ASSIMILATION OR TRANSNATIONALISM? CONCEPTUAL MODELS OF THE IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE IN AMERICA

Silvia Pedraza[1]

Americans are immigrants—people whose origins are various but whose destinies made them American. Immigration—voluntary or involuntary—is what created all multiracial and multicultural nations. The United States is a prime example. Sometimes the migrants moved freely from the area of origin to the area of destination. Such was the experience of the European immigrants. Sometimes their movement was coerced and resulted from processes not of their own making. This was the experience of enslaved Africans as well as of Mexicans, Native Americans, and Puerto Ricans, whose history began with conquest and annexation. Sometimes their movement was semi-coerced and semi-free—the experience of indentured servants (whether Japanese, Chinese, Irish, or Germans) in the nineteenth century and of refugees, such as Jews at the turn of the twentieth century and Cubans, Cambodians, Guatemalans, Salvadorans in the latter part of the twentieth century.

The major questions in immigration research can be summarized briefly as follows: What led people to make the decision to move—what "push" and "pull" factors impelled them to displace and uproot themselves (see Lee, 1966)? What is the nature of the crossing—not only literally but also, more abstractly, the policies of two governments that can, in societies that have developed long histories of emigration and immigration, result in their developing systems of economic and political migration (see Burawoy, 1976; Pedraza-Bailey, 1985)? And, what can they attain afterwards? A recurrent question in studies of immigration is: How do we best describe that process—as assimilation, adaptation, integration, incorporation, or transnationalism and diasporic citizenship? This paper traces the development of these concepts overtime as social scientists struggled to explain these important social processes.

ASSIMILATION

The study of immigrants was closely wedded with the beginnings of social science in America at the turn of the 20th century (Portes 1978). Immigrants and their plight were the focus of vivid studies from the early days of "the Chicago school," the first major department of Sociology in the U.S. Their work on immigration, ethnic, and urban studies laid the very foundations of American sociology (e.g., Park and Burgess, 1921; Park, 1928, 1950; Thomas and Znaniecki, 1927). Despite varying emphases, they shared the expectation that the outcome to the process of integrating those who arrived at its shores would be a process of assimilation. Yet from the outset there was an ambiguity in the idea that Park himself (1950 [1913]) underscored. "Assimilation" meant to become alike—but like whom? And in what way? That ambiguity remained until Milton Gordon (1964) distinguished among types of assimilation: cultural vs. structural. But the fundamental

characteristic of assimilation theory was already evident: assimilation was expected to be a one-way process that would also be natural and evolutionary, process that as time passed would yield the inevitable outcome of the adaptation of minority ethnic groups to the mainstream culture. A very different concept—transculturation—arose in Cuba, the peopling of which through conquest and immigration resembled that of the United States. Fernando Ortiz (1983 [1963]), one of Cuba's leading social scientists, proposed the notion of transculturation to signify how one culture comes to express itself in another, as was the case of *Santería*, the popular religious expression in Cuba that blended West African beliefs with Spanish Catholicism. Even in the United States, another important text of the time, Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan's (1963) *Beyond the Melting Pot* examined the incorporation of Blacks, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish in New York City and found substantial ethnic malleability and persistence. But the leading influence was that of the assimilation school, a major exponent of which was Glazer (1971), who argued that while Blacks did not seem to be assimilating to the mainstream, due to the Southern experience of slavery and "Jim Crow," in the North their experience more closely resembled that of other immigrants, and, in due time, they would also achieve it.

As Gordon defined it, cultural assimilation entailed a process of acculturation on the part of the immigrants, of becoming "alike" in cultural patterns, such as language, behavior, and values; while structural assimilation resulted only when the immigrants had been "taken up and incorporated" and entailed the full integration of the immigrants and their descendants into the major institutions of the society (educational, occupational, political) and into the social cliques, clubs, and institutions of the core society that lead to intimate primary relationships, including intermarriage. This distinction aimed to provide a more exact conceptual tool, a yardstick to measure the extent of the assimilation of immigrants and racial minorities in America.

