

Women, gender and migration

[Sociology](#), [Feminism](#)



Abstract

This research presents how the push-pull model of migration has been deflated by developments in migration theory. It discusses the concept of feminisation as a major trend in contemporary migration, caused by the dynamics of corporate globalisation.

Diaspora and transnationalism are described as ‘two dance partners,’ explaining this metaphor within the prism of migration.

Asylum is the chosen migration flow for this research, alongside considerations of how the analysis of global migration and its regulation becomes complicated.

This research adopts the qualitative research design, which harmonises with the interpretive paradigm. An in-depth semi-structured interview is conducted with a Sierra Leonean migrant who sought asylum in the UK.

The research concludes the presence of feminisation, the partnership of Diaspora and transnationalism, and the irrelevance of the push-pull model in the example of an asylum seeker as an interview participant.

1. Introduction

According to de Haas (2008), one’s decision to migrate is influenced by a number of factors, including the area of destination; intervening variables (distance, immigration policies, etc.); and personal factors. Migration occurs within definite streams, from certain places of origin and destination (de Haas, 2008).

Globalisation has created a channel for individuals to become increasingly mobile. Coupled with globalisation, the existence of skilled workers has tended to marginalise the less skilled, who encounter limitations on their permanent migration, thereby making it difficult for them to move from temporary to permanent work and obtain residence permits (Kofman, 2005). Emphasis on stratification within labour migration research can potentially tackle queries on the consequences that emerge from the manner of inclusion or exclusion of different groups from labour markets (Gabriel and Pellerin, 2008). The growing social differentiation of migration is seen amongst skilled Mexicans, considered as the new ‘high tech braceros’ (Smith and Favell, 2006: 24) that utilise a variety of visa channels to work in the US economy. Smith and Favell (2006) bring forward the evidence that the migration movement is more than about ‘brain drain’, as brain circulation, which underpins new forms of global competition, is being encouraged.

1. 1 Aims and objectives

This brief aims to discuss how the limitations of the individualistic ‘push-pull’ model are overcome by developments in migration theory. It also explains the reasons for the feminisation trend identified by Castles and Miller (2009). Along with these two topics are the attempt to describe what Faist (2010b) means by the metaphor ‘two awkward dance partners’ to describe Diaspora and transnationalism, and whether he is right. Moreover, this research explains how asylum complicates the analysis of global migration and their regulation.

The objectives are the following:

To review the extant literature on the developments in migration theory, feminisation in migration, Diaspora and transnationalism, and asylum in the midst of global migration

To conduct an interview on the subject of asylum and link it to migration concept

2. Literature Review

2.1 The ‘push-pull’ model of migration

The push-pull model allows the assumption that migration decisions are motivated by economic, environmental, and demographic reasons. The pushes and pulls in migration are created by either rural population growth or economic conditions. The first applies a Malthusian principle that such migration is due to pressures on natural and agricultural resources. The second, on the other hand, pushes people to be lured into cities and industrialised countries (de Haas, 2008).

At first, the push-pull model seems to integrate all the factors that contribute to migration decision-making because of its seeming propensity to incorporate other theoretical ideas. However, dubious insights have come to forward the insight of whether the push-pull model offers much analytical use, and whether it can qualify as a theory at all. A more problematic view is its tendency to puzzle various (individual and global) scales of analysis and not to allow designating relative weights to the various factors impacting migration decisions. The model also tends to overlook the internal stratification and heterogeneous character of societies and is instead likely

to work out on the individual level. There are therefore certain limitations posed by the push-pull model in the analysis of migration (de Haas, 2008).

The triviality and limitation of the model is mirrored in the relativity of migration pressure. Finding a better environment or less population pressure are not the typical reasons why people move, but due to their expectation of a more satisfying living elsewhere (de Haas, 2008).

The transnational approach to migration is one of those that attempt to overcome the limitations embodied in the push-pull model. The transnational community creates social bonds that allow migrants to tend to remit considerable amounts of money to their relatives, contrary to the push-pull model. The often transnational identity characters of migrants provide a huge explanation for the usual maintenance of bonds with communities of origin, as well as the creation of trans-local and transnational social links (de Haas, 2008).

