The unsettling nature of immigration: labour migration, racism and discrimination

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Chapter for **Research Handbook of Migration and Employment**

Edited by Guglielmo Meardi,

Scuola Normale Superiore, Italy

Edward Elgar Publishers

Word count: 7,005

25 October 2022

Introduction

The contention of this chapter is that the unsettling nature of immigration, that is the way it disrupts existing structures and practices, means that it offers opportunities for original empirical research and new theoretical insights. For sociologists of work and labour markets, one of the most interesting aspects of immigration is that it challenges the idea that migrant workers can be viewed or treated exclusively as commodities. Of course this was expressed in the well-known claim by the dramatist Max Frisch who, when describing Swiss unease about immigration, wrote: 'A puny master-race [the Swiss] sees itself in danger: it has called for labour and those who responded are human beings' (Frisch 1965). Though labour can be purchased for a price there are real limits to examining migrants as robotic entities governed by the mechanical forces of supply and demand or indeed as the passive recipients of laws and regulations that spin out of government offices. Migrants have identities based on ethnicity, skin colour and religion; they have friends and acquaintances and they may have beliefs and values that include prejudices towards others. It is in viewing immigrants as 'people' that sociologists of work and employment relations scholars can open up topics that endure beyond whatever public concerns have been whipped up about immigration for political purposes (see also Kasinitz 2012, : 582 - 584).

In relation to the world of work, I shall discuss a number of puzzles or anomalies at the intersection of immigration and employment that are grounded in this broader conception of migrants as people. By puzzles I mean questions that either defy the expectations of common sense or the predictions of some or other theory. As such they present a conundrum about the social world that requires explanation or theorisation (see for instance Mears 2017). Of course, the basic question raised by immigration is that of how identity is incorporated into the labour market because the very fact of immigration raises the issue of difference. What role do differences in 'race', ethnicity and nationality play in channelling migrants into particular kinds of work? Is discrimination simply a process of exclusion that operates in the same manner throughout the labour market? If so, why are people of colour concentrated in particular kinds of work?

The second major issue that this chapter raises is the role of social networks in channelling migrants into jobs and, in particular, into low wage employment. It may seem paradoxical that strangers in a new land often find work through their social networks when they have yet to make new friends and acquaintances. But it is the value of the information provided by the few

people that they do know that enables them to find work of some kind. Often these few people are from the same background and share the same ethnicity and so workplaces and industries can come to have a disproportionate number of people from the same 'race' or ethnicity. This phenomenon is now well understood, largely through Waldinger's application of labour market queueing theory to the US experience (Waldinger 1996; Waldinger and Lichter 2003). In Europe, however, there is emerging evidence that ethnically bounded social networks may also have negative consequences. One seeming perverse effect is that of leading immigrants into jobs for which they are over-qualified.

The anomalies and puzzles that I have chosen relate to workers who find themselves in what is roughly bottom quarter of the labour market. Some attributes of this section of the labour market should be noted for what follows. First, economic migrants, especially those termed labour migrants, tend to be employed disproportionately in poorly paid work (Amo-Agyei 2020). Second, this frequently means working in industries that require a range of manual skills such as agriculture and food production, construction, hospitality, transport and storage (OECD 2008). Finally, manual labour such as general labouring or working as process operatives in factories or driving are all jobs that are poorly paid and of low status.[1] Taken together, these characteristics show why work of this kind is generally considered unattractive, at least for native-born workers, and so it creates a structural dependency on cheap migrant labour within affluent capitalist economies (King and Rueda 2008; Piore 1979).[2] More generally, these characteristics, and indeed other differences in the nature of work, raises challenges for grand theories of migration and capitalism and indeed for our understanding of how discrimination operates across the labour market.

Marxism, migration and racism: from grand theory to theorising

Before proceeding, it must be acknowledged that for all the progress made in recent years in the study of immigrant employment the relative lack of interest in the problem of racism within the sub-fields of industrial relations and labour economics has meant that the racialisation of migrants - a process that may even treat white immigrants as racial groups with negative characteristics - has been relatively neglected. For sure, this is something of a puzzle in itself and one that raises all sorts of questions about the extent to which employment research is willing or equipped to handle differences in 'race', ethnicity and nationality. No doubt, part

of the problem here is academic specialisation with questions of race and ethnicity being left to a specialism within sociology.

