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Edited by Malcolm Cross

Excerpt

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Introduction: migration, the city and the urban dispossessed

A newcomer to the field of racial inequality and migration could be forgiven for thinking that the issues and problems emerging in the United States and Europe were so dissimilar as to warrant quite separate approaches. In the United States, until relatively recently, migration was regarded as highly significant only as the way by which the original workforce was established, but as having only marginal relevance to the great struggle for racial equality. Migration may have created a mosaic of cultures, but ethnic boundaries were perceived as softening as all surrendered to the American Dream. Even with the wakening of the 1960s, the issue was conceived as one of *civil rights* and not one of labour or class relations.

In Europe, by contrast, inward labour migration since the Second World War has generated what is sometimes called the 'thirteenth state' of Europe; 16 million migrants and their descendants from old colonial territories or poor countries on the European periphery whose arrival has not been an invitation to the 'European Dream'. On the contrary, they have been carefully introduced as the 'new helots' from whose labours opportunities have opened up for others.

While it is far too glib to suggest that in the United States migration created the powerful while in Europe it has generated the powerless, there can be no denying that the social structure of advanced capitalist economies on both sides of the Atlantic has come now to look more similar than hitherto. In the recent past, racism in Europe triggered thoughts of the Holocaust, while references to 'ethnic minorities' were taken to refer to Bretons or Basques but not to migrant workers and their descendants. Britain has been the exception to this generalisation, but even there few have been prepared to accept that the North American experience was of any great relevance.

The first central point of this book, therefore, is to argue against these

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[More information](#)2 *Malcolm Cross*

prejudices and to suggest that a structural convergence has occurred, the main feature of which has been the generation of minorities identifiable both by their class position and by a variety of processes of social and political exclusion. Because of this, comparison becomes imperative. A related point is that these are emergent processes; that is, as the economies of Western industrial nations have become further enmeshed in a re-ordered global network of capital and labour movements, so too have the fortunes of minorities come to look increasingly alike. In the first part of the book, these similarities are described. The central argument is that as Western economies have shed manufacturing jobs they have marginalised and excluded those whose low-cost labour was used to prop up the vestiges of the production processes on which the last Industrial Revolution depended. The first sense, therefore, in which the term 'dispossessed' is being used is to refer to the virtual labour market exclusion of those whose origins lay in the sharecroppers of the southern states, or the plantations of the Caribbean, or the peasantries of the Indian sub-continent or the Mediterranean and those who migrated for work. What they have lost is the chance to continue working in their chosen locations, mostly in the industrial centres of the central and north-eastern United States or the old industrial heartlands of northern Europe.

Stated as baldly as this, the proposition sounds overly deterministic and complete. In fact, economies do not change in this simple way from a total dependence upon manufacturing to an equally complete reliance upon services and new technology. Manufacturing is itself reborn, either in a new form or by assuming the contours of low wages and low costs that have led to such massive industrialisation in the 'new Japans' of South-East Asia. 'Post-industrialisation' is no less incremental, partial and uneven than its predecessor. Thus some minorities are reincorporated back into the labour market through 'Third World' doors, but that process itself again confirms their subordinate status. Others are introduced for the first time as a new, low-level service class to provide food, cleaning and transport to oil the wheels of finance capitalism.

A second theme is that with economic restructuring has come an enhanced salience of *space*. Just as the Industrial Revolution forever changed the face of some cities, so too has the Post-Industrial Revolution done the same. The cities of today are sites of hi-tech production, capital circulation and consumption, but they have for the most part been grafted uneasily onto the cities of yesterday. The result is the emergence or re-emergence of that shadowy zone around the central business district identified as the 'inner city'.¹ It is, of course, within this *cordon sanitaire* that a very large proportion of non-white minorities are forced to live. There is then a second sense in which the term 'dispossessed' is being used.

It refers to those who are excluded from the fruits of *consumption* and forced to live in poor housing, often on run-down, crime ridden estates, where the level of public services and facilities simply serves to confirm their exclusion and subordinate position.