In support of de Haas, Amelina and Faist (2012) describe the transnational approach as one that discards the nation-state as the only source of empirical analysis – which is also posited by Faist (2000) and Portes (2000). Methodological transnationalism, which is constructed by Amelina and Faist, covers a range of research methods that complement current epistemological approaches to the link between space and social mobility. Linked to this are migrant's investments and entrepreneurship (as a way in which they pursue a wide range of transnational economic activities), which is an important concern of policy makers (Olesen, 2003). As migration can be understood through interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary viewpoints,

developments in migration theory such as those by Castles and Miller (2009) fully describe this view, which only suggests an attempt to overcome the limitations of the ‘push-pull’ model

2. 2 Feminisation as a major trend in contemporary migration

Feminisation as a major trend in contemporary migration is seen in the example of Indonesia and Sri Lanka, which obtained the labour market for domestic workers, thereby spurring the feminisation of migration in the Gulf region. Female migrants are found in such fields as medical/health, sales, hospitality, and maintenance. The largest number of women migrants is in domestic work (Asis, 2005; Mateos, 2005).

According to Asis (2005), Sri Lanka, Indonesia, and the Philippines deploy female workers annually at 62-75 per cent; and deployment is associated with feminisation of migration. There are circumstances that feminisation of migration would broaden to include other countries, as illustrated by the example of Thai women migrants who may face underrepresentation in legal migration, but are predominant in terms of irregular migration (Asis, 2005). It may be seen based on Asis’ (2005) discussion that the wider significance of feminisation as a major trend in contemporary migration is driven by labour migration.

Piper (2013), on the other hand, surmised that the relevance of gender is found in most aspects of migration. Feminisation has been acknowledged as one of the major issues of current migration streams, as noted by academic studies since the 80s. Piper cited the reason for this:

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improvement in statistical visibility, increased women participation in most migration flows, increased failure of men to seek full-time jobs in their countries of origin, and an increasing demand for female employment in destination countries. In support to this, Engle (2004) claims that foreign women are tremendously regarded as commodities and carriers of service. If in the past, the movement of women was often due to family reunification or dependent on a male migrant; today, such movement features them as main migrants in their own right, generally as low-wage earners, where the dynamics of corporate globalisation are the ones directing female employment.

The wider significance of this feminisation trend for understanding migration is that it plays an important role in the institutionalisation of corporate globalisation in the process of migration, which offers further understanding of migration.

2.3 Diaspora and transnationalism as two awkward dance partners

Diaspora and transnationalism are described by Faist (2010b) as ‘two awkward dance partners’ that function as prominent research lenses for seeing the upshot of international migration. Albeit both ‘globalisation’ and ‘multiculturalism’ describe cross-border processes, the concept of Diaspora has often denoted national or religious groupings of people that live outside an imagined native land. Transnationalism, on the other hand, is used narrowly (to describe the strong ties amongst migrants) and widely (to depict communities and social formations) (Faist, 2010b).

Why Diaspora and transnationalism are two awkward dance partners is because of the discussion below:

Transnational social spaces, which are depicted in transnationalism, describe migrants' daily practices as they engage in a range of activities, such as reciprocity and unity, political participation in both countries of emigration and immigration, and migrants' small-scale entrepreneurship, to name some. Transnationalism is not broadly used compared to Diaspora and is not as politicised, but it is entangled with political connotations. Despite the indicated presence of ideology in the 'ism' in transnationalism, the adherents of this ideology is not apparent. Moreover, discussions on immigrants' integration have been sparked by transnationalism ever since transnationalism was introduced to migration studies (Faist, 2010a).

It has been made clear that both Diaspora and transnationalism cannot be taken apart in any way since doing so would mean neglecting the panoply of constantly overlapping definitions. Diaspora faced an absolute increase in applications and interpretations and these characteristics sum up most of its definitions. The first pertains to the causes of migration. Forced dispersal has been affixed to the older notions, which can be traced from the experience of Jews. Newer notions, on the other hand, relate to any form of dispersal, such as trade dispersal. The second refers to homeland's cross-border experiences with destination, as implied in older notions that indicate a revisit to an imagined homeland. Newer notion, on the other hand, replace revisit with dense and continuous connections across borders, which include countries of onward migration, thereby highlighting lateral ties. Thus,

Diaspora can be referred to include ethnic and religious groups/communities. Lastly, the third characteristic suggests the “ integration of migrants and/or minorities into the countries of settlement” (Faist, 2010b: 13). It may be inferred that based on these discussions, Faist is right in describing Diaspora and transnationalism as awkward dance partners.