The Chicago school in the early part of the century also emphasized the "natural history" of ethnic rela-

tions, as best expressed in Park's race relations cycle. Park evolved his theory of the race relations cycle as stages of interaction through which immigrant or racial groups progressed irreversibly: contact, competition, and accommodation, culminating in eventual assimilation (1950:138–58). Because at the root of his thinking was the ecological emphasis on race relations as spatial relations that defined the Chicago school of urban sociology, Park expected that the notion of assimilation and the stages of the race relations cycle could be extended to immigrants and racial minorities alike. From his point of view, both European immigrants and American Blacks came from rural, peasant backgrounds and, upon migration to the urban ghetto, confronted a similar clash of cultures. Thus immigration and race and ethnic relations could both be viewed within the same frame of reference.

This perspective was clearly apparent in another of the classics of the Chicago school: W. I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki's *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* (1927). Drawing from the work of Thomas, Park also was responsible for articulating the theory of the "marginal man." In 1928, Park stressed that marginal human beings—those who, as a result of migration, ended up by living simultaneously in two separate worlds—were not only marginal, never fully belonging to the one or the other, but also enormously creative and intelligent, as experiencing more than one social world had sharpened their vision and sensibilities. Park extended the concept of the marginal man from its origins in the notion of the human being caught between two cultures—the immigrant, the mixed-blood person (Eurasian, mestizo, or mulatto), the outcast and stranger (the Jew)—to encompass the experience of American Blacks who shared the same national culture but lived at the margins of society in social, rather than cultural or ethnic, marginality. Thus, it was left to E. Franklin Frazier (1957), student of the Chicago school and Black sociologist in the 1950s, to demarcate the difference between race relations and ethnic relations. He underscored that American Blacks had experienced successive forms of economic subordination (slavery, the plantation society, "Jim Crow") with the outcome of extensive cultural assimilation but, rather than final

structural assimilation, complete social and institutional segregation. Sociologists, then, in the early part of the 20th century were concerned with what the experience of immigration had done to the immigrants' lives themselves and with the outcomes to the process of integrating those who arrived at its shores, outcomes that were usually conceptualized as acculturation and assimilation—becoming like the dominant population, which at the turn of the century clearly meant conformity to Anglo-Saxon ways (Gordon, 1964).

Research on immigrants and the eventual outcomes of the processes of immigration, therefore, was at the very foundations of American sociology. But that emphasis began to wane until, in the 1960s, it all but disappeared. Several different trends promoted its disappearance. First, the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1924 cut the massive waves of European immigration to the United States. Second, under the pressures of Anglo-conformity, the children of those European immigrants went on to assimilate in American society at a time when the price of success was often one's ethnicity and identity. Like Paul Cowan (1982), writer for *The Village Voice* whose real name should have been Saul Cohen, many successful Americans became orphans in history, having lost their ethnic legacies. This could be seen in how often the old immigrants had to change their names, to Anglicize them. Looking at the first generation of Hollywood movie stars, for example, Kirk Douglas (father of our Michael Douglas today) was really the Eastern European Jewish Issur Anielovitch; Rita Hayworth, the love goddess, was really Spanish— Margarita Carmen Cansino. Third, as Portes (1978) stressed, the research focus on immigrants and immigration was also lost as a result of the arrival of the racial demands and militancy of the Civil Rights Movement so that the analytical focus shifted to that of racial and ethnic relations. And in the process what is really distinctive about immigrants was lost. What is distinctive about immigrants? At the micro level, that they have experienced another whole life in another country and culture, which they bring with them and decisively continues to influence them; and, at the macro level, that the state in two societies permits the immigrants to exit and enter. As

gatekeeper, the state regulates and directs migration through a body of law.

From the theoretical vantage point, immigrants are also distinct in that they bring with them a whole host of social resources (their social class, education, occupation, culture, values) from another society and their outcomes in American society will be partly a function of those initial resources, partly a function of the nature of their migration (whether they are political or economic immigrants, victims of genocide, settlers, or sojourners), and partly a function of the social context that greeted them, of the amount of opportunity available to them in their new society (in the particular cities and industries where they became concentrated, in the nature of the discrimination or exclusion they afterwards faced).

