historians is the narrative of the particular whereby “why” social phenomena come into being, change or persist is explained by showing “how” they do it, that is, by demonstrating how they had been shaped over time through changing circumstances that include temporal dimensions of events/actions such as sequence, rhythm and duration (on historians’ explanatory strategies, see Abrams, 1982; Diner, 2000; Aminzade, 1992; Sewell, 1996). Whereas sociologists test competing theoretical models for general applicability, historians seek to specify the configurations of time- and place-specific circumstances under which a given interpretation would best account for the phenomena studied. This approach also informs
historical studies of immigrant transnationalism (Morawska, forthcoming).

Historians have traditionally defined their discipline epistemologically in opposition to grand-theoretical ambitions of sociologists. In a disciplinary position statement, a leading immigration historian, Hasia Diner (2000), illustrates this identity-by-contrast: social scientists, she argues, “depend fundamentally on [theoretical] models,” whereas historians, because of their focus on the particular and their training which requires them to stay close to empirical sources, “generally cringe at the idea” (p. 31). This self-image of historians, however, has been based on the uninformed representation of sociological modes of analysis that contain approaches ranging from universalizing to particularizing theoretical strategies (see Hall, 1999 for the best-to-date exposition thereof). It is interesting and rather incomprehensible that, although they recognize their existence, neither sociologists nor historians who address the epistemological positions of their respective disciplines refer to methodological bridge-building studies of historical sociologists (Hall, 1999; Abbott, 1992; Ragin, 1987; Griffin, 1992). Immigration scholars in these two fields, especially advocates of interdisciplinarity, appear simply unaware of the existence of this literature. Familiarity with this work would facilitate the recognition of disciplinary differences and, thus, mutual “translations” of respective positions.

Whereas sociology is commonly used as a (counter-)reference, anthropology has thus far not been a referent in self-definitions of immigration historians. Although the focus of anthropologists on the particular makes their approach akin to that of historians, the latter’s recognition of the fundamental causality of time makes them perceive typologies constructed by anthropologists as too static an analytic strategy. Interdisciplinary conversations between historians and anthropologists of immigration could, then, profit from considering their different preferences for analytic strategies grounded in the epistemologies of each discipline.

**OBJECTIVE SCIENCE VERSUS PERSPECTIVE KNOWLEDGE**

Among the elements defining methodologies of immigration studies discussed here, the issue of the objectivity vs. perspectivism of disciplinary

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3 Efforts toward a rapprochement between history and anthropology in the early 1980s (see, e.g., special issue of the *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 12(2), 1981) have never borne fruit or the translation into research practice in these two disciplines of the mutual "Methodological understanding" they were supposed to produce. They have been resumed, however, in recent years — see, e.g., Dirks, 1996; Kalb, Mark, and Tak, 1996; Barnard, 2000; Axel, 2002.
knowledge has been taken for granted more than any other epistemological question considered thus far—a non-agenda by default—in almost all of the four fields.

The assumption of a value-free science has implicitly informed immigration and transnationalism studies in political science. The use of scientific methods of data collection and analysis (representative sampling and significance testing of findings) in this discipline and a belief shared by its practitioners in the possibility of constructing universally valid theories at the same time reflect and justify this tacit assumption. It underlies, for example, the belief of Gary Freeman, one of the leading experts in the field, that one of the important reasons why the study of international migration has been marginal in political science is the "normative bias" of many immigration/transnationalism scholars who infuse their research with political-ideological ideas about a "just society" (Freeman, forthcoming). Freeman is evidently unaware of his own normative option for the value-free, "detached" model of the social sciences. He does not recognize, either, a problem of possible influences of international migration/immigration policy scholars' institutional "connections" to state-national agencies involved in this policymaking on those investigators' research agendas and interpretations.*