Once again, however, this is not a deterministic or simple process. There is plenty of evidence of variation in this depressing picture. Not all minorities are in 'inner cities' and those that are occupy a variety of positions. Indeed, there is considerable evidence to suggest that in some of the most 'post-industrial' cities, minorities have become increasingly differentiated as some find themselves able to exploit hitherto closed options for advancement while others sink into the so-called 'ghetto underclass' (Cross and Waldinger 1992).

This book is not directly concerned with economic and social *policy* but more with identifying the issues with which new policies will have to contend. There is, however, one key debate that has emerged out of the issues raised herein and for that reason some comment has been included. The final chapters of this book refer to what has come to be called the 'underclass debate' and in the last part of this opening chapter some of the issues in that debate are discussed.

Migration and production

On both sides of the Atlantic, the 1970s and 1980s have witnessed an unprecedented decline in manufacturing both in terms of share of GDP and, more particularly, in employment. But is deindustrialisation a reversible process or are we witnessing a seed change in which the domestic division of labour is being supplanted by a form of international specialisation which will remove for ever manufacturing and possibly some service jobs? Theorists of the New International Division of Labour (NIDL) school have no doubts. These effects are both permanent and coincidental with national boundaries. What this means is a new form of specialisation in which whole nations can become proletarianised as they assume the role of manufacturers of the increasingly sophisticated goods demanded by Western consumers.

The chapter by Robin Cohen is a very important corrective to the NIDL thesis. As he points out, the phrase 'division of labour' is itself used in different ways, and the thesis fails to take account of the major migratory labour movements. Not only have new migratory streams been generated by the mushrooming economies of the Middle East, but there is evidence of new waves of migrant labour being drawn into those economies from which jobs are also being lost. It is this which constitutes the so-called 'New Migration' which is as characteristic of current economic

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[More information](#)4 *Malcolm Cross*

restructuring as exclusion from the manufacturing sector. Two questions arise from this analysis. The first is whether NIDL theory can be reconstituted to account for these apparently contradictory phenomena and, second, whether these processes imply that the exclusion of existing racial and ethnic minorities from employment is temporary. The critique of NIDL theory does not itself answer the latter question. It is perfectly possible for so-called 'new migrants' to take the low-level, often part-time, service jobs without improving the prospects of those languishing on the economic sidelines.

The European experience of recent migration suggests a considerable variation in the responses of national governments. On the one hand, the apparently *laissez-faire* – or at least *ad hoc* – policy making of the British state can be contrasted with the interventionist planning of what was West Germany. Stephen Castles makes the point, however, that while modern Germany represents an extreme case, the politicisation of race and ethnicity is a wider phenomenon. Faced with white electorates clamouring for solutions for what appear to be intractable economic problems, no European government has been prepared to promote racial equality with any degree of conviction. In the German case the implicit message from the Bundestag has been one of complicity with those wishing to blame the pains of restructuring on the 'foreigner problem'. This is, of course, no isolated case; other European Community governments, too, have found it convenient, when faced with a total of 15 million unemployed, to imply that if only the same number of migrant workers could be sent home then the problem would be solved. Racism is a response of the fearful and uncertain, and there can be few times more potentially fearful and uncertain than those facing Europe at the present time. In addition to the dislocations of massive economic change, the political turmoil at the end of the last decade has added a new twist. On top of job losses and new forms of labour demand, often fed by undocumented workers, we now have the possibility of massive waves of migration from the East as the log jam of state suppression gives way. Already there are signs that these effects will be felt on both sides. The release of poor workers to the West may well further displace Turkish, Moroccan and other Islamic minorities but not itself be of a sufficient magnitude to prevent the resurgence of anti-Semitism in Poland, Czechoslovakia, or the USSR.

