

**CONCEPTUALIZING SIMULTANEITY:  
A TRANSNATIONAL SOCIAL FIELD PERSPECTIVE ON SOCIETY<sup>1</sup>**

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**ABSTRACT:**

In this paper, we explore the social theory and consequent methodology that underpins studies of transnational migration. First, we propose a social field approach to the study of migration, and distinguish between *ways of being* and *ways of belonging* in that field. Second, we argue that assimilation and enduring transnational ties are neither incompatible nor binary opposites. Third, we highlight social processes and institutions that are routinely obscured by traditional migration scholarship but that become clear when we use a transnational lens. Finally, we locate our approach to migration research within a larger intellectual project, that has been taken up by scholars of transnational processes in many fields, to rethink and reformulate the concept of society such that it is no longer automatically equated with the boundaries of a single nation-state.

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<sup>1</sup> This is a co-authored paper, jointly conceived and written by both contributors.

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Social scientists have long been interested in how immigrants are incorporated into new countries. In Germany and France, scholars' expectations that foreigners will assimilate is a central piece of public policy. In the United States, immigration scholars initially argued that to move up the socioeconomic ladder, immigrants would have to abandon their unique customs, language, values, and homeland ties and identities. Even when "remaining ethnic" became more acceptable, most researchers assumed that the importance of homeland ties would eventually fade. To be Italian-American or Irish-American would ultimately reflect ethnic pride within a multicultural United States rather than enduring relations to an ancestral land.

Now scholars increasingly recognize that some migrants and their descendants remain strongly influenced by their continuing ties to their home country or by social networks that stretch across national borders. They see migrants' cross border ties as a variable and argue that to understand contemporary migration, the strength, influence, and impact of these ties must be empirically assessed. They call for a transnational perspective on migration (Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc, 1994). The resulting analyses, in combination with other scholarship on transnational dynamics, are building toward a new paradigm that rejects the long-held notion that society and the nation-state are one and the same.

This article is not intended as a comprehensive review of the transnational migration scholarship. In fact, a special volume of this journal, published in Fall 2003, does just that. Instead, in this paper, we explore the social theory and the consequent methodology that underpins studies of transnational migration. We argue that central to the project of transnational migration studies, and to scholarship on other transnational phenomena is a reformulation of the concept of society. The lives of increasing numbers of individuals can no longer be understood by looking only at what goes on within national boundaries. Our analytical lens must necessarily broaden and deepen because migrants are often embedded in multi-layered, multi-sited transnational social fields, encompassing those who move and those who stay behind. As a result, basic assumptions about social institutions such as the family, citizenship, and nation-states need to be revisited.

Once we rethink the boundaries of social life, it becomes clear that the incorporation of individuals into nation-states and the maintenance of transnational connections are not contradictory social processes. Simultaneity, or living lives that incorporate daily activities, routines, and institutions located both in a destination country and transnationally is a possibility that needs to be theorized and explored. Migrant incorporation into a new land and transnational connections to a homeland or to dispersed networks of family, compatriots, or persons who share a religious or ethnic identity can occur at the same time and reinforce one another.

Our goals in this paper are fourfold. First, we propose a social field approach to the study of migration, and distinguish between *ways of being* and *ways of belonging* in that field. Second, we argue that assimilation and enduring transnational ties are neither incompatible nor binary opposites. Instead, we suggest thinking of the transnational migration experience as a kind of gauge, which while anchored, pivots between a host-land and transnational connections. Third, we highlight social processes and institutions that are routinely obscured by traditional migration scholarship but that become clear when

we use a transnational lens. Finally, we locate our approach to migration research within a larger intellectual project, undertaken by scholars of transnational processes in a variety of fields, to reformulate the concept of society such that it is no longer automatically equated with or confined by the boundaries of a single nation-state.

## **FOUNDATIONAL APPROACHES TO THIS FIELD**

There have already been several waves of transnational migration scholarship that have fine-tuned concepts and analyzed transnational relations in a much more nuanced manner than earlier formulations. Researchers have explored transnational identity formation, and the economic, political, religious, and socio-cultural practices that propel migrant incorporation and transnational connection at the same time.<sup>2</sup> They have proposed typologies to capture variations in the dimensions of transnational migration. The extent to which transnational migration is a new phenomenon or whether it shares similarities with its earlier incarnations has been subject of much debate.<sup>3</sup> Several studies examine the scope of transnational practices among particular immigrant populations.<sup>4</sup> Finally, an emerging body of research tries to explain variations in transnational practices across groups.<sup>5</sup>

To develop our theory and methodology further and to address the implications of simultaneous incorporation, we begin with a brief synthesis of the scholarship on transnational migration to date upon

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc, 1994; Smith and Guarnizo, 1998; Grasmuck and Pessar, 1991; Laguerre, 1998; Itzigsohn et al, 1999; Smith, 2003; Levitt, 2001a; 2001b; Glick Schiller and Fouron, 2001a; 2001b; Ebaugh and Chafetz, 2002; Kyle, 2001; Ostergaard-Nielsen, 2003; **Fitzgerald, 2003**; Landolt, 2001; Goldring, 2002; Vertovec, 2003; Gold, 2002; Koopmans and Statham, 2001; Riccio, 2001; Van der Veer, 2001; Abelman, 2002; Morgan, 1999; Faist, 2000a,b; Schiffauer, 1999; Sklair, 1998; Itzigsohn, 2000; Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt, 1999; Kivisto, 2001; Mahler, 1998; Duany, 2000, Morawska, 2003b, Eckstein and Barberia, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> See Foner, 2000; Glick Schiller, 1999; Smith, 2002; Morawska, 2003b; Weber, 1999.