Even so, the lack of dialogue between the fields of migration and race and ethnicity is becoming much too conspicuous and will need to be overcome for at least two reasons. The first is simply that the fields of industrial relations and the sociology of work will have a significant blind spot that leaves them ill equipped to explain an enduring source of labour market inequality. If anything, this will become more and more obvious as processes of globalization continue to mix people together as never before. The second and related problem will be of recurring policy concerns. For instance, the 'European anxiety' regarding the place of Islam in Europe has generated a long-running debate about the challenges of integrating Muslim migrants in traditionally Christian countries (Erel et al. 2016, : 1340). This includes the problem of labour market incorporation particularly when there is a 'Muslim penalty' that shows lower levels of economic activity and higher levels of unemployment (Heath and Martin 2013).

To be fair, Marxist scholarship has long since grappled with the problems of 'race', racism and migration, especially within the European context, (e.g., Castles and Kosack 1973; Castells 1975; Miles 1982; Hall 1980). In a classic statement, Castles and Kosack (1973) argued that any analysis of labour migrants should not be conceived in terms of 'ethnic, social or cultural characteristics' but in terms of their common social and economic characteristics and, in particular, in terms of their class location. This starting position helped establish a political economy of migration that sought to go beyond the limitations of the old 'race relations' perspective which, among other things, was focused exclusively on people of colour – especially 'black' people – perpetuated the dubious notion of 'race' and saw immigration control as a policy tool for promoting good 'race relations'. Rather work in the Marxist tradition sought to ground the analysis of migration within a materialist perspective that emphasized wider processes of capitalist expansion and colonisation, the subsequent emergence of an international supply of labour and labour market competition (Miles 1982; Solomos and Back 1995).

The enduring puzzle for Marxists is why labour migrants and the white working class do not come together to advance the interests of the working class as a whole (Castles and Kosack 1973, : 19). The problem, which Castles and Kosack discuss in some detail, is attributed mostly to the racism of the local born workers and their trade unions. Articulating what would become

a classic Marxist position, they insisted that racism was to be understood as a phenomenon that is initiated and reproduced within the struggle between capital and labour. Accordingly, racism has a material basis as economic benefits flow from its origination and reproduction. The white working class, for instance, engage in racism as a defensive reaction against migrant labour from the former colonies who they see not as class comrades but as alien intruders (see also Castells 1975, : 53-4; Miles 1982, : 101-3). Meanwhile, employers hire workers of colour because they help create division within the working class and add to the obstacles it already faces in forming a unified labour movement. When mixed with labour market competition such divisions also provide employers with a measure of labour control by making white workers more fearful about their jobs. None of this occurs by accident and is certainly not captured by a 'race relations perspective' in which the dynamics of capitalist economies are completely absent (Cohen 1987, : 123-130; Castles and Kosack 1972, : 5-7).

As others have noted, one of the problems with arguments of this kind is that the consequences of a social phenomenon are used to explain their causes (see Elster 1982, : 454-456). A basic problem here is that of intention, as employers may have found that the racist attitudes and actions of other workers were simply an accidental by-product of the decision to recruit labour from overseas. Indeed it could be argued that capitalists would rather not have the kind of instability associated with widespread racism when it generates protests, riots and political upheaval. A further problem for this version of Marxism is that other 'isms', such as sexism or sectarianism could equally serve the same function of dividing the working class. Or, as Julian Go (2021) has put it: 'there is nothing inherent to the logic of capital that requires *race* to be the ideology of division'.

Admittedly, some writers within the tradition have recognised the problem and sought to break with the 'undialectical and functionalist assumptions that have framed Marxist analyses' for a more nuanced account of the relationship between capitalism and racism (Miles 1986, : 63). For Miles, racism was an ideology that had its own conditions of existence and reproduction though one that was not independent of material forces (1982, : 81). Economic factors may have a dominant role in bringing racism into historical struggles but they are not the only factors. What then needs to be explained is the ideological process that leads to the racialisation of different groups within particular economic and historical circumstances, which inevitably means identifying those interests that benefit from creating racist divisions in society (Miles 1986).

