Introduction: New directions in the anthropology of migration and multiculturalism

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Abstract

It is a kind of boom time for the anthropology of migration. Anthropologists are currently studying a wide range of migration-related topics. Many of them, of course, are not entirely new: anthropologists have been researching migration dynamics and impacts since at least the 1930s (most notably within the Manchester School of anthropology). Since the 1970s the discipline’s burgeoning interest in ethnicity has largely entailed research on post-migration communities. Since the 1990s, migrant transnationalism has become one of the most fashionable topics. There is still much to do in research and theory around migration, not least with regard to public debates around multiculturalism. This introduction suggests a number of possible new directions for anthropological inquiry into migration and multiculturalism, and summarizes the special issue’s contributing articles in light of their contributions toward moving the discipline in these directions.

Keywords: Anthropology; migration; multiculturalism; transnationalism; ethnicity.

Migration and migration-related topics currently have a prominent place in the discipline of anthropology. Among an assortment of topics, anthropologists are involved in the study of areas such as migration and identities, citizenship, law and legal status, religion, family and kinship, children and ‘the second-generation’, language, education, health, media consumption, internet use, the construction of ‘home’, sexuality, remittances, hometown associations, development, local politics, workplaces and labour markets. The breadth and vitality of today’s anthropology of migration is apparent not just in a burgeoning number of publications but in ongoing PhD student work.
and professional conferences, like those of the American Anthropological Association (AAA) and European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA), within which there now regularly convene several workshops on such migration-related themes. It is, in fact, a kind of boom time for the anthropology of migration.

The study of migration has long been both central and marginal to the development of social anthropology (Eades 1987). Even in the non-industrial societies which were the special focus of much anthropology in the discipline’s early days, there was evidence that migration in one form or another – rural-urban, regional, intra-empire, international – was having a variety of impacts on local communities and wider societies. Some anthropologists paid more attention to this than others, however. For a long time, many anthropologists’ lack of interest in migration was due to their overriding concern with elucidating patterns of social and cultural order that underpinned societies, rather than with unravelling processes of change (which migration represents in many ways).

Anthropologists working in south central Africa – particularly Max Gluckman, J. Clyde Mitchell and the emergent Manchester School – are credited most with the initial development of serious ethnographic accounts and theoretical insights surrounding migration issues. During the 1940s and 1950s they were witness to profound socio-economic transformations (especially rapid urbanization and vital shifts from agricultural subsistence to waged, industrial labour) within distinct political conditions (colonialism and its extensive state infrastructures). Their efforts to understand these contexts and changes led them theoretically to consider, among other things, the conditioning nature of, and inter-linkages between, encompassing spheres of political economy and modes of social relations implicated in migration processes. These interests still run through much contemporary anthropology of migration. Further, among the methodological and analytical tools that the Manchester School in Africa developed were approaches to case studies and concepts of social networks that inform much work in anthropology and other social sciences (see Rogers and Vertovec 1995) and understandings of group identities that presaged by over a decade the now dominant Barthian view of ethnicity (see Banks 1996).

There are several excellent overviews of anthropology and migration (including Gmelch 1980; Kearney 1986; Eades 1987; Malkki 1995; Brettell 2000; Foner 2000, 2003; Sanjek 2003), so little need here to systematically rehearse the development of the field. Several streams of thinking and lines of inquiry have obtained within this field over the years, and many important works have been published in each. Considering all of these, if there is a particular anthropological approach, focus, or set of questions around migration that
distinguishes it from other social sciences concerned with the topic, they are summarized well by Caroline Brettell who describes anthropology’s attention to:

... the articulation between the place whence a migrant originates and the place or places to which he or she goes. This includes exploration of how people in local places respond to global processes. Equally, anthropology’s focus on cultures, which includes the study of the interaction between beliefs and behaviour, of corporate groups, and of social relationships, has resulted in an emphasis in migration studies on matters of adaptation and culture change, on forms of social organization that are characteristic of both the migration process and the immigrant community, and on questions of identity and ethnicity. (2000: 98)

Indeed, equipped with this set of interests, over the past thirty or so years anthropology has mainly studied the broader field of migration through the concepts of identity and ethnicity.