<sup>4</sup> See Portes, Haller and Guarnizo, 2002; Guarnizo, Portes and Haller, 2003; Itzigsohn and Saucedo, 2002.

which a new theoretical synthesis can be built. We see four distinct “traditions” developing among scholars of transnational migration: the research done by sociologists and anthropologists in the United States, studies done by the Transnational Community Programme based at Oxford University, a literature on transnational families, and an effort to reformulate notions of space and social structure. Underlying these developments is a fundamental problem of social theory -- how to rethink society if we do not take national boundaries for granted.

Transnational migration scholarship in the United States has been shaped by its critique of the unilinear assimilationist paradigm of classical migration research (Glick Schiller, 1999; Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc, 1994; Glick Schiller, Basch, Szanton Blanc, 1995). Some studies have focused on the kinds of networks that stretch between a sending community and its migrants (Grasmuck and Pessar, 1991; Levitt, 2001a; Rouse, 1992; Smith, 1998, Kyle 2001). Others have sought to determine the conditions under which migrants maintained homeland ties and identities and how commonplace transnational practices were among the migrant population as a whole (Morawska, 2003b, Levitt, 2003b, Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc, 1994). These studies revealed that a small but none-the-less significant number of migrants engage in regular economic and political transnational practices (Portes, Haller, and Guarnizo, 2002; Guarnizo, Portes, and Haller, 2003) and that many more individuals engage in occasional transnational activities. Some studies explore the relationship between migration and development, categorizing transnational migration as a product of late capitalism which renders small, non-industrialized countries incapable of economic autonomy and makes them dependent on migrant-generated remittances (Itzigsohn, 2000; Portes, 2003. M.P. Smith and Guarnizo, 1998). The ways in which sending and receiving states continue to play a critical role in migrants’ lives has also received a good deal of attention (Smith, 1998; Goldring, 2002; Levitt and de la Dehesa, 2003). More recent research on the second generation is in many ways a continuation of the debate on assimilation, with

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<sup>5</sup> Levitt, 2002b; Itzigsohn and Saucedo, 2002; Portes, Haller and Guarnizo, 2002; Guarnizo, Portes and Haller, 2003.

proponents of the classic approach arguing that transnational migration is an ephemeral first-generation phenomenon. Meanwhile, some “transnationalists” speak of new forms of transnational connection or replace the term second generation with transnational generation to encompass youth in the homeland and the new land.<sup>6</sup>

While many U.S. researchers have focused on homeland/newland connections, the Oxford Transnational Communities Programme used a much broader definition of transnational ties.<sup>7</sup> In this project, transnational connections forged by businesses, the media, politics, or religion were all examined under the rubric of community. This work demonstrated that migrants are embedded in networks stretching across multiple states and that migrants’ identities and cultural production reflect their multiple locations. Among the important findings of the Transnational Communities project was the need to distinguish between patterns of connection on the ground and the conditions that produce ideologies of connection and community (Gomez and Benton, 2002; Ostergaard-Neilson, 2003).

Some of the U.S. and Oxford studies (Ballard, 2000) urge a reconceptualization of transnational kinship although research in this area has developed a trajectory of its own (Chamberlin, 2002; Bryceson and Vuorela, 2002). Studies of transnational kinship document the ways in which family networks constituted across borders are marked by gendered differences in power and status. Kin networks can be used exploitatively, a process of transnational class differentiation in which the more prosperous extract labor from persons defined as kin. Kin networks maintained between people who send remittances and those who live on them can be fraught with tension.

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<sup>6</sup> Levitt and Waters, 2002; Glick Schiller and Fouron, 2002

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Koopmans and Statham, 2001; Riccio, 2001; Van der Veer, 2001; Abelman, 2002; Morgan, 1999; Faist, 2000a; Schiffauer, 1999; Sklair, 1998; Castles, 1998.

A fourth group of scholars use a transnational approach to migration to challenge social theory. Morawska (2001a, 2003a) proposes a conceptualization of migration as “structuration” to posit the continuing dynamic between structure and agency that extends into a transnational domain. Faist (2000a, b), reasoning along similar lines, strives to conceptualize a domain of cross-border social relations he refers to as “transnational social spaces.” He privileges social relations and institutions, defining these spaces as “characterized by a high density of interstitial ties on informal or formal, that is to say institutional levels” (Faist, 2000b:89). Guarnizo (1997) and Landolt (2001) refer to a “transnational social formation.”

Much of this work, however, views the social formations engendered by transnational migration as unique. Instead, we propose that they are one indication, among many, that the nation-state container view of society does not capture, adequately or automatically, the complex interconnectedness of contemporary reality. To do so, requires adopting a transnational social field approach to the study of social life that distinguishes between the existence of transnational social networks and the consciousness of being embedded in them. Such a distinction is also critical to understanding the experience of living simultaneously within and beyond the boundaries of a nation-state and to developing methodologies for empirically studying such experiences.

## **BUILDING TO A TRANSNATIONAL SOCIAL FIELD THEORY OF SOCIETY**

To further develop transnational migration studies, we revisit the concept of society as it has been generally deployed and put aside the methodological nationalism that has distorted many basic social science concepts (Martins, 1974; Smith, 1983). Methodological nationalism is the tendency to accept the nation-state and its boundaries as a given in social analysis. Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2003) identified three variants of methodological nationalism: (1) *Ignoring* or disregarding the fundamental importance of nationalism for modern societies. This tendency often goes hand and hand with (2) *naturalization* or

taking for granted that the boundaries of the nation-state delimit and define the unit of analysis. Finally, (3) *territorial limitation* confines the study of social processes to the political and geographic boundaries of a particular nation-state. According to Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2003:578), “The three variants may intersect and mutually reinforce each other, forming a coherent epistemic structure, a self-reinforcing way of looking at and describing the social world.”

