Keynote Speaker

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Abstract

Beyond the Ethnic Lens: Irish Migration to Britain in Comparative Context
This paper engages with Nina Glick Schiller’s recent calls for migration studies to move beyond the ‘ethnic lens’ (2008). Research on migration is often weakened by the marked tendency to use a single ethnic/national group as the unit of analysis. Analysing migration from the experiences of a particular ethnic group, may exaggerate ethnic exceptionalism and understate the extent to which experiences are shared across different migrant groups.

This paper considers some of the benefits and challenges of going beyond the ethnic lens. What would be gained but also lost by viewing Irish migration to Britain through a more comparative perspective? I explore how such comparative analysis might contribute firstly, to a wider understanding of migration processes, experiences and inter-migrant relations, and secondly, to a fuller appreciation of varied dimensions of migratory experiences in Britain.

Biography
Dr Louise Ryan is Reader in Migration and Gender at Middlesex University where she is also co-director of the Social Policy Research Centre and programme leader for the MSc in research methods. A sociologist, she has research interests in gender, migration, ethnicity, and religion and identity, and has published widely on the Irish, Muslim, Polish communities. Her most recent book is an edited collection with Wendy Webster titled Gendering Migration: Masculinity, Femininity and Ethnicity in Post-War Migration to Britain (Ashgate, 2008).