INTERNAL COLONIALISM

In sociology the major challenge to assimilation theory came from the proponents of the internal colonialism model, the theoretical effort to delineate in what ways the experiences of the racial minorities (Blacks, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, Native Americans—some of its oldest immigrants and most indigenous native sons and daughters) differed significantly from the experiences and eventual assimilation of the White European immigrants at the turn of the century. The internal colonialism model underscored that the experience of these groups was different in that they had suffered a process of internal colonization due to their place and role in the system of production, place and role they came to occupy because of their color, their race (Blauner, 1969; Barrera, 1979). Proponents of the internal colonialism model underscored that the European migration had been voluntary, the result of decisions the immigrants themselves had taken, while the migration of the racial minorities had been involuntary, the result of slavery, annexation, conquest—processes that involved substantial violence. Moreover, they stressed, the European immigrants had changed their cultural patterns at will, gradually over the course of generations, while cultural change had been imposed on the racial minorities. Even more, the ghetto had been only a one or two generation phenomena for the European immigrants and their descendants, while for the ra-

cial minorities it had become a nearly permanent condition. Last, they stressed, the European immigrants had substantial control of their own communities, through teachers, policemen, small business owners, social workers, while the racial minorities' communities had been manned and controlled by outsiders. Hence, the racial minorities had suffered from a process of colonization, unlike anything experienced by the European immigrants.

An important corrective to the assimilation model, the internal colonialism model itself suffered from stretching the colonial analogy overly far, not recognizing the essential differences between the domestic situation of race relations in the United States and what happened in Africa and Asia. Thereafter, Joe Feagin (1978) sought to transcend the shortcomings of both the assimilation and internal colonialism models by focusing on the varying ways in which different ethnic groups were incorporated, became a part of the society, by paying attention to the initial and continuing placement and access of various groups within the economic, political, and educational institutions of the society.

Still, as a central concept that guided research, incorporation, like its predecessor, assimilation, assumed a one-way process, failing to take into account that immigrants not only become incorporated into a new society, they also transform it. Immigrants did not just become incorporated into American society, they made and remade America and are fashioning her still.

Despite the challenges the concept of assimilation and acculturation received from other concepts, such as internal colonialism, incorporation, and more recently transnationalism, and diasporic citizenship, Richard Alba and Victor Nee (2003) argued in *Remaking the American Mainstream* that it is still a necessary concept. In their view, assimilation is a grand narrative that served to describe well the experience of the Southern and Eastern European immigrants, as well as the Asian immigrants who arrived at the turn of the 20th century and, over the course of several generations, went on to join the mainstream of American life in terms of their levels of educational attainment, patterns of suburbanization, and inter-

marriage. As Alba and Nee emphasized, the process by which they achieved parity in terms of their life chances was partly historically contingent—dependent on two World Wars, the GI Bill, and the like. It was also racialized—that is, exclusive to those who had become "White" in the process. Banks, other credit lenders, and real estate developers kept Blacks, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Native Americans from joining the mainstream of life in suburbia due to their race. Still, even for those formerly excluded groups, there has been progress. Reynolds Farley and Richard Alba, in "The New Second Generation in the U.S." (2002) examined the pattern of occupational distribution for older immigrants and for the new second generation in the United States in 1998–2000. They showed that even for those groups dominated by low-wage labor immigrants in the first generation (such as Mexicans, Central Americans, and Afro-Caribbeans), there has been considerable improvement in the average occupational position in the second generation, though not to the point of parity with native-born whites, as is the case for Asians and South Americans, immigrants who arrived with high levels of human capital. Hence, it would seem that for all the challenges to the concepts of assimilation and acculturation over time, the concepts are still useful in exactly the way Gordon intended them to be: as a conceptual yardstick with which to measure the extent to which various groups have joined the American mainstream over the course of time.

TRANSNATIONALISM

As a result of the fourth wave of American immigration that we are still living through, sociology refocused its research on immigrants as a social category distinct from racial and ethnic minorities and on immigration as an international process that reshuffles persons and cultures across nations, until we now find ourselves amidst a veritable explosion of immigration research as well as a search for new concepts such as those of transnationalism and diasporic citizenship with which to describe the new realities.

The concept of transnationalism arose when social scientists noticed that under the impact of changes in the nature of modern communications at this centu-

ry's end, many immigrants fail to shed their old identities and totally assimilate. Instead, they developed new bicultural identities and live their lives and are quite involved in more than one nation, more than one world—in effect making the home and adopted countries both one lived social world. In his study of Mexican working class immigrants living in Redwood City, California, Roger Rouse found that "while they lived in Redwood City, they were also living deep in western Mexico" (1992:45) and were obliged to balance two quite different ways of life, which resulted in "cultural bifocality," as he expressed it.