Economic change of the magnitude that has affected Western societies from the mid-1970s has had a pronounced impact on social class. If the nineteenth-century revolution led to two major contenders for political power and economic dominance, then the Post-Industrial Revolution has led to fracturing and regrouping. In the process, traditional working-class

allegiances have changed as the primary and secondary features of the labour market have become reconstituted into an array of new sub-classes and social movements. As Stuart Hall, commenting on the political aspirations of the left in Britain, put it:

Divisions, not solidarities, of class identification are the rule. There are large and significant sectors of the 'working class' as it really is today – the unemployed, semi-skilled and unskilled, part-time workers, male and female, the low paid, black people, the 'underclasses' of Thatcherite Britain – who no longer see themselves in a traditional Labour Way. (Hall 1988: 266)

As a result political parties and trade unions on the left have to contend with either trying to appeal to old loyalties across an increasingly wide divide in the working class, or with rethinking their principles to appeal to groups outside the traditional working class. Either way this poses political problems for ethnic minorities who, because of their economic position, are faced with the choice between working-class politics that are increasingly irrelevant to their needs, or 'new-class' politics in which there is no coherent agenda. As Castles shows, this is a fertile terrain for the growth of new versions of old tendencies to blame innocent victims. Given the recent history of European racism, it would be unwise not to be concerned about the potential dangers in this volatile mix.

Industrial restructuring

The two chapters by Hill and Negrey and by Cross can be read in parallel. Both attempt to examine the impact on minorities of changes in those sectors of the US and UK economies in which the winds of change have been at their strongest. In the industrial heartland of the US, black workers had attained a powerful presence in the automobile industry. Rationalisation, exported production and disinvestment have had a dramatic effect on all workers, but none more so than blacks and Hispanics. The figures are astounding. More than half the minority production workers in Detroit, for example, lost their jobs between 1979 and 1984 with the result that poverty rose rapidly, and in some parts of the city infant mortality rates came to rival those in Third World countries. What is quite clear, both here and in those parts of the UK where a comparable collapse in labour markets has occurred, is that these changes are non-reversible. It is perfectly true that economic fortunes since the mid-1980s have greatly improved but the *relative* position of black workers has remained at the level to which it sank in the darkest days of the recession. In the Michigan case there is official recognition that new jobs will neither

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Excerpt

[More information](#)6 *Malcolm Cross*

be as numerous nor as appropriate for black and migrant labour as the old. Changes in the labour process, together with automation, will ensure that there will be no return to a seller's market in labour except for those with higher levels of training and skill than former employees possess.

Another phenomenon with important implications for minority workers is that restructured economies may regenerate manufacturing by promoting Third World conditions in First World locations. Annie Phizacklea argues, for example, that parts of the clothing industry in the UK are able to exploit a malleable, largely female, workforce which can rival in cost terms the sweatshops of South-East Asia. The flexibility of home working, for example, minimises costs by depressing wages and by allowing for fluctuations in demand without the necessity to retain labour. Where fashion wear is concerned the benefits of proximity and speedy responses outweigh the rock bottom prices of workers overseas. A particularly important feature of this phenomenon is that the reincorporation of workers into production is mediated by both race and gender. This demonstrates the important point made by Robin Cohen in his critique of NIDL theory: where race and gender combine to fracture working-class communities, the relocation imperative is controlled, but only at the cost of reproducing those very divisions in a more extreme form.

The post-industrial city

The fortunes of racial minorities in all settings appear to be intimately bound up with the future of the city. But the city itself is dramatically changing as Western economies are reorganising to exploit new technologies and to profit from, rather than be undermined by, the new centres of manufacturing enterprise that have emerged so powerfully in South-East Asia and elsewhere.

The residential concentration of recent migrants in urban centres is not a new phenomenon. Earlier twentieth-century movements of Jews, for example, from Eastern Europe have shown how the twin pressures of limited opportunity and choice, born partially out of a desire to defend cultural traditions, have had a concentrating effect in key locations. In the British, Dutch and French cases, migrant labour in the period after World War II has often succeeded earlier immigrants in exactly the same streets and neighbourhoods. As Ceri Peach shows in his survey of European migrant segregation, the key issue is not so much the level of separation in space but the corollary of poor housing and urban blight. Despite common features, however, Peach reminds us that the specific histories of each country and each constituent group can make a considerable differ-

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ence. Thus, a danger exists of assuming there is a 'European' pattern, let alone one which is common to North America *and* Europe. It is true that migrants have been drawn from vastly different countries and have been attracted for different reasons. It is also clear that the societies into which migrants have been incorporated differ considerably. However, the clear-cut succession, which typified migration to North America in the early years of the twentieth century, is not so evident. Also, when we look at the *social* position of migrants, much greater degrees of similarity become apparent. The message is, therefore, that low socio-economic incorporation produces similar patterns of exclusion regardless of significant and important differences of culture, aspiration and political setting. What it does not account for is the level of segregation of groups from indigenous majorities or from other minorities. Thus the position of migrants as they become more or less permanent minorities can only be explained by reference to both ethnicity or group cohesion on the one hand, and socio-economic position on the other.