Because much of social science theory equates society with the boundaries of a particular nation-state, researchers often take rootedness and incorporation in the nation-state as the norm and social identities and practices enacted across state boundaries as out of the ordinary. But if we remove the blinders of methodological nationalism, we see that while nation-states *are still extremely important*, social life is not confined by nation-state boundaries. Social and religious movements, criminal and professional networks, and governance regimes as well as flows of capital also operate across borders.

Recent developments in social theory have also challenged the nation-state container theory of society and provide insights into the nature of transnational flows that we build upon. Sassen, for example, reconfigured our understanding of the geography of cities by highlighting that some locations become “global cities” (Sassen, 1992). Discussing flexible capital accumulation, Harvey explored the “time-space compressions that so revolutionize the objective qualities of space and time that we are forced to alter, sometimes in quite radical ways, how we represent the world to ourselves.” (1989:240). Other scholars have highlighted the interconnectedness of societies through flows of media, capital, and people (Held *et al*, 1999). However, much of this work, according to Ulrich Beck (2000), continues to envision states as the primary unit and treats globalization as a process of interconnection between states. Such theories, Beck argues, continue “the container theory of society” on which most of the sociology of the first age of modernity is based. He calls for a new paradigm that changes “not only the relations

between and beyond national states and societies, but also the inner quality of the social and political itself which is indicated by reflexive cosmopolitization” (Beck, 2000:1).

Along with Beck, Faist (2000a), Urry (2000) and a growing number of other social theorists, we seek ways to move beyond “the container theory of society.” Many of these scholars, however, tend to underplay the concept of the social as they reconfigure the concept of society. Beck’s formulation of “reflexive cosmopolitization” and much of the related literature on cosmopolitanism, for example, largely abandons an exploration of social relations and social context. In Beck’s (2000) cosmopolitanism, as in Luhmann’s world society, communication technologies become key. Global media flows and consumerism lead to a new form of consciousness. Social relations and social positioning fall out of the analysis; the individual and the global intersect. Without a concept of the social, the relations of power and privilege exercised by social actors based within structures and organizations cannot be studied or analyzed. In addition, by trying to move beyond methodological nationalism, much of this theory building neglects the continuing power of the nation-state. Transnational migration studies, with their concrete tracing of the movement and connection of people, provide a useful corrective to these oversights, by highlighting the concept of social field.

We propose a view of society and social membership based on a concept of *social field* that distinguishes between *ways of being* and *ways of belonging*. The notion of social field exists in social science literature in several different forms. We draw here on those proposed by Bourdieu and by the Manchester school of anthropology. Bourdieu used the concept of social field to call attention to the ways in which social relationships are structured by power. The boundaries of a field are fluid and the field itself is created by the participants who are joined in struggle for social position. Society for Bourdieu is the intersection of various fields within a structure of politics (Jenkins, 1992:86). According to Bourdieu, either individuals or institutions may occupy the networks that make up the field and link social positions.

While his approach does not preclude the notion of transnational social fields, he does not directly discuss the implications of social fields that are not coterminous with state boundaries.

The Manchester School also informs our framework because these scholars recognized that the migrants they studied belonged to tribal-rural localities and colonial-industrial cities at the same time. Migrant networks stretching between these two sites were viewed as constituting a single social field created by a network of networks. By understanding society in this way, these researchers focused on a level of social analysis beyond the study of the individual.

Despite its importance, the term “social field” within transnational migration research has not been well defined. Building on Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc (1994), we define social field as a set of multiple interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices, and resources are unequally exchanged, organized, and transformed.<sup>8</sup> Social fields are multi-dimensional, encompassing structured interactions of differing forms, depth, and breadth that are differentiated in social theory by the terms organization, institution, and social movement. National boundaries are not necessarily contiguous with the boundaries of social fields. National social fields are those that stay within national boundaries while transnational social fields connect actors, through direct and indirect relations across borders. Neither domain is privileged in our analysis. Ascertaining the relative importance of nationally restricted and transnational social fields should be a question of empirical analysis.

The concept of social fields is a powerful tool for conceptualizing the potential array of social relations linking those who move and those who stay behind. It takes us beyond the direct experience of migration into domains of interaction where individuals who do not move themselves maintain social relations across borders through various forms of communication. Individuals who have such direct connections with migrants may connect with others who do not. We should not assume that those with stronger social ties will be more transnationally active than those with weaker connections nor that the

actions and identities of those with more indirect ties are less influenced by the dynamics within the field than those with direct transnational ties. In any given study, the researcher must operationalize the parameters of the field they are studying, and the scope of the networks embedded within it, and then empirically analyze the strength and impact of direct and indirect transnational relations.

For example, there may be one central individual, who maintains high levels of homeland contact and is the node through which information, resources, and identities flow. While other individuals may not identify with or take action based on those ties, the fact that they are part of the same transnational social field keeps them informed and connected so that they can act if events motivate them to do so. Recognizing that this individual is embedded in a transnational social field may be a better predictor of future transnational behavior than if we simply locate him or her solely within a nationally delimited set of relationships.

The concept of social field also calls into question neat divisions of connection into local, national, transnational, and global. In one sense, all are local in that near and distant connections penetrate the daily lives of individuals lived within a locale. But within this locale, a person may participate in personal networks, or receive ideas and information that connect them to others in a nation-state, across the borders of a nation-state, or globally, without ever having migrated. By conceptualizing transnational social fields as transcending the boundaries of nation-states, we also note that individuals within these fields are, through their everyday activities and relationships, influenced by multiple sets of laws and institutions. Their daily rhythms and activities respond not only to more than one state simultaneously but also to social institutions, such as religious groups, that exist within many states and across their borders.