The stand of immigration sociologists on the issue of objectivity vs. perspectivism in their disciplinary knowledge oscillates between two positions. One of these positions, like those of political scientists, has been informed by a tacit assumption about the objectivity of studies executed according to accepted methods of scientific analysis. Barbara Schmitter Heisler's (2000) review of the state of the art in theory and research in immigration sociology, for example, implicitly assumes guiding concepts and research agendas in this field to form and change either through internal paradigm shifts or in response to changing social environments adequately grasped by social scientists. Immigration scholars' own situations and intellectual or political preferences apparently impact neither their agendas nor their interpretations of findings.5

4The recognition by political scientists of the potential impact of their state-institutional connections on the scholarly agendas of their research has been a European rather than American development, apparently related to the European scholars' increased involvement in studies sponsored by the European Union and its different agencies. On such links, especially through the funding of research projects by political institutions and the implications thereof for the conceptualization of the investigated problems, see Geddes, forthcoming.

5For an example of studies specifically devoted to immigrant transnationalism "from below" that are implicitly informed by the assumption of the objectivity of collected data and the arguments based thereon, see a collection edited by Smith and Guarnizo, 1998.
The other position in immigrant transnationalism research—a position labeled postpositivist by Denzin and Lincoln (1998) in their review of current epistemological approaches in sociology—is represented, for example, by Alejandro Portes (2001). While Portes recognizes “that values enter at several points in the scientific research process,” he assumes this intrusion to be neutralized by “probing and investigation of others [scholars]” (Portes, 2001:6). The problem is more complex than this. First, perspectivism is introduced into scholarly research not only by personal “values” but also by taken-for-granted or preferred theoretical models and explanatory strategies applied in research. Second, these theories and analytic tools are often shared, like Kuhnian paradigms, by the practitioners of the discipline for a given period of time, so that the collegial probing and investigation may not reveal the possibilities of different perspectives.

Thus, to use Portes’ illustration, at issue here is not only whether “Saskia Sassen’s notion of ‘global cities’ and the role played by immigrants in these cities [stemming in part] from her own cosmopolitan origins [does or] does not detract from the value of her insights” (Portes, 2001:7), but the extent to which the world-system paradigm informing her studies makes her view these immigrants in structural terms as (aggregate) labor and blinds her to their individual agentic causality presupposed, for example, in anthropological research. Or, for another example, the accepted perception of historical research as “atheoretical” by both sociologists and historians of immigration has contributed to a persistent aperception by these two groups of interesting theoretical bridge-building propositions of historical sociologists.

Immigration historians and anthropologists have addressed the objectivity of their disciplinary knowledge only obliquely in discussions of specific research, but not as the epistemological issue relevant to their fields at large. Thus, “deconstructing” analyses by immigration historians and anthropologists of the white male perspective endemic in their disciplinary research and the exposing by anthropologists of immigration studies’ exclusive focus on the receiving, American society and neglect of the sending side recognize the particular standpoints in the field (see, e.g., Gabaccia, 1992; Sanchez, 2000; Brettell, 2000). Undoubtedly useful as modifiers of research agendas in disciplinary studies of immigration, these disclosures do not, however, consider these omissions in a broader context of value-free versus perspectivist knowledge and the impact each position has on research strategies and findings, although in both disciplines there exist good discussions of these issues (on historical practice, see, e.g., Appleby, Hunt and Jacob, 1994; on anthropological research, Atkinson, 1990).
Neither, for that matter, do studies that explicitly acknowledge their value commitment by siding theoretically with the "underdog" -- nonwhite immigrants from poverty-stricken world peripheries -- against the hegemonic powers of the rich-and-white receiving society by launching "transnational displacement (escape)" as the key concept in the study of immigration. Anthropologists, it seems, are the most numerous among advocates of this position. They probably find it attractive for two reasons: first, because of their traditional focus on "low and forgotten" peoples in the underdeveloped (post)colonial world and, because of their emic understanding of these cultures, their identification with the generalized disempowered others; and, second, because of the affinity of contemporary anthropology with a marxisant (here, emancipatory) "engaged postmodernism." An argument of Michael Kearney (forthcoming), one of the leading anthropologist-students of immigrant transnationalism, that such conceptual perversion constitutes one of the main strengths of the anthropological approach to immigration studies is a radical expression of this position (on the "poetics and politics of ethnography," see, e.g., Clifford and Marcus, 1996; see Mahler, 1998 for a critical assessment of anthropological studies informed by such emancipatory ideas). In less radical versions, such a positional knowledge approach has also informed the work of some sociologists of immigrant transnationalism. Sorting out possibly different bases of these perspectivist positions and examining their implications for research agendas and analyses would help the interdisciplinary work of immigration and transnationalism scholars in these two disciplines.