From ethnic migration to migrants in multi-ethnic contexts

Alongside other influential works (including Cohen 1969, 1974; Mayer 1971; Epstein 1978), anthropology’s focus on ethnicity was particularly sharpened by Fredrik Barth’s classic introduction to *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (1969). Moreover, Barth’s conceptualization of ethnicity was found to be particularly relevant to migration scenarios, since it highlighted the malleable, context-contingent negotiation of markers and boundaries of ethnic groups and identities; as contexts changed due to migration, anthropologists found, so would ethnicities. In this way during the 1970s and 1980s, the anthropology of migration was particularly characterized by studies of ethnic identity, its maintenance, construction or reproduction among migrants. Not coincidentally this was a period when ethnographic research was increasingly being conducted in urban contexts in European and North American settings. The prominence of the anthropology of ethnicity (and within and through it, the study of migrants) reached a kind of climax in a major international conference held in Amsterdam in 1993 (see Vermeulen and Govers 1994; Baumann and Sunier 1995).

Since the early 1990s, while ethnicity has remained of much interest to anthropologists, the anthropology of migration has witnessed the steady growth of transnationalism as perhaps its foremost topic of interest. The prominence of this topic goes far beyond anthropology; indeed, despite criticism in some quarters, in recent years transnationalism has become one of the fundamental ways of understanding contemporary migrant practices across the multi-disciplinary field of
migration studies (see for instance Portes et al. 1999; Levitt et al. 2003; Vertovec in press). It is fair to say that the whole transnational paradigm shift in migration studies – developed through the 1990s and early 2000s into a massive sub-field in itself – was catalysed by key anthropological works (especially Georges 1990; Grasmuck and Pessar 1991; Rouse 1991; Glick Schiller et al. 1992; Basch et al. 1993; also see Kearney 1995).

The expansion of transnationalism as a topic of study has been tracked by Gustavo Cano (2005), who examined the Social Science Abstracts Database to see across the social sciences an increase from a handful of articles keyworded ‘transnational’ or ‘transnationalism’ in the late 1980s to nearly 1,300 articles by 2003; almost two-thirds were published between 1998 and 2003. A comparable rate and scale of expansion of works concerning transnationalism took place within anthropology itself. As in other disciplines, the growth of interest in transnationalism coincided with escalating concerns surrounding the many forms and processes of globalization; in anthropology, moreover, attention to transnationalism and globalization entailed important attempts to re-think notions of culture in light of global flows and modes of deterritorialization (cf. Appadurai 1996; Hannerz 1996; Fog Olwig and Hastrup 1997; Gupta and Ferguson 1997).

Particularly during and since the 1990s, too, anthropology has also played a major role in developing another significant area of migration studies, namely ethnographic studies on gender and migration (see especially Willis and Yeoh 2000; Pessar 2003; Pessar and Mahler 2003; also Mahler and Pessar 2006). Despite the importance of this field and its relation to theory, policy and basic ways of understanding a range of migration dynamics, Sarah Mahler and Patricia Pessar (2006) point out that for a host of reasons a truly gendered approach to migration still remains marginalized within anthropology and across migration studies.

Studies of ethnicity – group formation and maintenance, identities, associations and politics – still certainly abound in anthropology today; but perhaps it is now dealt with more as a secondary category of analysis rather than as a core theoretical focus as in the 1980s. Such a shift has not only occurred due to the rise of other topics of interest like transnationalism and gender, but also to the emergence of notions of hybridity (see Caglar 1997), creolization (see Palmié 2006) and cosmopolitanism (the 2006 Diamond Jubilee conference of the Association of Social Anthropologists [ASA] was devoted to this theme). Ethnicity may well remain a crucial component in the study of any of these topics, but it is no longer the focus per se; indeed, such topics serve to challenge many longstanding understandings of ethnicity. It is worth contemplating whether the seeming relegation of ethnicity and the rise of such other topics of study since the early
1990s not only relate to real global flows and new admixtures, but to broad ‘anti-essentialist’ shifts in methodology. Many anthropologists harbour anxieties over being labelled as ‘essentialist’ if they dare describe almost any characteristic of a group or category (cf. Grillo 1998, pp. 195ff.). Transnationalism, hybridity, creolization and cosmopolitanism are all conceptual devices that anthropologists and others now use to get beyond purportedly bounded and fixed understandings of groups and cultures which, fairly or not, have been associated with studies of ethnicity.

