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## Week 2: The History of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies

Exploring Sociology's Role in Understanding Displacement

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# Introduction to Refugee and Forced Migration Studies

Refugee and forced migration studies encompass the dynamics of displacement, defining key terms, and understanding historical contexts that have shaped modern discourses.

Overview of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies

Interdisciplinary nature of the field

The role of history and sociology in refugee studies

*Source: Elie, J. (2014). Histories of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies.*



# Defining Key Terms



A refugee is defined by the 1951 Refugee Convention as someone with a well-founded fear of persecution due to their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group.

Forced migration is an umbrella term that includes refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), asylum seekers, and individuals fleeing environmental disasters.

Asylum seekers are individuals seeking international protection whose refugee status is not yet determined. Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are those who flee within their own countries due to conflict, violence, or disaster, facing unique challenges and vulnerabilities in their displacement.



# Pre-modern and Early Modern Migrations

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Historical forced migrations include the Jewish diaspora, which dispersed Jewish communities across Europe; the expulsion of Muslims from Spain in the late 15th century, known as the Reconquista; and the transatlantic slave trade, which forcibly relocated millions of Africans to the Americas, shaping migration patterns that resonate today.





# [A]historical Context

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## Pre-modern and early modern forced migrations:

Historical events like the Jewish diaspora, the expulsion of Muslims from Spain, and transatlantic slave trade are examples of pre-modern forced migrations.

*Source: Zolberg, A. R., Suhrke, A., & Aguayo, S. (1989). *Escape from Violence: Conflict and the Refugee Crisis in the Developing World*. Oxford University Press.*

**The Post-WWI and WWII Refugee Crises:** The two World Wars marked a turning point in the understanding and treatment of refugees. The mass displacements during and after WWII laid the foundation for international refugee protection frameworks.

*Source: Loescher, G. (1993). *Beyond Charity: International Cooperation and the Global Refugee Crisis*. Oxford University Press*

## Jewish Diaspora:

The Jewish diaspora is the dispersion of the Jewish people outside their traditional homeland (Judea) following historical events such as the Babylonian exile (6th century BC) and the Roman destruction of the Second Temple in 70 AD, which led to their widespread settlement throughout Europe and beyond.

- Gruen, E. S. (2002). *Diaspora: Jews among the Greeks and Romans*. Harvard University Press.
- Boyarin, D., & Boyarin, J. (1993). *The Power of the Diaspora: Two Essays on the Relevance of Jewish Culture*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Bauman, Z. (2000). Exile, Diasporas and the “Invisible” Jews. *Postmodernity and its discontents* (pp. 207-222). Polity Press.

*Discusses the sociological implications of Jewish diasporas, touching on patterns of forced migration and the concept of exile.*

## The Transatlantic Slave Trade:

The transatlantic slave trade, one of the largest forced migrations in history, forcibly moved millions of Africans to the Americas from the 16th to the 19th centuries.

- Eltis, D. (2000). *The Rise of African Slavery in America*. Cambridge University Press.
- Lovejoy, P. E. (2011). *Transformations in slavery: A history of slavery in Africa* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Klein, G. S. (2010). *The Atlantic slave trade* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.





# Development of the discipline

- Despite the deep historical roots of forced migration, the field is considered “ahistorical.”
- Historians have traditionally overlooked refugee studies, focusing more on policy-driven research.
- Refugee studies **emerged primarily in the 1980s with practical, present-focused concerns.** The study of the history of forced migration in Europe
- peaked in the 1980s, with publications such as Michael Marrus’s overview of Europe’s Unwanted (1985) and national perspectives akin to Wolfgang Jacobmeyer’s major study of ‘Displaced Persons’ in Germany (1985).
- Historians like Tony Kushner and Peter Gatrell have called for more historical engagement.

*Source: Marfleet (2007), Gatrell (2010).*



# The Emergence of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies:

- Refugee and Forced Migration Studies began to develop as a distinct academic discipline in the post-World War II era, responding to Cold War displacements, post-colonial conflicts, and civil wars.
- The establishment of organizations like the UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) played crucial roles in shaping the field.

*Source: Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E., Loescher, G., Long, K., & Sigona, N. (2014). The Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies. Oxford University Press.*

- The term “refugee” originally applied primarily to European contexts after the two World Wars.
- Shift towards Forced Migration Studies to account for broader displacement, including IDPs, economic migrants, and environmental displacements.
- Reflects a more inclusive and global understanding of forced movement.