But even this position has been subject to the criticism that writers in the Marxist tradition are still unable to accept that production relations could be subordinate to cultural processes (Zoubir and Murji 2020). As Goldberg (1992) has argued, the pre-occupation with giving the process a materialist basis limits the scope for conceptualising racism and racialized social relations in capitalist societies. Treating racism as an epiphenomenon of class relations overlooks numerous historical examples where class exploitation was either incidental to the construction of racial dominance or else racial management was pursued at the expense of class differentiation. A classic example was apartheid South Africa where a racial state governed the population in explicitly racial terms under which racial groups were identified legally and administratively as 'inherently inferior or historically immature'. For the 'historically immature', the racial state sought to bring civilisation and salvations to peoples who were not fit to govern themselves (Goldberg 2002, : 44). So rather than assume a single monolithic and capitalist racism the emphasis should be on mapping the different historical and contemporary formations of racism.[3]

It should also be noted that much of Marxist writing on immigration has been about economic migration and probably mostly about labour migration. But, as immigration specialists know, it is a complex phenomenon with, for instance, different modes of entry leading to distinctive categories for economic, family, humanitarian and student migration. Then there is irregular or undocumented migration. Such complexity has led one of America's leading sociologists, Alejandro Portes, to insist that attempts at a *grand theory* of immigration are futile because 'the different areas that compose this field are so disparate that they can be unified only at a highly abstract and vacuous level' (1997, : 810). Along with the different areas, Portes argued that the division between macrostructural issues, such as the role of global capitalist expansion in initiating migration flows and the power of states to regulate such flows has little to offer any micro-sociological analysis such as the effects of community networks on the decision whether or not to migrate. To his mind, the two levels are not fungible.

In any case, there is an emerging consensus that theory development in the social sciences has come to a standstill over the past few decades, especially when compared to developments in methods. What was once known as grand theory and sought to explain all of society (and even history) through a highly abstracted set of concepts and claims of general tendencies has been in decline for some decades following the demise of structural functionalism, structuralism and Marxism.[4] One reaction to this impasse has been to encourage a move from 'theory' to 'theorizing' with theorizing being a process and theory being the end product. For

Swedberg, a leading proponent of this endeavour, any social scientist can engage in the task of theorizing once they seek to explain whatever empirical regularities, anomalies or puzzles feature in their work. In other words, theorizing should be a practical research activity. He acknowledges, however, that this will probably be more evident in the discovery of new phenomena and puzzles rather than in testing and refining any specific theory (Swedberg 2016, 2014). What I argue in this chapter is that the unsettling nature of economic migration provides opportunities to revisit existing theories and concepts.

Migration, racism and labour market discrimination

The idea that racism is about so much more than ideology and, furthermore, that it has an analytical value independent of class relations is so well established in the contemporary sociology of race and ethnicity that it barely needs to be articulated. To take but one example, the French sociologist Michel Wieviorka (1995) insists that racism has three components: prejudice, assumptions, attitudes and opinions; exclusionary practices or discriminatory behaviour, and ideology, doctrine or political programme. Such conceptions recognise that it has a power precisely because it is visible in everyday life whereas class relations have an intangible and abstract quality that make them less obvious. At the micro level, it can occur in unconscious biases that lead to unintentionally discriminatory outcomes and at the meso level it can occur in practices observed in banks, at sporting venues, and in the way minority characters are presented (or not) in films and on TV. Of course, at the macro or systemic level it may be derived from histories of colonisation and enslavement (see, for instance, Reskin 2012; Phillips 2011).