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<sup>8</sup> See also Glick Schiller and Fouron, 1999; Glick Schiller, 1999; 2003.

A social field perspective also reveals that there is a difference between *ways of being* in social fields as opposed to *ways of belonging* (Glick Schiller, 2003; 2004).<sup>9</sup> *Ways of being* refers to the actual social relations and practices that individuals engage in rather than to the identities associated with their actions. Social fields contain institutions, organizations, and experiences, within their various levels, that generate categories of identity that are ascribed to or chosen by individuals or groups. Individuals can be embedded in a social field but not identify with any label or cultural politics associated with that field. They have the potential to act or identify at a particular time because they live within the social field but not all choose to do so.

In contrast, *ways of belonging* refers to practices that signal or enact an identity which demonstrates a conscious connection to a particular group. These actions are not symbolic but concrete, visible actions that mark belonging such as wearing a Christian cross or Jewish star, flying a flag, or choosing a particular cuisine. Ways of belonging combine action and an awareness of the kind of identity that action signifies.

Individuals within transnational social fields combine ways of being and ways of belonging differently in specific contexts. One person might have many social contacts with people in their country of origin but not identify at all as belonging to their homeland. They are engaged in transnational ways of being but not belonging. Similarly, a person may eat certain foods or worship certain saints or deities, because that is what their family has always done. By doing so, they are not signaling any conscious identification with a particular ethnicity or with their ancestral homes. Here again, they are not expressing a transnational way of belonging.

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<sup>9</sup> Some analysts such as Thomas Faist (2000a), contrast “social ties” with “symbolic ties.” By emphasizing ways of being, rather than social ties, we develop a concept that decouples social relationships from a notion of common interest or norms.

On the other hand, there are people with few or no actual social relations with people in the sending country or transnationally but who behave in such a way as to assert their identification with a particular group. Because these individuals have some sort of connection to a way of belonging, through memory, nostalgia or imagination, they can enter the social field when and if they choose to do so. In fact, we would hypothesize that someone who had access to a transnational way of belonging would be likely to act on it at some point in his or her life.

If individuals engage in social relations and practices that cross borders as a regular feature of everyday life, then they exhibit a transnational way of being. When people explicitly recognize this and highlight the transnational elements of who they are, then they are also expressing a transnational way of belonging. Clearly, these two experiences do not always go hand in hand.

Finally, locating migrants within transnational social fields makes clear that incorporation in a new state and enduring transnational attachments are not binary opposites (Morawska, 2003b; Levitt, 2003b). Instead, it is more useful to think of the migrant experience as a kind of gauge, which while anchored, pivots between new land and a transnational incorporation. Movement and attachment is not linear or sequential but capable of rotating back and forth and changing direction over time. The median point on this gauge is not full incorporation but rather simultaneity of connection. Persons change and swing one way or the other depending on the context, thus moving our expectation away from either full assimilation or transnational connection but some combination of both. The challenge, then, is to explain the variation in the way that migrants manage that pivot and how host country incorporation and homeland or other transnational ties mutually influence each other. For example, Portes and his colleagues found that transnational entrepreneurs were more likely to be U.S. citizens, suggesting that by becoming full members of their new land, it became easier for them to run successful businesses

involving their homeland. Similarly, some Latino communities use the same organizations to promote political integration in the United States that they use to mobilize around sending-country issues.

In this vein, Glick Schiller, Calgar, and Karagiannis (2003) have proposed a useful distinction between mere connection and the kinds of connections that engage individuals institutionally in more than one nation-state. One can have friends, colleagues, or co-religionists with whom one communicates and exchanges information or objects across borders without ever coming into contact with the state or other institutions. But if one belongs to a church, receives a pension, or has investments in another land, one must necessarily negotiate his or her way through a set of public and private institutions that grounds those connections more firmly. Their “pivot” is rooted in two or more legal and regulatory systems, encouraging a greater sense of embeddedness in the transnational social field and making the connections within it more likely to endure.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Methodology and theory have an intimate relationship. To develop a transnational framework for the study of migration, we need a methodology that allows us to move beyond the binaries, such as homeland/new land, citizen/non-citizen, migrant/ nonmigrant, and acculturation/ cultural persistence, that have typified migration research in the past. On the other hand, a framework that privileges transborder processes rather than incorporation-oriented activity may not capture the interrelationship between transnational connection and social relationships within a single nation-state.

Using a transnational framework implies several methodological shifts. First, we need to focus on the intersection between the networks of those who have migrated and those who have stayed in place, whether in the new land, homeland, or some other diasporic location (Glick Schiller, 2003). This focus allows for comparisons between the experiences of migrants and those who are only indirectly influenced by ideas, objects, and information flowing across borders. Although multi-sited research is ideal for

studying these two different experiences, the impact of transnational relations can be observed by asking individuals about the transnational aspects of their lives, and those they are connected to, in a single setting.

Second, we need tools that capture migrants' simultaneous engagement in and orientation toward their home and host countries. And these dynamics cannot just be studied at one point in time. Transnational migration is a process rather than an event. Transnational practices ebb and flow in response to particular incidents or crises. A one-time snap shot misses the many ways in which migrants periodically engage with their home countries during election cycles, family or ritual events, or climatic catastrophes --- their attention and energies shifting in response to a particular goal or challenge. Studying migrant practices longitudinally reveals that in moments of crisis or opportunity, even those who have never identified or participated transnationally, but who are embedded in transnational social fields, may become mobilized into action. Such a research strategy would help explain the transition from a way of belonging such as a diasporic identity ---Armenian, Jewish, or Croatian ---to direct engagement in transnational practices.