Herbert Gans (2000) has recently called the absence of sociology-of-knowledge analysis of immigration research one of the "holes" awaiting study. I agree. But I believe an even "deeper" look into the epistemological foundations of the discipline -- sociology and other fields considered here -- is called for to reveal their tacit assumptions about the knowability of the world in general and the implications of these options for the concepts and analytic strategies informing their study of immigration and transnationalism. The purpose of such (self-)reflections is not to diminish or discredit the value of scholarly research, but to enhance it by revealing its limitations and at the same time opening possibilities of well-informed modifications. I may well strengthen my argument by revealing its epistemological premises.

A general orientation that informs my position can be summarized in two presuppositions. The first assumes the world and our experience in it to exist both within and outside our minds and bodies. The second consists of
two conjunct premises: 1) the ways of these “outside” and “inside” worlds and their interrelations are basically knowable, but 2) because the ongoing mutual (re)constitution of these outside and inside worlds makes them inherently contingent and fluid, our knowledge of them is likewise conditional, partial and tentative.

The epistemological position informed by the above presuppositions may be called neomodern (see Comaroffs and Comaroffs, 1992:xi). The prefix “neo” expresses the recognition that our representations of the world reconstitute – transform – rather than reproduce it. The root and emphasis “modern” reflects, on the one hand, a view of representations – whether general theories, typologies, or narratives of the evolving historical processes – as continuously interacting with the outside environment, rather than locked in a realm of fiction. On the other hand, it expresses a belief that the acknowledgment of the “transformative” function of representations does not by itself invalidate each and all of them as accounts of what are (were) the immigrants’ lived experience or the state-national institutions’ policies. It means, rather, that the degree of verisimilitude, or approximation, of these representations to that experience and those policies should be evaluated from the perspectives of both within- and other-disciplinary concepts and approaches.

CONCLUSION

Rather than summarize the preceding discussion, I suggest here some directions for mutual education useful for the effective inter- (not just multi-) disciplinary work in the study of immigration and transnationalism. These suggestions reflect my own epistemological position and analytic preferences and they should be read as an invitation to discussion and not as a prescription for the right path toward “the third phase” of research on immigrant transnationalism.

Thus, to start with the issues of shared interest among immigration and trans(post)nationalism scholars in different disciplines, we need not only to clarify the main concepts and understandings of theory informing our own disciplinary studies, but also, and importantly considering the multidisciplinary character of the field, to “compare notes” on these matters with colleagues from other disciplines so that collaboration is based on mutual understandings of different meanings assigned to these notions.

Similarly, the need to identify the feedbacks between various dimensions of this phenomenon and to conceptualize the connections linking it to macrostructural processes, recognized by representatives of different discipli-
nary studies of immigrant transnationalism, might best be realized in an interdisciplinary conversation so that the field-specific propositions are enriched by the ideas from other analytic traditions. The earlier mentioned different propositions of such link-building by the anthropologists, political scientists, and political economists could serve as "ground zeros" from which to begin a discussion.

Finally, immigration scholarship in all disciplines considered here would profit by integrating analytic concern with gender relations into the already taken-for-granted agenda of class and racial conditioners of immigrant attitudes and behavior investigated at individual as well as group levels. The work of anthropologists and historians, whose concern with this issue, applied in research, has thus far been most systematic, could serve as a base for an interdisciplinary discussion about ways of such integration.