Again, immigration unsettles. Following the fall of the Berlin the Wall in 1989 and the subsequent dissolution of the USSR in 1991, east Europeans began to move to Western Europe in significant numbers, notably after the expansion of the European Union in 2004 when freedom of movement was extended to the so-called A8 countries (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia). Within a few years reports of xenophobic and racist attitudes and behaviour towards Polish, Romanian and other nationalities began to attract the attentions of researchers and a 'new racism' without racial differences was revealed. For instance, a comparative study of Ireland, the UK, the Netherlands and Germany found that Polish migrants believed they had such experiences. This was most widely reported

in the Netherlands in the first wave of the survey but rose most significantly in the UK in subsequent years (McGinnity and Gijsbertsa 2015).

The racialisation of east European labour migrants in the UK became especially pronounced in the years leading up to the Brexit referendum in 2016 (e.g., Fox et al. 2012). Polish workers were initially viewed in the UK as a 'desirable' migrant group who almost passed as 'invisible' due to their whiteness (Rzepnikowska 2019). Later this perception would shift probably because of the increasingly negative depictions of the Polish as a people who were taking jobs from British workers while putting a strain on housing and public services. Though the research participants thought of themselves as white, the Polish language, the foreign accent and the 'foreign look' all became the markers of difference (p.70).

That it is directed towards white Caucasian migrants is not an entirely new phenomenon but it nonetheless demonstrates rather powerfully that, as an ideology, racism can change and adopt to different circumstances. As a 'scavenger ideology' it gains its power from its 'ability to pick out and utilise ideas and beliefs in specific socio-historical circumstances' (Solomos and Back 1996, : 18-19). Fredrickson's conception of racism is useful here as it contends that racism is about difference and power and not necessarily about skin colour or phenotype. Racism originates in a mindset that regards 'them' as different from 'us' in ways that are permanent and unbridgeable. Crucially, this difference also provides a rationale for using power over the ethno-racial other in ways that would be thought cruel and unjust if applied to members of the same group ('us'). For Fredrickson, racism has an ideological need to justify the subjugation of 'them' [Fredrickson 8-9?]. Even so, it has to be acknowledged that the racialization of east European migrants has been fuelled by economic competition. It has, in other words, a material basis even if is not the only one.

Detecting discrimination: does the colour barrier extend beyond the post-colonial nations?

Outside of the UK, research in Europe on racist and discriminatory practices has only begun to appear in the past couple of decades. What is especially relevant about the recent wave of research is that it seeks to capture the biases and prejudices of those making decisions about recruitment and selection. That is, it is about the covert racism of recruiting supervisors and managers rather than the overt racism of the (white) working class.

Perhaps the most striking findings are based on the re-discovery of an ingenious quasi-experimental form of research in which the fictitious applications of two or more equally qualified job applicants are sent to employers with existing vacancies. In order to capture discrimination, the applications vary only by 'race' or ethnicity as revealed by a marker such as the applicant's surname or an accompanying photograph. Probably the most extraordinary paper to emerge from this wave of quasi-experimental field studies is one that presents a formal meta-analysis of 97 field experiments of discrimination incorporating more than 200,000 job applications in nine countries across Europe and North America (Quillian et al. 2019). Before outlining the main findings it is important to note that most of these countries had introduced anti-racist legislation of various kinds with some even strengthening anti-discrimination measures over time. Even so, the findings are stark: significant discrimination exists against non-white applicants in all nine countries though it varies somewhat by country. In high-discrimination countries, the local born white applicants received nearly twice as many positive responses ('call-backs') as the non-whites. By contrast, the white natives received only about twenty five percent more in the low-discrimination countries. France had the highest levels of discrimination followed by Sweden with smaller differences among Great Britain, Canada, Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway, the United States, and Germany.