Each of the research methodologies used to study transnational migration has particular strengths. We believe that ethnography is particularly suited for studying the creation and durability of transnational social fields. Participant observation and ethnographic interviewing allow researchers to document how persons simultaneously maintain and shed cultural repertoires and identities, interact within a location and across its boundaries, and act in ways that are in concert with or contradict their values over time. The effects of strong and weak indirect ties within a transnational social field can be observed and those connections, whether they take the form of institutional or individual actors, can be studied. Like surveys, ethnographic research can also begin with a random sample of persons who migrate and who have no intention of returning home.

## **POWER**

When people belong to multiple settings, they come into contact with the regulatory powers and the hegemonic culture of more than one state. These states regulate economic interactions, political processes and performances, and also have discrete nation-state building projects. Individuals are, therefore, embedded in multiple legal and political institutions that determine access and action and organize and legitimate gender, race, and class status. Foucault (1980) wrote that the experience of power goes beyond mere contact with the law or the police. Rather, power pervades and permeates all social relations because what is legitimate, appropriate, and possible is strongly influenced by the state. People living in transnational social fields experience multiple loci and layers of power, and are shaped by them, but they can also act back upon them.

Most migrants move from a place where the state has relatively little power within the global interstate system to a more powerful state. At the same time, many migrants gain more social power, in terms of leverage over people, property, and locality, with respect to their homeland than they did before migrating. It is this complex conjuncture between personal losses and gains that any analysis of power within transnational social fields must grapple with. Furthermore, migration often opens up the possibility for transnational migrants to contribute, both positively and negatively, to changes in the global economic and political system. For example, long distance nationalist movements have long influenced nation building and national transformation. Lithuania would not have become Lithuania without immigrants in the United States first imagining its emergence and then mobilizing to make it a reality (Glazer, 1954). Former Iraqi exiles are now playing a critical role in rebuilding the Iraqi state. Transnational migrants can also strengthen, alter, or thwart global religious movements like Islamic fundamentalism, Christian fundamentalism, or Hindu nationalism.

Not only can migrants potentially shift the position of states within the world economic order, they can also influence the internal functions of states as well. They may be forces for privatization because they want telephone systems that work and private schools and hospitals where their family members will be well attended. They may pressure states to institute conservative legislation that preserves traditional values. Acting within their transnational social fields migrants may also fuel movements for rights, social justice, and anti-imperialist struggles.

Transnational migrants also shift power by redefining the functions of the host state. There are many instances, such as in the Cuban, Israeli, and Irish communities, in which migrants have successfully mobilized host country legislatures to support their homeland projects. The Mexican state and Mexican transnational migrants living in the United States have altered the ways in which some U.S. institutions categorize and process individuals. The Mexican state's issuing of the *matricula consular* or a consular ID card to legal and unauthorized Mexican migrants in the U.S has enabled migrants to pressure banks, motor vehicle bureaus, and car insurance companies to be more responsive to them.

Using a transnational social field perspective allows for a more systematic study of the social processes and institutions that have been routinely obscured by traditional migration scholarship and even by some studies of transnational migration. New perspectives emerge on a number of issues including the effect of migration on gender hierarchies and racialized identities; family dynamics; the significance of nation-states, membership and citizenship; and the role of religion. In the following section, we discuss each in turn.

## **HOW CLASS, RACE, AND GENDER ARE MUTUALLY CONSTITUTED WITHIN TRANSNATIONAL SOCIAL FIELDS**

Scholars have tended to study class, race, and gender as discrete realms of experience. Here we build on feminist theory by recognizing that since these social locations are mutually constituted, we must

discuss them together. We approach all three as hierarchical positions that entail differential social power. Data on these varying statuses illustrate the analytical limits of methodological nationalism. Social scientists often use national income statistics to assess the socioeconomic status of migrants without considering the other statuses that they occupy. But when society differs from polity and is made up of sets of social relationships in intersecting and overlapping national and transnational social fields, individuals occupy different gender, racial, and class positions within different states at the same time. Recognizing that migrant behavior is the product of these simultaneous multiple statuses of race, class, and gender makes certain social processes more understandable.

For example, a transnational perspective can help explain contradictory data on the political attitudes and actions of immigrants. In some cases, immigrant women, who find themselves racialized in their new homes, appear to be quite conservative with respect to struggles for rights and recognition. Poor migrants of color in the United States, for example, often strive to differentiate themselves from African Americans rather than join efforts to advance minority group civil rights (Waters, 1999). They may re-enforce or even reinvent gender distinctions and hierarchies that are more rigid and “traditional” than those in their ancestral homes (Espiritu, 1997; Lessinger, 1995; Caglar, 1995). They accept low status jobs in their new home, tolerate employment discrimination, and resist political projects or labor protests that would redress these wrongs. Ironically, this heightened gender stratification often occurs in households where immigrant women have entered the workforce and men have begun to share the responsibility for child rearing and housekeeping, thereby redefining other aspects of gender dynamics in more egalitarian terms.

Consideration of migrants’ multiple positions within transnational social fields helps explain this seemingly conservative and contradictory behavior (Pessar and Mahler, 2003). When individuals elaborate markers of gender after they migrate, they may be preserving or creating status in other

locations within the transnational social field. Conservative positions of women and men in relationship to struggles for rights or “family values” may be linked to the class position of migrants in the homeland. Migrants who are laborers, home health aides, or domestic workers in countries of immigration may also be educated and middle class homeowners or business people in their homelands. Men who may have higher status than women at home are generally more interested in maintaining political homeland connections and identities (Grasmuck and Pessar, 1991). In contrast, women migrants may use income they earn abroad to improve their social standing at home. Transnational religious systems, such as Islam or Charismatic Christianity, also provide venues for asserting one’s enhanced status and for acquiring social capital and resources (Peterson and Vásquez, 2001).