The economic position of American blacks has been well documented for many years. The similar position of many new minorities in Europe has only become evident in the 1980s. The chapter by Eversley, for example, draws on a new analysis of 1981 census data for the UK to demonstrate that the vast majority of Afro-Caribbeans and Asian minorities live in areas of severe urban deprivation. The critical point, however, is that older industrial areas, which did not attract migrants in the 1950s and 1960s, are equally deprived on all the normal indices. The poverty and joblessness of minorities is a function, therefore, of changes in the fortunes of the places into which they initially moved, compounded by well-known processes of racial and ethnic exclusion. Thus we cannot expect to understand what is happening to minorities now without an appreciation of changes in the economies of Western societies. In particular, the plight of minorities has been profoundly deepened with the uneven development in cities and major urban centres. But, once again, we are reminded that it is folly to assume that minorities are passive victims. Groups differ in the responses they make to these worsening conditions. Some will respond politically by taking up the cudgels for state intervention to mitigate the worst consequences of economic restructuring; some will fall back on strong religious and cultural traditions to try and achieve what others did before by capturing 'middlemen' niches and specialised opportunities that emerge in any period of rapid economic change.

This picture is well described for London by Hamnett and Randolph who again are able to draw on a recently available data source. What their longitudinal study shows is precisely this complex pattern generated by

the interaction of economic change and ethnicity. In the first place, it is a mistake to assume that there is a simple relationship between economic decline and minority job loss. In the London case, for example, the secondary position of black workers in manufacturing appears to have protected them from some of the worst job-shedding associated with reorganisation. In other words, the new economies are not necessarily those in which there is no demand for low-level workers. On the other hand, the deindustrialisation process lowers the proportion of total jobs in manufacturing and thus exposes those hitherto dependent on this sector to the potentially dangerous task of finding alternative economic activity. Afro-Caribbean women, for example, have led the movement into alternative jobs, but there is little evidence to suggest a move out of a secondary labour market position. What has happened is that ethnic minority women, particularly those of Afro-Caribbean origin, have pioneered the general change to more female employment, albeit part-time and poorly paid. While it is true, therefore, that economic restructuring has tended to dispossess minorities of their original economic positions, this does not mean that they have all been equally effected. There is strong evidence, for example, that those Asians who came to Britain as a result of the expulsion from East Africa have drawn on their entrepreneurial skills and community loyalties to seek out and exploit the opportunities generated by major economic reorganisation (cf. Cross and Waldinger 1992).

Arguments over the 'New Migration' have focussed on the so called 'global cities', or centres of the world economy which have the special role of lubricating the flow of information and providing financial services. Roger Waldinger demonstrates that in the case of New York at least two separable processes have been at work. Whites have left the city faster than the jobs they formerly occupied, with the effect of opening up opportunities for non-white labour. In the public sphere some native blacks have been the beneficiaries, but in private business new migrants from South-East Asia have gained employment. At the bottom, however, there has been a growth of menial jobs which have largely gone to the remaining new migrants – those from Puerto Rico, Haiti and the Dominican Republic. In other words, post-industrial transformation has led to a fracturing of minority groups themselves into a complex ethnic division of labour. This would not be predicted by most existing theory which tends to assume that all ethnic minority groups are equally displaced, or that all are destined to become the new helots in a polarised class structure. The fact that the picture is considerably more complex should not detract, however, from the critical point that for most native black Americans the post-industrial economy of New York has exacerbated their plight on the margins of a rapidly changing labour market.