Linda Basch and colleagues (1994:7) formalized the definition of transnationalism now in use: the process by which immigrants "forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement." Thus, they underscored, immigrants "take actions, make decisions, and develop subjectivities and identities embedded in networks of relationships that connect them simultaneously to two or more nations" (Basch et al. 1994:7). Like all social processes, it has economic, political, and social dimensions, both in its causes and consequences. However, soon thereafter the cry arose that transnationalism is not new, though much of the literature sounds as if it is (Foner 1997; Moya 2004; Waldinger 2004). Comparing immigrants at the turn of the century with contemporary immigrants to New York—the quintessential immigrant city—Foner (1997) showed that many transnational patterns actually have a long history. At the turn of the last century, many immigrants were involved in what is now called transnationalism. For example, Italian and Russian immigrants also kept ties of sentiment and family alive with those back home by living in what today are called "transnational households" with members scattered across households; by sending remittances back home; and by making political contributions for particular causes, such as the Irish support for the nationalist cause back home. Moreover, with the exception of Russian Jews who fled from political and religious persecution, the return rates for many immigrant groups, like the Italians, were extremely high, around one-third, even higher than today's.

While these critiques are valid, I argue that, nonetheless, at the turn of this 21st century, much is distinctive about our current transnationalism. In today's global economy, changes in the technologies of transportation and communication (jet air travel, faxes, electronic mail, the internet, videos) have changed the qualitative experience of immigration. These modern communications (or are they post-modern?) have enabled immigrants to maintain more frequent and closer contact with their home country and to participate regularly—both actually and vicariously—in the life they once left behind. Based on substantial participant observation, in various immigrant communities, as well as observing the changes over time in my own transnational relationship to my country of origin, I argue that while immigrants in the past also led transnational lives, there is a qualitative difference in the transnational experiences immigrants live today. Because the new technologies allow immediate communication, immigrants can experience the world they left behind as if they were still there. For example, today Costa Ricans can easily and rapidly travel between "home" and "host" societies, rather than spending many months at sea, the voyage that it took Italians to return to Italy in the 19th century; likewise, cable television has brought Greece, with its colorful festivals and Olympics, right into the living room of Greek immigrants. Moreover, while in the past communication was not reliable and was painfully slow, today it is nearly certain and fast. For example, the "overseas Chinese" that lived scattered throughout the South East Asian nations in the early part of the 20th century often paid a "letter writer" to write the letter they could not, so as to send their messages back to their families in China. However, the letter often did not reach those in the rural areas, or it took a month or two to reach them, so that the news had grown old, while today a fax sent to a temple or a benevolent association will penetrate deep in China, and arrive immediately. Even Cuban-Americans, whose travel is so restricted by the perennial conflicts between the U.S. and Cuban governments, now communicate regularly with relatives and friends back in the island through electronic mail, since a friend that works for a state corporation that has access to e-mail can invariably be found; and

while Irish immigrants in the early part of the 19th century heard that a new baby had been baptized in Ireland long after the event, today Mexican immigrants can quickly see the baptism that took place back in their village on video. Rather than being substantially cut off from the past, today's immigrants live—existentially speaking—both in the past and the present at once. A strong emotional thread now ties the two realities, as never before.

Immigrants today are there not just in their memories and imaginations, but vicariously, in that very moment; they are able to participate—economically, politically, socially, emotionally—in a regular, constant way, often creating two "homes" that rest on the pillar of an identity (or identities) that incorporate two or more nations, social worlds, at the same time. This is true even when, as Waldinger (2004) points out, dual loyalties can be conflicting. My point is not to emphasize a past/present divergence, as Waldinger put it, but to emphasize that we do now live in a brave new world that is both vastly more impersonal and personal at once. We know the ways in which our new world is more impersonal—e.g., telephone menus now answer most of our questions automatically, without our hearing a human voice; clothing is bought and sold online via the computer without our ever touching the cloth in our hands for its feel. But our new world is also far more personal across very great distances than it once was, as the new technology allows us immediate intellectual and emotional communication with those we love that remained behind. Those sustained affective, emotional linkages also constitute a form of transnationalism, as Elizabeth Aranda and Elena Sabogal (2004) have argued. They give evidence of the social networks across various nations that immigrants are embedded in, even though they do not entail sustained cross-border exchanges, as Portes et al. (1999) insisted upon. For many immigrants in their new "home," this communication with their families and friends back in their old "home" represent the foundation of their emotional and economic well-being. As Waldinger (2004) concluded, "History involves change, which is why any particular historical constellation is distinct from other like developments encountered before." Thus, we do want to know how

and why "now" differs from "then." However, as both David Hollinger (1995) and Jose Moya (2004) stress, the major differences are not necessarily between "then" and "now," but between groups who show remarkable variation in the development of diasporic identities and political and social involvement.