Let us also consider the epistemic gains from the field-to-field knowledge of discipline-specific approaches and analytic strategies and the possibilities of "translations." Sociologists who use transnationalism as the key concept framing their studies and on this basis claim interdisciplinary affinity with anthropologists may want to consider the epistemological context of this notion in anthropological research and, specifically, its holistic and relational (rather than "cut" into class, gender, race, etc. segments) approach to the study of human (here immigrant) communities, and the equally holistic understanding of space that differs from the sociological notion of residential patterns (segregation/concentration). Immigration sociologists may also want to consider the inherent temporality of social life that shapes processes such as immigrant assimilation and transnational involvements; conceptualized in terms of duration, rhythm, sequence and rupture, these "time variables" can be incorporated into sociological analyses (for a view of sociology and history as "one single intellectual adventure," of which neither group is aware, and the ways to make it obvious, see Braudel, 1980; Abrams, 1982; Abbott, 1991).

Anthropologists may likewise profit from examining ways historians use time as an analytic tool, how it derives from the discipline-specific concept of social events/actors as processes, how it impacts historians' explanatory strategies, and, in particular, how its integration into the anthropological analytic tool kit would dynamize this discipline's own mode of explanation. Immigration anthropologists appear unfamiliar with, or never refer to in their studies, their colleagues' discussions of the relationship between anthropology and history. Both historians and anthropologists may find it interesting to com-
pare the what and how of integrating temporal and spatial dimensions in the study of immigrant communities from the epistemological positions of these two disciplines. Because time plays a fundamentally important role in the (re)constitution of societal structures and human action (see Giddens, 1976, 1984; Sewell, 1992; Emirbayer and Mische, 1998 on the structuration process), these two issues – the temporal dimension of social life and the embeddedness of immigrant (trans)local spaces, the focus of anthropological research – in broader social contexts could be considered jointly.

Although both sociologists and anthropologists agree with political scientists' call to “bring the state into” the study of immigrant transnationalism, this task has not yet been accomplished. It requires, of course, the elaboration of the micro-macro link, in this case the connection between translocal activities of immigrant actors and political processes “from above.” Political scientists face a similar task a rebours, namely, to incorporate the immigrant transnational identities, economic pursuits, and politics “from below” as conceptualized by sociologists and anthropologists into their state- or (global) economy-focused models. In both cases, the mutual examination of the concepts and their implications for the analytic strategies used by scholars in these different disciplines should help in these undertakings.

As in other disciplines, a consideration by political science students of immigration and trans(post)nationalism of the effects of “time variables” on the phenomena they study and of their implications for methods of analysis and construction of theories may bring not only a better understanding of the work of immigration historians, but also ideas enriching their own disciplinary analyses. Some familiarity with the work of historical sociologists, moreover, should dispel the accustomed conviction of these grand-theory-oriented scholars that analyses of the particular and the narrative method of explanation are inherently atheoretical (besides the already cited studies of Hall [1999] and Ragin [1987]; also Quadagno and Knapp [1992]; and Calhoun, [1998]).

The same readings would help to unsettle the firm belief of historians that sociological theories are by definition universal and, as such, abhorrent and to make historians of immigration and transnationalism familiar with, and thus capable of applying in their own work, historical generalizations (Skocpol, 1984) and theoretically informed particularizing explanatory strategies such as situational history, specific history, and configurational history elaborated by John Hall (1999). Immigration historians may also profit from the examination of the concept of space used by anthropologists, which is as nuanced as that of time elaborated by historians.
Learning about different analytic strategies applied in particular disciplines and, especially, different ways of conducting theoretically informed research should enhance not only these disciplinary approaches themselves, but also lay ground for a well-informed interdisciplinary collaboration in the study of immigration and transnationalism. These tasks would be served even better if this work were accompanied by immigration and transnationalism scholars' collective self-reflection on the underlying tenets in their disciplines regarding the issue of objectivity vs. perspectivism in their scholarly knowledge, the grounds of these tenets and their possible defects, and on the most effective ways to produce the most adequate knowledge possible.

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