What is especially interesting given the emphasis in Marxist analysis on racial capitalism and its basis in a history of colonisation is the conclusion that 'national histories of slavery and colonialism are neither necessary nor sufficient conditions for a country to have relatively high levels of labor market discrimination' (p. 488). Sweden, for instance, had similar levels of hiring discrimination as countries with extensive colonial pasts even though it had only a very brief history of colonialism outside Europe. This is certainly a conspicuous finding as it is frequently assumed that contemporary racial prejudices have their historical basis in the ideologies developed in the 18th and 19th century, especially in the justifications for the origins and maintenance of colonialism and the international slave trade (Robinson 1983). Another unexpected finding was that lower rates of discrimination were reported for minorities in the United States than for many of the European cases which, it must be emphasized, have no recent history of slavery. To put it bluntly, the relationship between histories of slavery and colonialism and discrimination are much more complex than previously claimed. Once again immigration unsettles existing understandings and the challenge is to explain why a country like Sweden which has had long history of progressive left wing governments should have

comparatively high rates of discrimination (Mulinari and Neergaard 2017, provide a useful starting point on this question).

Beyond discrimination: bad jobs, social networks and labour market queues

The obvious starting premise for much of the research on discrimination is that employer prejudices towards people of colour, in particular, makes it more difficult for them to obtain whichever job is advertised. However, processes of racism (and sexism) can also take another form that leads to people from minority backgrounds being highly concentrated in specific occupations and workplaces. To give an example from the city in which I live, it is often observed that many of London's traffic wardens are from west Africa, particularly from Ghana and Nigeria (Gimson 2003). In Paris, the street sweepers are from Africa more often than not (Barou 2022). Other examples of immigrant niches can be found in the caring, cleaning and construction industries (Wilson 2003; Datta et al. 2009).

How does this occur? Obviously, the kind of discrimination that is captured by the social audit studies is of little help here. One reason is that those studies simply did not examine entry into routine and semi-skilled jobs. Of the ten occupations used by Quillian and colleagues none included routine and semi-skilled workers. Even the four manual occupations that they list as requiring low levels of education (cook, carpenter, plumber and electrician) all require substantial amounts of vocational training [move (Lancee et al. 2019)].[5] In the UK, for example, such apprenticeships last for three to four years. None could be described as being on the lowest rungs of the job hierarchy and they are certainly not among the lowest paid (Oesch 2013, : 40 - 47).

Within the literature on race and ethnicity, particularly that influenced by Marxism, racism is sometimes conceptualised as a two-fold process of exclusion and exploitation, if not also one of domination or subjugation (Mulinari and Neergaard 2017, : 92-3). Certainly, it would be accepted that there are processes of exclusion, of the kind revealed in social audit studies, but these arise from labour market competition as it is this material reality that fuels racist beliefs and behaviour in a way that takes them beyond the prejudices of individual managers. Though some racialised outsiders may be able to enter intermediate ranking occupations, they will be unable to do so in substantial numbers and so migrant workers are funnelled disproportionately towards low-wage, low status jobs. Thus, in exploitative racism, 'the focus is on the construction of (cheap) labour through racialisation' (Mulinari and Neergaard 2017, : 93).

From a Marxist perspective, proletarianisation and exploitation are universal capitalist processes but it is the sourcing of labour from overseas, following capitalist imperialism, that has introduced racist and racialist forms of exclusion into western economies (Miles 1993, : 30-38)

The argument is certainly plausible. But one of the limitations with the Marxist approach is that the theory is presumed to capture capitalism generally and so can be read into the incorporation of migrant workers into the economies of Britain, Germany or the United States. Applicability is generally assumed to be unproblematic.[6] Instead of using specific countries or labour markets to improve the general theory, the theoretical claims may, at best, encounter some contradictory elements but these are never significant enough to undermine the overall approach (e.g., Miles 1986, : 62-6).

Leaving aside the not considerable issues of varieties of capitalism, differences in immigration politics and the composition of immigration flows, there is still the question of how discrimination varies across the labour market and how it contributes to the mechanisms that lead migrants and ethnic minorities into specific occupations and industries. To put it at its simplest: do the racial prejudices of employers become less important as you move down into the lower rungs of the labour market?