## **TRANSNATIONAL FAMILIES**

Much work on globalization and transnational phenomena focuses on production. But reproduction also takes place across borders and is an important, if understudied, aspect of the migration experience. Just as transnational migration studies prompt us to rethink the terrain in which social processes take place, they also challenge our understanding of social reproduction.

Numerous studies illustrate the ways in which the boundaries of family life change over the life cycle. Members of the second and third generation in Europe and the United States continue to return to the Middle East and South Asia to find marriage partners (Hooghiemstra, 2001; Lesthaeghe, 2002; Levitt, 2002b). Increasing numbers of women have joined the ranks of men who head transnational families (Parrenas, 2001; Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila, 2003). Transnational family life entails renegotiating communication between spouses, the distribution of work tasks, and who will migrate and who will stay behind via long distance (Pessar and Mahler, 2001). Non-migrants also imagine the gendered lives of their migrant peers and change their ideas about successful marriages and suitable marital partners.

Levitt (2001a) found that the young women in the Dominican village she studied only wanted to marry men who had migrated because they were considered the ideal breadwinner and life partner.

While adults make family decisions, children are the central axis of family migration and often a critical reason why families move back and forth and sustain transnational ties (Orellana *et al*, 2001; Zhou, 1998). Adult-centered studies obscure the ways in which child raising actively shapes their families' journeys, the spaces they move in, and their experiences within those social fields. This is particularly true as children mature into young adults. Kandel and Massey (2002), for example, found a culture of migration so deeply embedded in the Mexican communities they studied, that transnational migration became the norm. Young men, in particular, came to see migration as an expected rite of passage and as the way to achieve economically what they could not attain in Mexico.

The studies we describe attest to the fact that in migrant households that are constituted transnationally and across generations, living transnationally often becomes the norm (Nyberg Sorenson and Fog Olwig, 2002). How must we rethink conventional wisdom about the family in response? First, using a transnational lens reveals the changing nature of the family as a socioeconomic strategic unit, and how family ties are worked and reworked over time and space. Deborah Bryceson and Ulla Vuorela (2002) use the term "relativizing" to refer to the ways in which individuals establish, maintain, or curtail ties to specific family members. Within transnational social fields, individuals actively pursue or neglect blood ties and fictitious kinship. Based on their particular needs, individuals strategically choose which connections to emphasize and which to let slide. Second, in many cases, socialization and social reproduction occur transnationally in response to at least two social and cultural contexts. Even children who never return to their parent's ancestral homes are brought up in households where people, values, goods and claims from somewhere else are present on a daily basis. Similarly, the children of nonmigrants are raised in social networks and settings entirely permeated by people, resources, and social

remittances from the host country. For these individuals, the generational experience is not territorially bounded. It is based on actual and imagined experiences that are shared across borders regardless of where someone was born or now lives.

Locating migrants and their families squarely within transnational social fields requires rethinking the notion of generation and the term “second generation” (Glick Schiller and Fouron, 2002). Conceptualizing generation as a lineal process, involving clear boundaries between one experience and the other, does not accurately capture the experience of living in a transnational field because it implies a separation in migrants’ and nonmigrants’ socialization and social networks that may not exist. It also fails to take into account that generational experiences are shaped by common experiences during youth that create a shared worldview or frame of reference which influences subsequent social and political activism (Mannheim, 1952; Eckstein, 2002).

While many researchers now acknowledge the salience of transnational ties for the immigrant generation, many predict these ties will weaken among their children. In the United States these researchers find that the transnational activities of the second generation are confined primarily to certain groups who are, by and large, physically and emotionally rooted in the United States and lack the language, cultural skills, or desire to live in their ancestral homes. Since these individuals are only occasional transnational activists, and their activities are confined to very specific arenas of social life, they are likely to have minimal long-term consequences (Rumbaut, 2002; Kasinitz *et al*, 2002).

But whether or not individuals forge or maintain some kind of transnational connection may depend on the extent to which they are reared in a transnational space. Clearly, transnational activities will not be central to the lives of most of the second generation and those who engage in them will not do so with the same frequency and intensity as their parents. But surveys concluding that transnational practices will be inconsequential may be short sighted. They may overlook the effect of the many

periodic, selective transnational activities that some individuals engage in at different stages of their lives (Levitt, 2002b; Glick Schiller and Fouron, 2002; Smith, 2002). They may also fail to differentiate between ways of being and possible ways of belonging --- that the desire and ability to engage in transnational practices will ebb and flow at different phases of the lifecycle and in different contexts. At the point of marriage or child rearing, the same individuals who showed little regard for a parental homeland and culture may activate their connections within a transnational field in search of a spouse or values to teach to their children (Espiritu and Tham, 2002). The children of Gujaratis who go back to India to find marriage partners, the second generation Pakistanis who begin to study Islam and Pakistani values when they have children, or the Chinese American business school students who specialize in Asian banking are doing just that.

## **THE NATION-STATE: THE POLITICAL LIMITS AND EXTENSIONS OF TRANSNATIONAL SOCIAL FIELDS**

The use of a transnational social field perspective and the concept of simultaneity also draws attention to the changing nature of political activism and the nation-state and how these are shaped and shape the transnational social fields in which they are embedded. Both migrants and refugees continue to engage in a variety of cross-border political practices directed at their home and host countries. Some of the early work on transnational migration predicted that these activities would weaken or, in some cases, bring about the decline of the nation-state. Instead, what we see is a reformulation of the state as it assumes new functions, abdicates responsibilities for others, and redefines who its members are. Future research needs to explore why some states change in response to their increasingly transnational constituencies and others do not. We also need to ask which functions states abandon, under what conditions, and what new roles they assume. Finally, we need to identify the new kinds of organizations and collectivities that step in to fill the gap left by the changing state.

