

International Migration Field Exam

June 1, 2011

Please answer one question from each of the following four categories. You have until 5 p.m. to complete the exam, with a required one-hour break.

Theories of migration

Outline the development of immigration from Asia to the United States. How do the different theories of migration apply to different groups of Asians? Which theories work best for which groups? Where might the theories need to be further expounded? How do these examples differ from migration to the U.S. from Mexico?

Two decades ago, Douglas Massey and his colleagues reviewed and catalogued a variety of theoretical perspectives on the factors driving the origins and perpetuation of migration flows. How did this cataloguing change the way immigration specialists viewed theory in their field? How might these theoretical perspectives be expanded or updated?

Assimilation/Incorporation

The concept of social boundaries has in recent years received considerable sociological attention and has become folded into incorporation theories. Discuss the role of such concepts in various incorporation theories and assess the extent to which you think the concept has improved the analytical leverage of such theories, or not? Is the field better off by focusing on the idea of boundaries, or not?

In the last 15 years, assimilation theory has undergone a renaissance after decades of criticism. How has assimilation theory changed? What were the critiques of it, and how does it now address these critiques? Does assimilation theory as now conceived address the experience of today's immigrant groups? If so, how? How might the theories be improved?

Settlement and Immigration Policies

Discuss the importance of unauthorized migration for U.S. immigration policy, including how it affects possibilities for policy reform.

Evaluate the statement by Gary Freeman (1994: 29) that "democracies have more and better means to control their borders, monitor foreigners within their territories, and manage international flows than they did twenty, fifty, or one hundred years ago."

Context of reception / Ascribed and achieved characteristics of immigrants

Scholars of U.S. immigration have long debated the quality of immigrants: their education and skill levels, their commitment to the United States, their willingness to learn English. Some have argued that immigrants in the 1970s were better skilled than immigrants now; others have said that immigrants in the early part of the 20th century were being assimilated more quickly than immigrants today. Discuss some of these debates. How does the context of reception for various immigrant groups affect the debate?

What is transnationalism? To what extent has transnationalism historically been a factor in international migration? How does it affect the context of reception in the destination country? If you were going to design a study that tested transnationalism, how would you operationalize it?