Like all social forms, transnationalism can have both positive and negative impacts—economically, politically, and socially. Transnationalism is not only salutary for the mental health of immigrants, but is also salutary for the economic health of the underdeveloped nations they came from. For example, in many Latin American countries today immigrant remittances represent millions, even billions of dollars a year—the second or third largest source of foreign exchange, quite critical to the survival of those societies (Lora 2003). And this is true not only with respect to Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Dominican Republic, and Venezuela, but also Cuba. Despite the insistence of a very vocal part of the Cuban American exile community, whose political task is to insist that no dollars be sent back to Cuba because that props up Fidel Castro's regime, another sizable part of the Cuban American exile community insists on putting their families back in Cuba first—and quietly sends dollars back to their family left behind, who need it. This is a moral task in which women are centrally involved (cf. Pedraza 1991).

Not only does migration result in remittances, but remittances also result in migration. In her study of the cumulative causation of migration from Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Mexico, and Puerto Rico to the U.S., Elizabeth Fussell (2004) found that in all communities in these countries, except Puerto Rico, larger amounts of remittances sent to households in a given year were associated with higher migration prevalence ratios the following year, especially in places with older migration streams, such as Mexico and the Dominican Republic. As Fussell underlined, immigrants who send back remittances demonstrate the rewards to migration, thus enticing more members of the sending community to go to the United States. Puerto Rico was an exception because, as U.S. citizens, Puerto Ricans migrate

freely to and fro. So much so that Jorge Duany (2000) has investigated how a "nation on the move" constructs its identity in Puerto Rico (where 61 percent of Puerto Ricans live) and the diaspora (where 39 percent of Puerto Ricans now live). While language (Spanish) and culture (Latin America) used to be the cultural markers of the Puerto Rican identity, such a large diaspora, many of whom do not speak Spanish and are rather American, challenges the very markers of that identity.

Moreover, while overall the impact of immigrant remittances is positive for buoying the sinking economies back home, it can also create certain imbalances. Sarah Blue's (2004) survey of Cuban families in Havana who received remittances from their relatives abroad showed that the remittances were relinking the family that both the Cuban government and the exile community had torn asunder, and that they certainly provided some measure of material comfort for those left behind, improving their lives; however, they also served to exacerbate racial inequality. Since the first two waves of the Cuban exodus (from 1959 to 1974) were predominantly White (cf. Pedraza 1996a), Black and Mulatto Cubans in the island have fewer immigrant networks abroad they can relay on to send remittances to improve their household consumption or to sponsor their emigration.

Transnationalism has class as well as racial dimensions. Harriett Romo's (2004) study of the transnational lives of the Mexican elite in San Antonio, Texas, described the major influence they had on the cultural and artistic life in the city of San Antonio itself, as well as the role of "broker" they played between the Mexican community, on the one hand, and the Anglo elite, on the other, on behalf of the Mexican community.

DIASPORIC CITIZENSHIP

It is also important to recognize that yesterday as well as today, the immigrants' return migration and their involvement with life in the countries they left was due not only to their bonds of love and loyalty for the family and nation left behind, but was also due to their lack of acceptance in America. Michel Laguerre used the broader concept of diasporic citizenship—"a set of practices that a person is engaged in, and a

set of rights acquired or appropriated, that cross nation-state boundaries and that indicate membership in at least two nation states" (1998:190). Laguerre underlined that thereby Haitian immigrants in the U.S. today "escape complete minoritization since the link with the homeland allows one to enjoy the majority status one cannot exercise in the adopted country" (1998:192). Thus Laguerre underscored the difference that race—being Black and immigrant—makes.