It is within sending states that we find the greatest changes in laws, state policy, and migrant practices on both the national and local levels. The vulnerable geopolitical position of many peripheral sending states, increasing poverty in the wake of structural adjustment policies, and the racial barriers migrants encounter explain recent trends toward extending the boundaries of citizenship (Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc, 1994; Guarnizo, 2003; Itzigsohn, 2000). The governments of many states, even within Western Europe, see the utility of having access to populations settled elsewhere. Ireland, Greece, Italy and Portugal have recently developed both policies and rhetoric that embrace their “communities abroad.”

States have developed a range of policies that reflect who they are redefining as their membership. Some states pursue “homelands policies” that encourage state contact with temporary migrants to facilitate their return. Other states develop “global nations’ policies,” that encourage enduring links to permanent settlers abroad, to ensure their continued national membership and loyalty rather than their return (Goldring, 2002; Smith, 1998). But not all sending states are the same. They vary with respect to how willing and able they are to encourage transnational activism and how willing they are to give emigrants and their descendants political rights, including the right to vote while living abroad. We suggest the following categorization to capture the variation in possible arenas and types of state responses toward emigrants. States vary with respect to law or the degree to which they extend political rights. They vary with respect to rhetoric or the kind of ideology of nationhood that is promulgated. And they vary with respect to public policy or the kinds of programs and policies that they pursue

### **The Extension of Political Rights**

The extension of rights is mandated by law. Some states distinguish between two categories of membership – citizenship and nationality. Citizenship delineates the character of a member’s rights and

duties within the national polity. Nationality legally delineates a category of belonging without granting full citizenship rights.

Sending states have promulgated a range of legal distinctions to delineate categories of citizenship and nationality: (a) the denial of dual citizenship or any form of dual access to rights. Countries such as Haiti and Germany allow no dual sets of rights,<sup>10</sup> (b) Dual nationality with the granting of some legal privileges to emigrants and their descendants but not full dual citizenship. Mexico and India have taken this position, legally recognizing “nationals” in some way. (c) Dual citizenship in which emigrants and their descendants are accorded full rights, when they return to the homeland, even if they also hold the passport of another country. States as disparate as France, Ireland, Greece, the Dominican Republic, Brazil, Italy, and Portugal follow this policy. (d) Dual citizenship with rights while abroad. People living abroad, from countries such as Colombia, have the right to elect representatives to the home-country legislature.<sup>11</sup>

The expansion of dual nationality or citizenship, in their different forms, means that even persons who are not active participants in transnational politics or even situated in transnational social fields, have access to those memberships, if they want to claim them. As an identity strategy, an investment strategy,

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<sup>10</sup> However, Germany allows dual citizenship for *Ausiedler*, Jews, and persons whose countries do not allow the repudiation of citizenship and Haiti, without altering citizenship laws, considers its diaspora as a part of the Haitian nation.

<sup>11</sup> The number of countries permitting some form of dual belonging is increasing rapidly. In Latin America alone, ten countries allowed some form of dual nationality or citizenship, including Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico, Panama, Peru, and Uruguay in 2000 while only four countries had such provisions prior to 1991 (Jones-Correa, 2002). Other countries recognize dual membership selectively, with specific signatories. Guatemala has an agreement with other Central American Countries and several countries have such agreements with Spain.

or even an exit strategy, multiple memberships endow the individual with several potential positions with respect to the state.

### **Ideology of Nationhood**

States like China, Ireland, Portugal, and Haiti propose a national self-concept based on blood ties linking residents around the world to their respective homelands (Glick Schiller, 2005b). They have redefined their territories to include those living outside them. They may do this, as in the Haitian case, without granting dual citizenship or nationality. For this reason it is useful to distinguish legal connections from ideologies of long distance nationalism. Building on Anderson's original concept, Glick Schiller and Fouron (2001a) define long distance nationalism as a set of ideas about belonging that link together people living in various geographic locations and motivate or justify their taking action in relation to an ancestral territory and its government. As in other versions of nationalism, the concept of a territorial homeland governed by a state that represents the nation remains salient, but national borders are not thought to delimit membership in the nation. Citizens residing within the territorial homeland view emigrants and their descendants as part of the nation, whatever legal citizenship the émigrés may have.

These ideologies of nationhood shift over time, at different periods of nation building (Glick Schiller, 2005a). Globally, before World War I, science endorsed the concept of nation as based on race. In the middle of the twentieth century, when the rhetoric of blood and race was discredited and the populations of nation-states became viewed as only those who lived within national territories, states tended not to make claims on their emigrant populations. Dictators such as Salazar of Portugal or Duvalier of Haiti denounced expatriates, who often organized in opposition to their regimes. Since the 1970s, during the current period of globalization, a language of blood has once again emerged and is deployed by a variety of states. Malaysia uses descent to differentiate populations considered native Malaysians with full citizenship rights from other populations such as persons of Chinese and Indian

ancestry (Ong, 1999; Bunnell, 2003). Portugal has reclaimed its emigrant populations, allowing dual citizenship and organizing councils of Portuguese abroad. In promoting its case for entrance into the European Union, Portugal argued it would bring special access to countries like Brazil as well as its special relation to Lusophonic populations in Africa (Feldman-Bianco, 2002).