So, like most disciplinary sub-fields the anthropology of migration has gone from strength to strength, approach to approach. Anthropology’s engagement with post-migration ethnic diversity itself, however, has been lacking the same vigour. This is rather surprising, given the surge of interest in ethnicity since the 1970s. At that time Ronald Cohen anticipated a shift in anthropological interest ‘from ethnic isolates, “tribes” if you will, to one in which the interrelations between such groups in rural, urban, and industrial settings within and between nation-states is a key, possibly the key element in their lives’ (1978, p. 384, emphasis in original). A little later, Clifford Geertz eloquently advocated that anthropological theory and methods should address the growing complexity surrounding contemporary conditions of diversity:

[W]e have come to such a point in the moral history of the world that we are obliged to think about such diversity rather differently than we have been used to thinking about it. If it is in fact getting to be the case that rather than being sorted into framed units, social spaces with definite edges to them, seriously disparate approaches to life are becoming scrambled together in ill-defined expanses, social spaces whose edges are unfixed, irregular, and difficult to locate, the question of how to deal with the puzzles of judgment to which such disparities gives rise takes on a rather different aspect. Confronting landscapes and still lives is one thing; panoramas and collages quite another. (1986, p. 121)

Yet interrelations between multiple groups have not become the subject of anthropological inquiry as much as one might have expected.

One of the main ways anthropologists have theoretically engaged multi-ethnic settings themselves has been through the conceptual framework of ethnic pluralism in post-colonial settings such as the Caribbean (e.g., Smith 1965), Africa (e.g., Kuper and Smith 1969) and Southeast Asia (e.g., Hefner 2001). Often these have been viewed as ‘social spaces with definite edges to them’ of the kind that Geertz described. In *Pluralism and the Politics of Difference* Ralph Grillo
(1998) considers these kinds of settings comparatively alongside others in various historical contexts – pre-colonial, colonial, and twentieth-century nation-state – in order to typologize the ways diverse political institutions have dealt with modes of ethnic and cultural diversity. Grillo’s book is a significant contribution to the field, providing an anthropological view into an array of multi-ethnic situations, respectively taking into account local cultural meanings, political frameworks and policy objectives.

Drawing on such comparative insights – an ability supposedly inherent to the discipline – one would have anticipated anthropologists to have much more to say about multi-ethnic environments in contemporary post-migration, Western contexts (where, as mentioned, much work on ethnicity has been done). Yet when the anthropology of ethnicity was most thriving around the 1980s, the field was usually comprised of studies of identity and social organization among one or another distinct ethnic group within a particular multi-ethnic (or post-migration, ethnic majority-minority) setting. Since the 1990s, the transnational turn in the anthropology of migration has provided illuminating ethnographic data and an appreciation of the dynamics of migrants’ lives and interests across national contexts and multilocality. Yet often this research has been focused on the transnational ties and practices of, again, distinct migrant ethnic groups. The diverse migration settings themselves, where modes of migrant transnationalism are negotiated within or alongside everyday interactions and cross-cutting ties between a number of groups – often other immigrants, remains seriously understudied.

This is not to say that anthropologists have ignored multiculturalism. It has certainly been engaged by the discipline – stimulated, in part, by Terence Turner’s (1993) reprimand that anthropologists had heretofore remained arrogantly aloof from public debates around multiculturalism and the American ‘culture wars’. There was an observable upsurge in the number of panels on multiculturalism at the AAA annual conferences during the 1990s. But we should pause to acknowledge that ‘multiculturalism’ can mean many possibly related, but nevertheless discrete things, including a demographic condition, set of institutional accommodations, objectives of a political movement or broad body of state principles (Vertovec 1998). The multiculturalism with which anthropologists have mostly engaged has been of the political movement or ideology sort. Especially in the United States, this is the multiculturalism through which Black and other ethnic minorities have called for greater, if not separate, recognition and representation in the public sphere and particularly in university curricula (cf. Turner 1993; Eller 1997; Visweswaran 1998). In order to engage this meaning of multiculturalism, several anthropologists have looked to provide a kind of corrective to, or at least critical assessment
of, multiculturalist social movement ideologies, political philosophies, policy measures and public debates by underscoring the need for non-reified understandings of ‘culture’ (cf. Asad 1990; Wax 1993; Vertovec 1996; Baumann 1999; Watson 2000).