# Interdisciplinary Approaches

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The emergence of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies has integrated insights from sociology, political science, law, and anthropology.

This interdisciplinary approach enhances the understanding of forced migration dynamics, allowing for more comprehensive analyses of refugee experiences and policies.







## Sociological Foundations in Forced Migration Studies:

Sociology has traditionally engaged with issues related to migration and displacement. Early sociologists such as Robert E. Park and the Chicago School of sociology studied the social integration of migrants in urban spaces.

Source: *Park, R. E. (1928). Human Migration and the Marginal Man. American Journal of Sociology.*

Sociology's concern with understanding the social structures that govern interactions between different populations is central to forced migration studies. **Concepts such as social cohesion, social networks, and identity play important roles.**

# Key sociological theories

## Social Networks and Transnationalism

This theory examines how refugees maintain cross-border ties with their country of origin while establishing networks in host societies. **Alejandro Portes** have explored how migrants and refugees maintain "transnational social fields" across borders.

*Portes, A., Guarnizo, L. E., & Landolt, P. (1999). The Study of Transnationalism: Pitfalls and Promise of an Emergent Research Field. Ethnic and Racial Studies.*

**Nina Glick Schiller** introduced the idea of refugees as active participants in transnational spaces, creating "transnational families" and engaging in political activism across borders.

*Glick Schiller, N., Basch, L., & Blanc-Szanton, C. (1992). Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration. New York Academy of Sciences.*



# Role of International Organizations

Organizations such as the UNHCR and IOM have been fundamental in shaping Refugee and Forced Migration Studies. Their frameworks and policies have been instrumental in addressing refugee crises globally, providing a crucial foundation for scholarly research and practical interventions.



# Social Integration vs. Segregation

**Assimilation Theory:** Sociologists have long studied how immigrants, including refugees, adapt to host societies. Early theorists, such as Milton Gordon, developed the "assimilation theory," which suggests that immigrants gradually adopt the culture and norms of the host society.

*Gordon, M. M. (1964). Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion, and National Origins. Oxford University Press.*

## **Multiculturalism and Acculturation:**

Theories of multiculturalism and acculturation challenge the assimilation model, arguing for pluralistic societies that allow migrants and refugees to retain their cultural identities while integrating socially and economically.

*Berry, J. W. (1997). Immigration, Acculturation, and Adaptation. Applied Psychology.*



# Social Capital Theory

## Power and Agency

A common critique of early studies is the portrayal of refugees as passive victims. Recent sociological perspectives emphasize the agency of refugees, highlighting their role in shaping their own futures and resisting oppressive structures.

Pierre Bourdieu's concept of social capital is often applied to refugee integration, analyzing how refugees use their social networks to navigate new social systems

*Bourdieu, P. (1986). The Forms of Capital. In J. Richardson (Ed.), Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education. Greenwood Press.*



# Stigma and Marginalization

Refugees often face significant stigma and marginalization within host societies due to their legal status and perceived differences. Erving Goffman's work on stigma provides insights into how refugees navigate their identities and societal perceptions, influencing their social integration and mental health.



Sociology's strength lies in its **qualitative methods**, particularly **ethnography, case studies, and interviews**. These **methods offer a bottom-up approach** to understanding the lived experiences of refugees, complementing legal, political, and economic analyse.

# PRACTICE

- Each group has one of the three sociological insights discussed above: **transnational networks, social integration, or marginalization**.
- Each group will spend 10 minutes discussing how their assigned sociological theory applies to the **recent refugee waves' representatives**.

Think about the following questions:

- How does the theory help us understand the experiences of refugees?
- What real-world examples can you find from the Syrian refugee crisis that illustrate this theory?
- How does this theory contribute to developing policies or practices that might improve the situation for refugees?
- After the group discussions, each group will present their findings to the rest of the class in a 3-minute presentation.

# Conclusion and Discussion



# Conclusion and Discussion

Q&A Session

A Historical Context

Development of the Refugee



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## Historical Context of Forced Migration

Forced migration has deep historical roots. Shaped by transnational events such as the Greek Diaspora, the expulsion of Muslims from Spain, and the transatlantic slave trade. Understanding these origins is crucial for grasping contemporary issues related to displacement and refugee crises.



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### Sociology's Role in Refugee and Forced Migration Studies



Key sociological theories



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PRACTICE



**Key Sociological Theories**

**Social Practice Theory**

**Social Integration vs. Assimilation**

**Human Capital Theory**

**Structural Functionalism**

**Intersectionality**