2. 4 The Increasingly Differentiated Migration Flows Focused on Asylum

This section discusses the increasingly differentiated migration flows, focused on asylum migration. According to Lasailly-Jacob (2010), policies on asylum have been the main focus of academic research and public debates. The point of view of the host countries has been given much attention, with particular emphasis on the foresights of the receiving ones who manage the effects of population movements in their country. Doomernik and Jandl (2008) observe that a tough policy on asylum migration has been undertaken to balance global recruitment strategies. Whether a strong asylum policy only intends to mask an increasing volume of immigration is open to interpretation. Published reports indicate refused asylum applications alongside approximately 60, 000 deportation targets.

The European Union (EU) compromises certain democratic norms in dealing with neighbouring counties like Libya or Ukraine to adopt migration activities. Questions that arise include proper access to asylum, protection from persecution, and detention conditions. Physical safety has been used as a prism for greater cooperation to regulate the flow of asylum seekers across countries. Common legally binding policy – in relation to asylum and policing – has been undertaken (Charmie and Powers, 2008). Both asylum and

immigration policies face the issues of visas, family unification, social integration, equal treatment and inclusivity, and admission criteria, to name a few (Peers and Rogers, 2006).

3. Research Methodology

3. 1 Research Design: Qualitative

The specific research design for this study is qualitative, which is defined as “ multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011: 5). This indicates that qualitative research undertakes investigations in natural settings, whereby people attempt to interpret phenomena based on the meanings brought to them. Some of the empirical materials used in qualitative studies are interviews, case studies, visual texts, and focus groups, to name a few. The justification for using the qualitative design for this research is its direction to present the research questions involving migration, which cannot be adequately discussed if a quantitative or a mixed method design is applied.

3. 2 Research Paradigm: Interpretive

Since this research pursues the qualitative design, it hence correspondingly employs an interpretive paradigm. This paradigm states that people continuously produce social constructions from the world around them. The ultimate purpose of interpretive paradigm is to understand the experiences of people as the study takes place in natural settings (Chilisa and Preece, 2005). On the point of view of interpretivism, knowledge is subjective because of its nature to create social constructions. This is differentiated

from the positivist paradigm, which is based on measurement and quantification (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2011).

3.3 Data Collection

Both primary and secondary data collection methods are applied to this research to address the research questions. Primary data are those collected afresh for the specific use of the researcher and are therefore original (Mooi and Sarstedt, 2011). Examples of these are survey data, interview data, observation data, field notes, etc. Secondary data, on the other hand, are those already collected by someone else for their own purpose, which is being used again by another (Kothari, 2004). Examples of these are data from books, journal articles, corporate reports, online data, and the like. This current research employs interview data as well as data from books and academic journals. The interview thus conducted is in-depth and semi-structured, involving an asylum seeker from Sierra Leone.

4. Presentation and Analysis of Results

According to the interview participant, the civil war in her homeland caused her to come to the UK in 2002. Her purpose of migration was to obtain safety from the war and to have a better chance of good education. This is coherent with the notion of forced dispersal embodying the concept of Diaspora (Faist, 2010a; Faist, 2010b). There was a strong belief from the participant that Britain is more accommodating towards asylum seekers than other countries, as she was reminded that Sierra Leone was once a colony of Britain. The presence of a strong Sierra Leone community in Britain, to which she is able to identify and rely strongly, also served as a reason for her

search for asylum in the country. Physical safety is the reason for her search for asylum, which the literature also claims as the prism that precipitates greater cooperation to regulate the flow of asylum seekers (e. g. Charmie and Powers, 2008). Apparently, the push-pull model does not harmonise with the participant's situation because of the model's focus on the individual level and its propensity to overlook the internal stratification and heterogeneous character of societies (e. g. de Haas, 2008).

The participant states that despite her strong Sierra Leone culture, there were changes in her priorities along the way. She claims that she goes home every year, communicates with her family via phone or Skype, and sends money to her people. This is congruent with de Haas' (2008) description of the transnational community. The participant now sees the UK as her home because this is where she lives, works, and pays her taxes. The strong cultural ties and community spirit with her people is seen in the fact that if any Sierra Leonean is in difficulty, she participates (along with the others) in contributing money, buying food, or helping the person to take care of their children if they cannot. It may be suggested that within this community is a form of people's cooperative union, showing Diaspora that includes ethnic and religious groups/communities as described by Faist (2010b), as well as an "imagined homeland" (Faist, 2010a). This also demonstrates how migration systems link people in transnational communities, consequently resulting in a geographical clustering of migration streams (de Haas, 2008), as how the Sierra Leone community (where the participant belongs) is formed.