Vered Amit-Talai has also engaged anthropology’s relationship to public debates around multiculturalism, but in a way that goes beyond the correctives about ‘culture’ to stress the role of individual agency and consciousness within ‘the experience of everyday cultural multiplicity’ (1995a, p. 141). Rather than being content with notions of hybridity as an alternative ‘third space’ (à la Bhabha 1994; cf. Werbner & Modood 1997), the anthropological eye should turn to complex arenas where, ‘to operate effectively, people have to be multi-cultural’ (Amit-Talai 1995b, p. 227). While arguably rare, there have been some important studies which valuably contribute to such an approach towards multi-ethnic contexts.

For example, the contributions to Structuring Diversity, edited by Louise Lamphere (1992), comprise case studies exploring interactions between and among established residents and groups of new immigrants (such as Hmong, Assyrians and Mexicans) within defined institutional settings including workplaces, schools and housing complexes (also see Lamphere 1987). Roger Sanjek’s (1998) The Future of Us All provides an ethnographic account of local civic and political organizations in one of New York City’s most ethnically diverse neighbourhoods – Elmhurst-Corona, in Queens. Sanjek portrays how a shared ‘politics of place’, or set of common quality of life issues, serves to forge multi-ethnic coalitions and alliances among whites, longstanding ethnic minorities and new immigrants. And in one of the most methodologically and theoretically important works in this field, Gerd Baumann’s (1996) Contesting Culture moves squarely away from a priori approaches to ethnic groups by approaching Southall, west London as single social field or unit of analysis. Baumann studies discourses of ethnicity, culture and community as they are manifest among a variety of Southall informants and at various levels and sites, revealing ‘communities within communities, as well as cultures across communities’ (Ibid., p. 10). Through his examination of cross-cutting ties, processes of reification and dual discursive competences entailing dominant and demotic (‘of the people’) discourses of culture and community, Baumann paints a detailed ethnographic picture of lived multiculturality.

Such studies advance the anthropology of migration and multiculturalism through prompting alternative conceptual categories and explanatory frameworks (cf. O’Neal 1999). In the same way, pre-existing anthropological concepts can be revitalized and extended through insights of ethnographic studies of migration and multi-ethnicity. Such additional concepts might include: intersystems or
cultural continua (Drummond 1980), multiple cultural competence (Goodenough 1976; Vertovec and Rogers 1998), cultural code-switching (Ballard 1994), cultural complexity (Barth 1989; Hannerz 1992), and grammars of identity and alterity (Baumann and Gingrich 2004). By applying to multi-group ethnography such concepts alongside transnationalism, creolization and cosmopolitanism, exciting lines for anthropological inquiry could develop in the otherwise underdeveloped area of multiculturalism.

New directions: Outwards and inwards

Although this Special Issue is entitled ‘new directions in the anthropology of migration and multiculturalism’, it would be hard to suggest that something in this area is entirely new. This is because practically no matter what one says in many fields of social science, there will often be someone else who pops up and says it’s been seen or done before. This is particularly true of anthropologists, who are stereotypically notorious for one-upmanship by way of pointing out that some new finding declared by a colleague has actually already been observed among the Bongo-Bongo.

Therefore, rather than as absolutely novel, here we mean ‘new’ with regard to methods, concepts, issues or cases recently taking on fresh or further meaning in the light of changing circumstances or application. And by ‘directions’ we refer methodologically to where one ‘goes’ for fuller analytical comprehension after initial ethnographic observations of individuals, groups, settings, interactions and events. For example, we could portray the transnational turn in the anthropology of migration as a change in ‘direction’ by way of shifting analysis from groups in specific localities to groups and their activities as they engage cross-border, multi-local processes and practices. The direction of analysis, so to speak, moved from ‘here’ to ‘here-and-there’. Again, anthropologists had seen such long-distance phenomena before the transnational turn, but for a variety of reasons some started to give such phenomena greater attention and application in research and theory. In that sense, transnationalism became a ‘new’ approach (cf. Portes 2001).