Moreover, as a social practice, diasporic citizenship is ahead of its legal expression. Laguerre argues that a new conception of dual citizenship is developing that is dual in two senses: first, in the sense it has always been for many immigrants—that while they are in the home country (Italy, Haiti) they are its citizens, while when they are in the U.S. they are Americans; second, also in the new sense that the diaspora—those who are, as the etymology of the word indicates, scattered asunder like seeds—can now participate fully in the social and political life of both countries, exerting quite an influence on the course of the political life in the home country. Foner provides a telling example. In the last Dominican presidential election, many Dominicans residing in New York quickly flew to the island to vote. In the next elections, the trip will be unnecessary since, due to electoral reforms, it will be possible to vote while remaining in New York. This gives the diaspora (whether Haitian, Dominican, now Mexican also) a role in homeland politics that is much larger than ever before. Moreover, as Laguerre underscores, it removes the future of citizenship from its modern-day location in the nation state. With Haiti's long history of political repression, the diaspora may well be playing the role of the missing political center—between the army and the government, siding with the people, thus helping the development of civil society and democracy in Haiti. Incidentally, that is precisely the role that the Cuban diaspora has never been able to play with respect to Cuba, at least in part because both the American and Cuban governments have drastically curtailed its involvement with life in Cuba, its transnationalism, much less its diasporic citizenship. As David Hollinger underscored, the new immigration, like the old, "displays a variety of de-

grees of engagement with the United States and with prior homelands, and it yields some strong assimilationist impulses along vivid expressions of diasporic consciousness" (1995:153).

Governments will try to restrict the flows of communication involved in transnationalism. As of the Summer of 2004, President George W. Bush drastically curtailed the involvement of Cuban-Americans with their family and friends in the island by restricting their travel (only once very three years now) and the amount of money they may send back as remittances through formal channels, such as Western Union, as well as the goods they may send to the island. These restrictions will only temporarily reduce the flow of people, goods, and money, however. Cuban immigrants, like all other immigrants, will find ways to get around the government's restrictions. Try as governments try to stop the immigrants transnationalism, however, they will not be able to do so because transnationalism is a fact of the modern (or post-modern) world in which we live, it is a result of the spread of the new forms of communication.

Laguerre underscored that transnational Haitian Americans developed loyalty to their new country as well as to their homeland, loyalties that give rise "to a fragmented bi-polar identity that transcends national boundaries and is central to the social construction of the transnational citizen" (1998:173). He also sees such an identity as the result of transnationalism. Here I disagree with Laguerre, for to me such an identity (preferably called a bicultural identity) is not only fragmented but also sharper in its sensibility—not unlike that of Park's "marginal man" at the beginning of the 20th century. It is also both cause and consequence of transnational practices. To my mind, a bicultural identity is not only the result of transnationalism but is that on which transnationalism first depends and ultimately (over the course of time and further investments) cements. Precisely because transnationalism depends on such a bicultural identity, it

is unclear at present whether the second generation, the children of immigrants, can or will participate in such a transnational social field. While that is the subject of future research, I believe that they can or will do so only to a rather delimited extent. However, it is possible for even a small group of the second and third generations to play an influential role, as they can transfer ideas and resources that can have important impacts in both places.

Last, participation in transnational practices and the exercise of a diasporic citizenship has consequences for the extent to which immigrants can engage in ethnic politics in American life. Like any other social form, transnationalism has both positive and negative consequences. The positive consequence is that transnationalism gives us a new emotional health—a present that is tied to one's past. But the negative consequence is that this may well come at the price of domestic political engagement, of creating institutions and lobbies that can improve the immigrant's lives as immigrants, workers, ethnics. Transnationalism has consequences for the extent to which immigrants can assimilate—both culturally and structurally—in America. In the end, it may still be up to the second and future generations to play the ethnic politics game. Such, indeed, was the role the descendants of the old immigrants played in the past, when city-level political "machines" built on the support of various ethnic groups traded votes for city jobs and contracts. Hence, it is quite likely that the shift in concepts—from assimilation to transnationalism—will only be useful to describe the lived experience of the immigrant generation. That, however, is a necessity at a time like now when America is not only "a nation of immigrants"—whose history was written by immigrants—but is also an immigrant nation—whose present relies on immigration. Perhaps in the brave new world of this 21st century most nations will also become immigrant nations.

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