Having lived in the UK for quite a long time, the participant appreciates the idea of the multicultural community, coupled with friends of different nationalities who are generally more accepting. Faist (2010b) calls such integration into the country of settlement 'Diaspora'. According to the participant, some countries do not apply equal opportunities, fairness, and human rights as they do in the UK. Amongst those she appreciates the most in the UK are free education, respect for human rights, safety and security, a feeling of independence, and economic and political stability. She says that this is unlike the civil war, corruption, and lack of economic growth in Sierra Leone. However, she stresses the importance of having family members around, since being alone can be isolating. Despite having lived in the UK for a long time, she claims that the Sierra Leonean culture has influenced her character more than the British culture. The notion of transnationalism is seen in this context, specifically transnational social spaces, such as reciprocity and unity in both countries of emigration and immigration (Faist, 2010a).

Her country of origin benefits from her living in the UK by working with the Red Cross as a way to give back to the country that rescued her from persecution in her homeland. The war in Sierra Leone created an avenue for her to come to the UK and pursue her goals, including education, which is valued in her family as a means to sustain financial and social statuses. Amelina and Faist (2012) describe this in their 'methodological transnationalism' as a development that takes place between space and social mobility.

It must be noted that the concept of feminisation (e. g. Piper, 2013; Engle, 2004; Asis, 2005) may also be applied to this example, as the asylum seeker is a woman who was eventually able to integrate to the UK society as a student and a worker. It has been forwarded that the relevance of gender can be seen in most aspects of migration (including asylum) (Piper, 2013), to which the participant's situation is applicable.

3. Evaluation and Conclusion

3. 1 Evaluation

The participant in the study demonstrates the irrelevance of the push-pull model of migration to the stream of migration. Rather, the transnational approach reveals a more applicable position to the situation, as shown by the social bonds thus created amongst Sierra Leoneans and with other UK residents, and the tendency of the participant to remit some money to her family and friends way back in her country (e. g. de Haas, 2008; Amelina and Faist, 2012). Albeit feminisation is not the major issue in the interview, it can be surmised that its essence is nonetheless existent since the asylum seeker eventually became a worker in the UK, and her deployment may be associated with feminisation of migration (Asis, 2005).

Diaspora is evident in the groups of Sierra Leonean people who live outside an imagined native land (e. g. Faist, 2010b). Transnationalism, on the other hand, is seen in the description of the migrants' strong ties and social formations (e. g. Faist, 2010a; Faist, 2010b). Thus, the partnership between Diaspora and transnationalism is relevant to the migrant as an asylum seeker.

Moreover, regulation processes create and mould migration flows, which are involved in labour market segmentation insofar as policies are supported by gendered and classed postulations. Legal channels are concluded to have opened up due to the upsurge of irregular migration, including asylum.

3. 2 Conclusion

This research deals with the developments in migration theory and how these developments addressed the limitations of the push-pull model. It explains feminisation as a major trend in contemporary migration, as well as the metaphor that Diaspora and transnationalism are ‘two awkward dance partners’. Further, it focuses on asylum and how it complicates the analysis of global migration and their regulation.

Developments in migration theory have caused an attempt for the surmounting of the limitations of the ‘push-pull’ model, an individual choice and equilibrium model. The relativity of migration pressure shows the triviality of the model. The transnational approach deals with this triviality and limitations, whereby it rejects the nation-state as the sole basis of empirical analysis.

Feminisation, on the other hand, is seen as a major trend in contemporary migration, as evidenced by the proliferation of women workers in the fields of medical/health, sales, hospitality, and maintenance. Labour migration drives the occurrence of feminisation as a major trend in contemporary migration. Gendered norms also mediate the way migrants perform their roles in the migration process. There are prevailing stereotyped assumptions

amongst labour recruiters set at the heart of the feminisation of migration, offering both demand and opportunities for female workers.

Through migration systems, people, families and communities are linked in transnational communities, and it consequently leads to an orderly geographical arrangement and clustering of migration streams, just as the participant in the study seems to depict. The concept of Diaspora denotes national or religious groupings of people that live outside an imagined native land. Transnationalism is used to explain the strong ties that prevail amongst migrants as well as to describe communities and social formations.

A balance between tough policy on asylum migration and global recruitment processes has been established in migration process. Physical safety has been the precipitating prism for regulating the stream of asylum seekers across countries, which is the same reason for asylum seeking by the participant in the study.

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