So too here, contributors to this Issue take rejuvenated looks at relationships between macro-contexts or conditioning factors and micro-practices, social formations or cultural institutions. Most of these ‘new directions’ might be described as ‘outward and inward’. For generations, anthropology has prided itself in combining ‘micro-level’ ethnographic observations with an appreciation of ‘macro-level’, particularly political economy, conditions (Lamphere 1992). As mentioned above, the situational approach of the Manchester School
in Africa represented an especially strong methodology of this sort.
And indeed as advocated by Brettell,

An anthropological approach to migration should emphasize both
structure and agency; it should look at macro-social contextual
issues, micro-level strategies and decision-making, and the meso-
level relational structure within which individuals operate. It needs
to articulate both people and process. (2003, p. 7)

The same should hold for anthropological studies of multiculturalism
and multicultural settings. Anthropological theory needs to take
account of no less than a range of contextual constraints (including
socio-economic conditions, state policies and public discourse),
historical trajectories, group variables, institutionalized practices and
possible paths of individual or collective action and how these
mutually frame each other. It is a tall order, but the rewards will
certainly manifest in better theory and methods surrounding the
incorporation of newcomers and the everyday dynamics of diversity.

The eight articles that comprise this Special Issue take different, but
in many ways overlapping, approaches to the ‘directions’ of contextual
conditioning. In the first article, Ralph Grillo builds on his earlier
work (1985) about the discourses and policy frameworks surrounding
the problem of immigrants and immigrants as problems in France as
well as on certain themes addressed in Pluralism and the Politics of
Difference (1998). He is concerned with how migrants, and the kinds
of cultural diversity they represent, are dealt with in public discourse,
policy, and politics. Taking in hand issues at a remove from
conventional, ethnography-based analyses, here Grillo interrogates
the nature and impact that cultural concepts, and concepts about
culture, have on public understanding, policy development and
everyday social relations. He particularly examines current public
discourse and policy debates surrounding a widespread ‘backlash,’ in
the UK and across Europe, against multiculturalism, diversity and
difference. Grillo describes a ‘complex, multifaceted, multivocal
phenomenon’ in which certain key, albeit ‘fuzzy’ concepts have been
deployed surrounding ‘integration’, ‘multiculturalism’, ‘diversity’,
difference’, and ‘cohesion’. Each is capable of multiple interpretations,
with changing associations of what is ‘good’ or ‘bad’ for society. The
varied intentions of those initiating discourses or policies are
compounded by reactions to what people think these terms mean. In
this way, Grillo maps a conceptual landscape in which issues
surrounding migration and multiculturalism are represented.

Another kind of landscape is explored by Nancy Foner. In order to
underline how and why the ‘city as context’ matters, Foner assesses
factors that specifically condition migration and multiculturalism in a
particular place, namely New York City. She demonstrates how conditions, structures and processes surrounding the continuous replenishment of diversity have combined to create a ‘New York way’ of multiculturalism. Here is an experienced anthropological eye turned toward unravelling how – in a place where ‘ethnic diversity is the expectation’ – history, demography, geography, political institutions and policies provide the conditions in which new patterns of immigration, identification, interaction and admixture are shaped. This includes attention to conceptual shaping as well, significantly around meanings of ethnicity, ‘race’, and the variable labels given to new groups and categories. New York City displays numerous commonalities, similarities and contrasts with other big American cities like Los Angeles; at the same time certain national laws, institutions and policies have overarching impacts on all such settings. Bearing these in mind, Foner argues that a contextual analysis of a specific set of urban factors contributes not only to a fuller understanding of migration and multiculturalism, but to appreciating why, it seems, New York City provides a ‘warmer welcome’ to newcomers than most other places in the country.