The chapter by Alisdair Rogers makes it quite clear that the ‘fourth wave’ migration to the United States is quite unlike that which went before. In one sense, it is more akin to the post-war migration to Britain in which it was possible to identify a middle-class stream, mostly from India into the health service, and a much larger movement into very low-level, poorly paid jobs. The current inward movement is into the west and south-west sunbelts of America. The migration is also bimodal with Indians and Koreans finding niches in the burgeoning topography of silicon valleys, while the Mexican and Caribbean workers soak up these new menial jobs. The movements are urban but not ‘inner city’. Rather, these new migrants find their way into suburbia where they generate business, rather than residential, enclaves. Unlike Peach, then, Rogers is more persuaded by the economic determinants of residential locations. What is particularly important about this phenomenon is that rather than seeing ‘ethnicity’ and ‘class’ as alternative perspectives in accounting for spatial distributions, ethnicity is understood as emergent in those locations where it mediates class relations. In other words, it is essential to view these two bases of structured division and inequality together and to explore their interrelations.

The underclass debate

While it is quite apparent, therefore, that all minorities are not affected in the same ways by industrial reorganisation, and that new migrants are incorporated at different levels, it is also clear that a significant proportion of native black Americans, and a growing proportion of some minorities in Britain, and possibly the rest of Europe, are becoming trapped in conditions of increasing poverty. In both Britain and North America there has been a reluctance by researchers to recognise this fact for fear of rekindling the ‘culture of poverty’ debate initiated in the 1960s by Daniel Moynihan (1965 and 1970). The vacuum created by this timidity was initially filled by those seeking to provide intellectual justification for the rolling back of the ‘nanny state’. The most important example of this thinking was in the work of Charles Murray, whose book *Losing Ground* (1984) revived an earlier debate on the so-called ‘urban underclass’. This is an important contribution which specifically challenges the central approach of this book. To Murray, the emerging evidence on the so-called ‘underclass’, or those who are termed here the ‘dispossessed’, signifies a change in family patterns and styles of parenting rather than a product of economic change. His initial statement stimulated a response by William J. Wilson (1987) which built on an earlier book showing the degree to which civil rights legislation in the United

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[More information](#)10 *Malcolm Cross*

States had stimulated class divisions within black America. Since the last two essays in this book offer extensions and correctives to Wilson's position, it is important to identify the main parameters of the debate itself.

Charles Murray's argument is that there are three key indicators of the underclass condition. These are, first, the levels of illegitimacy, the incidence of violent crime and the extent of labour market withdrawal. Illegitimacy is taken as an indicator of weak family life and poor parenting, which is itself thought to be a cause of violent crime and low labour market commitment. In other words, the other two indicators are *outcomes* of the underclass condition. Crime and unemployment do not create an underclass; rather, they are the way by which we know it.

As a later development of Murray's approach, where he seeks to apply it to Britain, makes clear, there are three key theses bound up in these propositions. The first is moral. It is to suggest that old distinctions between 'roughs' and 'respectables' are still salient; indeed, that they are more salient today than before because some forces, largely unspecified but linked to the family (weak parenting), have increased the proportion of the 'roughs', or those whose values differ from those of the Protestant ethic. Thus, it is how people *react* to their circumstances which is important, rather than the circumstances themselves:

When I use the term 'underclass' I am indeed focussing on a certain type of poor person defined not by his condition, e.g. long-term unemployed, but by his deplorable behaviour in response to that condition, e.g. unwilling to take the jobs that are available to him.
(Murray 1990: 68)

A second thesis, quite unrelated to the first, suggests that the problem is related to how people behave when confronted by certain opportunities created by state intervention. For example, he dismisses the notion that his is a 'culture of poverty' thesis on the grounds that members of the underclass are not culturally delinquent. On the contrary, they are perfectly rational because what they are doing is exploiting opportunities (wrongly) put before them:

How can people read my extensive descriptions of causation, all of which focus on the ways in which members are responding sensibly (at least in the short term) to policies that have been put in place around them, and then cite surveys regarding a 'culture of poverty' to refute me?
(Murray 1990: 69)

But, of course, not *all* members of the lower class do behave in this way, so the important question is why some do. We are back then to the moral theory of what poverty is.