Family History and Globalization of the Bruce and Mays Family Lines

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The main purpose is to relate the history of the Mays and Bruce family lines to globalization. “Globalization is the worldwide intensification of interactions and increased movement of money, people, goods, and ideas within and across national borders”, (Guest. 2017:17). My family relates to globalization through time-space compression and uneven development. Time-space compression is the rapid innovation of communication and transportation technologies that changes the way people think about space and distance. Uneven development is the unequal distribution of benefits of globalization (Guest. 2017:17-20). This effected the Bruce and Mays differently during the Industrial Revolution and the increased urbanization. The US started out as a means for Europe, mostly Britain, to acquire raw materials, such as cotton, tobacco, and other resources, but soon the US started to build railroads and factories that were inspired by European culture. These resources that were imported to other countries in Europe helped them develop and start the industrialization (Taniguchi. 2004:3-19). The spread of technology from other countries is what pushed industrialization and urbanization in America (Guest. 2017: 454-455). My family fits into the classical example that families become more nuclear over time and is opposite to Laslett’s “Null Hypothesis”. The “Null Hypothesis” is the idea that households were similar in size in the previous century. This idea changed in the 1960s when Laslett found a village from the 17th century with nuclear families. The Hajnal’s Western family type also strengthened this because it stated that many people would wait until they are financially stable, so many married later in life or remained single (Puschmann, and Solli. 2014: 1-12).

The evidence that has been compiled is from interviews from my family, historical data on my family from ancestry and family search, and scholarly research about how families have changed over the centuries. My family was affected by time-space compression on the Bruce side, which worked for the Norfolk and Western Railroad since in 1896. This changed the way raw materials and goods were transported. People no longer had to rely stage coaches, horses, ships, and other means of less effective travel and allowed the movement of money, people, goods, and ideas around the United States faster. With new transport systems my family thought about the world in a different way, especially those who worked for the railroad knew that people and goods could travel up to 60mph, whereas the average horse and buggy would go 15mph. The Bruce side was affected by uneven development when the Norfolk and Western railroad came to Bluefield, West Virginia. Harvey Bruce, my great-great-great-grandfather, started work there as a laborer. The small town turned into a booming city in the years following the addition of the railroad created jobs and helped the economy, but the rural areas were not thriving (Lambie. 1954: 128-130). Elizabeth Webb, who was the wife of Leonard W. Bruce, lived on a plantation in Virginia. The farm was condensed into a smaller family garden and the family either moved to find work, got married, or stayed in the small farm house (Bruce, Terry, interviewed by Abbey Mays, February 20, 2019). The industrialization period hurt the farmers and rural workers and forced them to move into the cities in order to get work, which is what happened to my family. The Mays’ side was in Virginia and worked in the coal mines and the Union Pacific railroad. John Wesley was a blacksmith for a coal company in Bedford County, Virginia and his son worked at the same company as a laborer at only fourteen (Mays, Suzanne, interviewed by Abbey Mays, February 20, 2019). The hard work that the workers put in were usually not compensated fairly and the money went straight to the owners rather than trying to make the conditions safer for the workers. This caused uneven development in the coalmining towns, causing the workers to live in small and broken-down housing, while the owners had nice houses just down the street.

My family become more nuclear over time has stuck to the traditional nuclear family since the 1800s. The number of children in the family started out at around six in the 1700-1800s, but only a few of the children survived childhood. They had a lot of children because many of my ancestors needed extra hands around the house and the farm. This supports the First Demographic Transitions theory, which refers to the decline of infant mortality and fertility rates. This theory predicted that after the 1700s the demographic history would be able to replace all the current residents and there was no need for sustained immigration (Lesthaeghe 2014: 18112–15). This would much later lead to the Second Demographic Transition theory, which argued that after the 1970s sustained sub-replacement fertility would take place. This theory was met with cultural concerns, such as aging, integration of immigrants, adaptation to cultures, high levels of poverty, less stability, and complex households (Lesthaeghe 2014: 18112–15). After the 1800s the family lines settled into the traditional nuclear family and only broke this tradition a few times. These times were in rough economic patches in the depression when Eleanor Bowling rented out rooms to tenants and when Lacy F. Mays cohabitated with Grace E. Rolen after she was widowed at a young age with two children. Both cases were harsh, and it is understandable why they broke from tradition. After these events the traditional family, with the parents and the children, continued. Than in the 1900s it went down to only four to five children. This continued until my grandparents were born and then decreased to two children. Lastly in 1999, it decreased to one child, me. This trend of a slow decrease of offspring makes sense because of later-marriages, waiting to be financially stable, and the children are no longer needed to be workers on the family farm. This is also consistent with Le Play’s original theory. Le Play studied and divided the family configurations into three different types of families, such as the patriarchal, stem, and unstable family. The stem family, when the head of the house picks the successor and the rest of the offspring will move out as they get married, is the most prominent in my family line (Puschmann, and Solli. 2014: 1-12).

My family history relates heavily to globalization because of the ties to the railroading companies that we still have today. My family was heavily involved in the Industrial Revolution, but instead of moving to a big city the industrialization came to them in 1884 when Thomas Graham came to survey the land for the Norfolk and Western Railway (Lambie. 1954: 128-130). Shortly after this he bought a tract of land and began construction. This was one of my great-great-great-grandfathers, Harvey Bruce, first jobs. He worked as a laborer laying down the tracks in order to make a living for his family. Later when the railroad expanded and started to move west, he was given a permanent position in West Virginia so he could raise his family. Later, his son Leonard W. Bruce became an engineer for the railroad and his brother George Bruce became a conductor for the same company (Leonard W. Bruce in the 1930s US Federal Census). In my family today I have three members who work for Norfolk & Southern Railroads, my grandfather, Terry Bruce, my great uncle, Tim Bruce, and my cousin Nick Bruce, but almost every single male on the Bruce side has worked for the railroad since it started.

My family’s history has been affected heavily by globalization, especially time-space compression and uneven development. In addition, has been deeply affected, good and bad, by the Industrial Revolution. The Bruce side was able to make this new world that was rapidly growing work for them, while the Mays side had to face more struggles through unequal pay for work. America changed and was able to globalize their markets because of the Industrial Revolution and without it, people would still only be focused on their small section of the US rather than the world as a potential market.

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