Grillo’s examination of discursive trends and Foner’s methodological approach to mapping conditioning factors have relevance to contexts of migration and multiculturalism everywhere. In my own article within this Special Issue, I point to similar conditions while also observing changing migration flows and policy impacts. In the UK (as elsewhere), most social research, policy framing and public discourse on diversity has presumed ethnicity to be the key signifier and central organizing principle for a range of ‘communities’ generally modelled on the immigrant populations who came in the 1950–70s (characterized by large numbers, common legal status or citizenship, and roughly similar demographic profiles in terms of gender, age, and family). I describe how over the past decade, however, a range of immigration patterns and variables have fundamentally altered the composition, distribution and statuses of immigrant communities in Britain. Summarized by the notion of ‘super-diversity’, I stress the need to re-evaluate conceptions and policy measures surrounding diversity by way of moving beyond an ethno-focal understanding and adopting a multi-dimensional approach (including country of origin, migration channel and legal status, consequent social profiles, spatial distribution, transnational practices and local policy responses). Appreciating the confluence of factors will lead to a better understanding of the highly differential composition, social location and trajectories of various immigrant groups today. In these ways super-diversity and the facets of complexity it entails pose significant challenges for policymakers, practitioners and social scientists alike.
With relevance not least to issues I raise, Thomas Hylland Eriksen provides a thoughtful theoretical reflection on contemporary conditions of cultural complexity. He discusses three ways of conceiving complexity within social science – as a matter of social relationships, individual human attributes or ways of looking at the world. Further, Eriksen distinguishes between social and cultural dimensions of axes relating to exclusion and inclusion, ideas of openness and closure, enforcement and choice under conditions of complexity. His argument prompts us to closely consider the meanings of ethnic and cultural diversity, while having implications for today’s ubiquitous public concerns about ‘integration’.

Another set of theoretical and methodological distinctions surrounding the contexts of anthropological research concerns levels of analysis. With such matters in mind, Ayse Caglar draws on current theory in geography and political science to argue for the inclusion of scale, and particularly processes of rescaling, within studies of migration, migrant incorporation and transnationalism. She demonstrates two different ways in which the rescaling strategies of particular cities and regions impact upon the position and potential practices of migrants. In the area of Mardin in southeast Turkey, a set of development programmes (importantly entangled with EU initiatives) are leading to the return and re-investment of migrants who have been effectively cut-off from the place for up to thirty years. In Essen and the Ruhr region of Germany, the campaign to become European City of Culture in 2010 has focused on a shift from industry to cultural diversity, meaning that migrants are to be valued as positive contributors to the area’s economic future. Both cases show how neither the nation-state, nor the city, can solely be the adequate scales of analysis which much migration scholarship presumed them to be.

A multi-scalar approach is also taken by Michael Peter Smith in his description of the practices of key political actors who move between political spheres in Mexico (especially Zacatecas) and California. Smith is a political scientist by training but is included in this collection as a kind of ‘honorary anthropologist’ for his major contributions to ethnography and the study of migration and transnationalism, through which he exercises a distinctly anthropological approach (as conveyed in the quotes by Brettell above; see for instance Smith 1992, 2001; Smith and Guarnizo 1998). Here he observes the ways migrants engage political structures, associations and arenas in places of origin and destination. These include electoral politics and campaigns, lobbying, and the activities of hometown associations in towns and cities, states and national elections in both Mexico and the USA. In so doing, Smith wishes to highlight challenges that such transnational migrant political practices and other aspects of dual citizenship hold for concepts of national identity.
and for citizenship itself. Smith’s method of contextualization and ethnographic description helps us recognize how migrants’ identities and experiences reflect ‘contingencies of time and circumstance’, multiple social locations and multi-positionality. ‘Their lived experience’, Smith suggests, ‘engenders capacities and repertoires for social practice in geographic and social locations that cross borders, but how they will act and when are products of historical contingency.’ Rather than a problematic dual loyalty feared by some observers, Smith finds – alongside a range of mixed feelings among migrants – clear evidence of positive dual allegiance to both countries. But again, such feelings and practices are subject to complex contingences; it is a task for anthropologists and other social scientists to unpack the conditions and consequences surrounding such contingencies.

The ways migrants engage conditions and contingencies are also fundamentally informed by their own cultural values and structures. A core interest of the anthropology of migration entails the ways migration processes themselves create or transform specific cultural meanings and institutions (see, for instance, Werbner 1990). Emergent phenomena associated with contemporary modes of migrant transnationalism indicate similar shifts in culture. The longstanding patterns of migration from Pakistan to the United Kingdom – now typified by intensified and normative transnational family connections – provide an exemplary case in point. A significant manifestation of British-Pakistani transnationalism is currently witnessed in the high incidence of marriages arranged transnationally and entailing migration (in either direction, but mostly to the UK) by one of the spouses. In her contribution, Katharine Charsley looks at Pakistani arranged marriages not just in terms of family strategies and kinship obligations, but in terms of managing the risks of marriage in a transnational context. Such understandings of risk are culturally-grounded and gendered. Everyday concepts of marriage risk among Pakistanis are exacerbated in transnational marriages, not least since distance reduces the knowledge of the spouse and his or her attributes, the trust afforded by kin can more readily be undermined, and there is considerable possibility that one partner may simply be ‘marrying a passport’. Charsley’s valuable study demonstrates not just how migration experiences affect a cultural institution – here, arranged marriage – but how transnationalism itself may present new, potentially transformative conditions by creating new risks as well as opportunities.