A useful way of thinking about this question is through the queueing theory of labour markets. Originally developed by American political economist Lester Thurow (1975) as 'job competition' theory, it was subsequently adopted by sociologists to help theorise occupational segregation on the basis of gender (Reskin 1991). Where workers and employers compete on the basis of wages under the neo-classical economic model they compete for places in two distinct queues according to this perspective. Workers compete for places in *labour queues* – the ranking of workers by employers – while employers compete for workers in *job queues* - the ranking of jobs by workers. As there is limited competition over wages, the employer has to rely on other 'rules of thumb' that invariably include assumptions and stereotypes relating to the applicants' personal and social characteristics. When it comes to the job queue, these may be ranked on the basis of judgements about the nature of the work, the workplace conditions and the kind of people who do the work. The matching process means that the highest placed person in the labour queue will get the best job in the job queue while the most lowly workers end up either jobless or in jobs others have rejected.

What does the queuing approach add to the neo-classical wage led model? For sure, it puts more weight on the non-economic factors, such as the 'rules of thumb' and the stereotypes as well as the political efforts of some (white) groups to preserve their labour market privileges. In addition, this perspective recognises that the absolute and relative size of the respective queues influences who gets which job (Reskin 1991, : 174- 186). In an expanding economy, for instance, the absolute size of the queues will shrink as local born workers move upwards and so open slots further down for outsiders. Furthermore, both the position on the job hierarchy and the intensity of the competition will have an impact on the level of discrimination. If, for instance, there are labour shortages towards the bottom then managers' decision will be less influenced by personal prejudices.

Extensive use has been made of queueing theory to account for the concentration of immigrants in low wage employment in the US, notably by Roger Waldinger (see also Waldinger 1996, : 137-173; Waldinger and Lichter 2003, : 8-11;). Three aspects of his elaboration on this approach are worth noting as they counter the common assumption that we can understand ethnic and racial inequality solely through discrimination. First, the 'bad jobs' at the bottom of the job queue are not simply bad because they pay low wages. For sociologists, work is more than a collection of tasks as it is intimately bound up with the kind of people who do it. Some forms of work are, for instance, labelled as 'women's work', typical 'student summer jobs' or even 'gay jobs' (Tilcsik et al. 2015). Accordingly, Waldinger observes that 'dead-end' jobs are not only poorly paid but also inherently stigmatizing. They are, of course, stigmatizing because the work has unpleasant elements such as dealing with irate motorists or washing pungent smells off street surfaces. But in a race conscious society they are also stigmatized because they involve working with racialised minorities and outsiders.

Second, Waldinger and Lichter acknowledge that in race conscious societies entire ethnic groups can be ranked according to 'socially meaningful but arbitrary traits' (2003, : 8). In other words, the suitability of the potential workers may be determined *categorically* where they are relatively equal on experience, education and training (i.e. human capital). Towards the bottom half of the labour market, however, managers are quite willing to select people who are not like themselves, especially if they are having trouble filling vacancies. Unlike jobs in the professional ranks, the recruiting managers know that they are not hiring potential friends. This observation is worth dwelling upon. What Waldinger contends here is that managers are willing to hire people with whom they have little in common. They do not, for instance, expect to

socialise with them after work. Accordingly, the preconceptions of managers may matter less when the work itself is worth less (2003, : 16-7).

Finally, the preferences of managers may be circumscribed by the impact of social networks on recruitment. Dead-end jobs have one feature that is to the benefit of newly arrived migrants which is that they have very high levels of turnover or 'churn'. With regular openings, migrant workers may find themselves in a position to help friends and acquaintances. If existing employees have inside information about a person leaving and use it to tip off a friend then there is a good chance that the friend is like themselves in terms of ethnicity or nationality. This mechanism is reinforced when employers adopt a 'birds of a feather' principle – they hire those that resemble existing workers on the basis that they know roughly how they will perform. In the words of one restaurant manager: 'If you have workers who are reliable, their friends are probably similar, same skills and metabolism' (p. 105). As the information on existing employees makes them a known quantity it means that the managers can hire what they believe to be good applicants quickly and at little cost. With high levels of 'churn', a workplace can quickly come to have substantial numbers of employees from the same ethnic or racial group (Waldinger and Lichter 2003, : 103 - 5).

In sum, labour migrants can come to congregate in very specific kinds of employment for reasons that are much more complicated than the biases and preconceptions of individual managers or supervisors. Instead, they may be the product of forces inside and outside the workplace as the prejudices of would-be employees, the demands of customers and the power of word-of-mouth referrals come together to influence who ultimately gets the job.