In the final article, Louise Lamphere is also particularly concerned with transformations of cultural meanings and practices. She importantly advances the field by reconsidering key concepts and processes surrounding migration and multiculturalism not by addressing immigrant communities, but by considering such concepts and
processes in light of Native American experiences. Lamphere argues that there are many forms of cultural blending to which standard concepts in migration literature, particularly assimilation, simply do not do justice. Instead, she initially borrows Levi-Strauss’ notion of ‘bricolage’ to refer to active processes involved in complex cultural constructions of meaning and practice. However, Lamphere stresses that we need to look at cultural variations within families, networks and communities, rather than merely between immigrant or ethnic groups. Her longstanding concern with micro-processes leads her to examine the ‘weaving and stirring’ of cultural meanings and practices among Navajo families with multiple experiences of regional migration, economic integration, socio-economic mobility and intermarriage. She provides rich ethnographic evidence of the compatibility of some aspects of assimilation along with culturally distinct practices, symbols and values cross cutting ‘outward’ elements and ‘internal’ ways of thinking. Interestingly, Lamphere describes patterns of adaptation that pre-date European arrival, but which are wholly relevant to contemporary scenarios of migration and multiculturalism.

**Conclusion: Future directions?**

In what other analytical directions does the anthropology of migration and multiculturalism need to go? One way is ‘backward’ into history in order to appreciate better other kinds of experiences and processes of mobility and admixture within the global ecumene (Hannerz 1996; Mintz 1996; Sanjek 2003). Another direction could be described as ‘sideways’ through more comparative analysis. In both these directions, as Foner has suggests,

> A comparative analysis can deepen our understanding of migration by raising new questions and research problems and help to evaluate, and in some cases modify, theoretical perspectives and formulate explanations that could not be made on the basis of one case – or one time period – alone (2005, p. 3).

Yet another direction should be ‘towards’ in the sense of more interdisciplinary engagement (cf. Brettell and Hollifield 2000). While Foner (2003, p. 25) admits that ‘An inherent tension exists between the push to interdisciplinary work and the pull of the discipline,’ there is (in migration studies, at any rate) nevertheless a trend toward more interdisciplinary research across the social sciences. As Foner (Ibid.) argues, anthropologists have much to contribute – particularly through their up-close ethnographic accounts of migrants’ meanings, values, social relations and experiences – to large studies entailing
surveys, questionnaires and large datasets that are the staples of other disciplines. Similarly, Marcelo Suárez-Orozco foresees that

The next generation of anthropological studies of immigration will be increasingly required to reckon systematically with the findings of our colleagues in allied disciplines and to continue making a case for the unique perspectives emerging from the ethnographic process. Interdisciplinary collaborations between allied social scientists are likely to provide the increasingly sophisticated scholarly frames now needed to deal with the complexities of immigration in the global era. (2005, p. 8)

Such new frames and complexities are already evident in the growing interest in anthropology and across the social sciences in such migration-related topics as mobilities (Larsen et al. 2006), mobile subjects (Foner 2003) and mobile livelihoods (Sørensen and Fog Olwig 2001).

Finally, yet certainly not exhausting the possibilities, there is the direction of ‘into’ with respect to policy. That is, many anthropologists are still broadly reluctant to engage with the policy world (of states, international agencies, non-government organizations or civil society associations), whether to do with migration and multiculturalism or not. But as many of the contributors to this Special Issue suggest, policies often matter greatly since their conditioning structures directly affect migrants’ lives, practices and processes surrounding them. Researchers should take policy into account; by doing so, moreover, their findings will already be policy-relevant. It is only a small step further to make policy evaluations and recommendations, and anthropologists should not be constrained to do so.

The anthropology of migration and multiculturalism no longer remains at both the centre and periphery of the discipline. It has consolidated firmly in the centre of anthropology today. From there, by adopting the perspectives suggested above and throughout this special issue of Ethnic and Racial Studies, research and theory in the field will cumulatively move in the direction ‘forward’.

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