Conclusions

Though much of the research in immigration is of an applied nature it need not be so because immigration unsettles existing understandings about labour markets, discrimination and processes of racialisation. To their credit, Marxist scholars have a long tradition of analysing racism and migration even if within the narrow prism of class relations and organisation. Even if the relationship between processes of racialization and material conditions take on a deterministic quality it must be acknowledged that labour market competition seems a necessary condition for the racialisation of new migrant groups, such as Polish workers.

Yet the progression from objective conditions to subjective beliefs and discriminatory behaviour remains unclear and deserves much more attention. Economic competition is certainly an important variable in attitudes to immigration (e.g., Kunovich 2017) and while attitudes have a complicated relationship with behaviour a sense of hostility towards immigrants may spill over into racism for some. That step requires a degree of legitimate and it is here that the literature on new social movements and far right violence may offer some valuable theoretical leads in the form of grievance and opportunity models (e.g., Koopmans 1996; Dancygier 2010). A central issue here is the emergence of political figures who both stimulate and seize upon anti-immigrant sentiment to increase the salience of immigration as an issue in national politics.

As I noted earlier, huge progress has been made through quasi-experimental social audit studies in understanding the prevalence of discrimination on entry to employment. Some of this challenges existing understandings about legacies of colonialism while informing us that the discrimination faced by the new 'white' east European migrants is nowhere as marked as for people of colour. What still needs to be examined is the very real possibility that discrimination can operates as a source of exclusion in some sections of the labour market but is perhaps less important in others. The existing social audit studies, which are biased towards mid-level occupations, may add to our understanding of why it is difficult to enter the middle and upper echelons but they may be much less important in lower status occupations even when the lack of formality in recruitment procedures among small and medium sized businesses should provide more space for personal preconceptions and biases to influence recruitment.

Though I have set out what can be learned from applying Waldinger's application of queueing theory on this problem more research is needed to see how it fits into the European context where there a differences in the composition of immigration flows and where societies may be more or less racially conscious depending on whether or not they have a history of colonization or, indeed, a tradition of anti-racist education. It may be that theory works better in post-colonial settings and so might help explain why traffic wardens in London and street sweepers in Paris originate in West Africa. But it is probably also likely that in the European context religion and prejudices against Muslims, in particular, has to be included in the analysis (Heath and Martin 2013; Heath and Di Stasio 2019).

Finally, the underlying argument of this chapter is that grand theory no longer offers a fruitful way forward in understanding the relationship between immigration and employment.

One of the main reasons is that of variations across the world of work depending on the nature of the work and its perceived status, especially if stigmatized. Tackling the kind of 'middle range' (Merton 1968) puzzles that I have raised should enable us to theorise more creatively, especially about labour market processes, and perhaps raise other anomalies and puzzles that will help us advance on the descriptive orientation of this applied field.

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[1] Respondents to a nationally representative survey in Britain scored these jobs lower than a notional average job when it came to perceptions of their desirability (McGovern et al. 2007, : 252 - 254).

[2] Yet, as the COVID pandemic has highlighted, this category can also include 'essential workers' such as hospital cleaners.

[3] I am aware that there is a growing literature on racial capitalism and racial formations/regimes that has taken some of its inspiration from Marxist analyses of racism (e.g., Robinson 1983; Go 2021; Mulinari and Neergaard 2017). I have not included it because I believe that the macro or global level of analysis has little to offer to kind of meso and micro-sociological questions addressed in this chapter.

[4] Here I distinguish between Marxism as a theoretical perspective in the social sciences and Marxism as a political force. Unlike the former, the latter may be showing signs of revival (Jeffries 2012).

[5] Similarly, only two of the thirteen studies examined by Heath and Di Stasio [ref] included applications for semi-skilled jobs with the rest being for non-manual white-collar jobs.

[6] There are also numerous problems with the classical Marxist surplus-value conception of exploitation (see, for instance, Murphy 1985).