### **Changing Functions of the State**

States adopt some tasks and abandon others in response to transnational migration. In Levitt and de la Dehesa's (2003) review of transnational migration and redefinitions of the state, they found that Latin American governments instituted several different programs and policies toward emigrants. They reformed ministerial and consular services to be more responsive to emigrant needs. They put into place investment policies designed to attract and channel economic remittances. They granted dual citizenship or nationality, the right to vote from abroad, or the right to run for public office. They extended state protections or services to nationals living abroad that went beyond traditional consular services. Finally, they implemented symbolic policies designed to reinforce emigrants' sense of enduring membership.

Sending states institute these policies for a variety of reasons. For one thing, remittances far exceed the funds received for official development assistance or foreign portfolio investment in many less-developed countries, (Naim, 2002). According to the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), "in 2002, remittances to Latin America alone rose by 18 percent to \$32 billion from 2001 levels, or 32 percent of the \$103 billion worldwide estimated to be remitted to developing countries" (Univ. of CA, Davis, 2003). But sending nations' economic motivations to sustain strong ties to migrants go beyond remittances. Immigrants trade with their home countries and bring in large quantities of tourist dollars. Successful entrepreneurs from countries as diverse as India, Israel, China, Brazil, Taiwan, Mexico and Pakistan not only contribute money but entrepreneurial and technological energy and skills. Brain drain can become brain circulation or brain gain (Saxenian, 2002). Finally, states court emigrant loyalties

because they see them as a potential political force in the host country that can advance their economic and foreign policy interests (Mahler, 2000; Levitt, 2001a). Some states even promote host-country political integration so that emigrants are better situated to act on their behalf.

States are not the only political actors that define their constituencies transnationally or that carry out activities across borders. Political parties may operate abroad, especially if emigrants have settled in sizeable numbers and with sufficient ties to influence elections in the homeland. Mexican, Dominican, and Haitian politicians campaign in the United States on a regular basis. Each of the three principal Dominican political parties has a U.S.-based organization trying to capture support among Dominicans along the eastern seaboard. In the Turkish case, parties with dominant religious and nationalist agendas, like the nationalist Milli Hareket Partisi or the religious Saadet Partisi, frequently send leaders to northern Europe to rally support (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003).

Regions of large countries, such as Brazil or India, may also begin to act as transnational agents, regardless of the national government's stance. This is especially true in situations where the majority of emigrants leave from a few regions or provinces. Sub-state policies are different from the transnational activities of national governments in that regional governments do not control immigration and formal citizenship and their transnational activities are driven by efforts to promote extra-territorial regional or local loyalties rather than nation-building (Baubock, 2003). In the Brazilian case, the municipal government of Governador Valadares and the state government of Minas Gerais created investment funds and business promotion schemes designed to build on migrants' localized loyalties. The money raised was used to support projects directed at municipal development. Likewise in India, the Gujarat State government has instituted a number of initiatives to encourage long-distance economic projects, including offering tax breaks and bureaucratic support to potential investors, that are separate from any efforts by

the national government or political parties to stimulate Non-Resident Indian (NRI) involvement (Levitt, 2002b).

Even units as small as towns may define themselves transnationally and engage in development-oriented activities. In such cases, the actors are usually emigrants living abroad who organize hometown associations. For example, Mexican, Salvadoran, and Dominican hometown associations now fund and implement numerous community development projects that were previously the purview of the state (Goldring, 2002; Landolt, 2001). They assume this role in an age of neoliberalism in which states increasingly eschew roles they were rarely able to fulfill in countries beyond the capitalist core.

Based on their stances towards emigrants with regard to law, rhetoric, and public policy, we identify several broad categories of migrant-sending states:

Transnational Nation-States – Some states have become transnational nation-states in that they treat their emigrants as long-term, long-distance members. Consular officials and other government representatives are still seen as partially responsible for emigrants' protection and representation. These states also grant emigrants dual citizenship or nationality. Often these are states that have become so dependent on remittances that transnational migrants' contributions and participation have become an integral part of national policy (Guarnizo, Portes and Haller, 2003). States such as El Salvador, Mexico, Portugal, and Dominican Republic and Brazil fall into this category.

More common are Strategically Selective States that encourage some forms of long-distance economic and political nationalism but want to selectively and strategically manage what immigrants can and cannot do. Like transnational nation-states, these states also recognize the enormous political and economic influence migrants wield which they have come to depend on. On the one hand, they want to ensure the continued home country involvement of emigrants, whom they recognize are unlikely to return. On the other hand, they want to maintain some level of control over emigrants' home ties, lest

migrant interests conflict with those of the state. Such states offer partial and changing packages of tax privileges and services to emigrants, encourage long-distance membership but never grant the legal rights of citizenship or nationality or the franchise. They walk a fine line between providing enough incentives to reinforce long distance membership while not “over-serving migrants,” and making nonmigrants resentful. India, Barbados, Ireland, the Philippines, Haiti, and Turkey have all tried, at various times, to obtain support from populations abroad without granting full participation in their internal political activities.

These arrangements are by no means static. Diasporic agitation for dual citizenship led the Filipino government to pass legislation in 2003 that allows dual citizenship and restores Filipino citizenship to those people who previously lost their citizenship by becoming citizens of other countries. The Senate President remarked when the Citizenship Retention Bill was signed, “It is our affirmation to the age-old adage that ‘once a Filipino, always a Filipino’” (Javellana-Santos, 2003). The same year, India granted persons four generations removed from migration and citizens of specific countries such as the United States and Great Britain dual citizenship (Khanna, 2004).

A third type of state is the Disinterested and Denouncing State. States adopting this stance treat migrants as if they no longer belong to their homeland. Any overtures migrants make vis a vis their ancestral home are viewed as suspect because migrants are seen as having abandoned the homeland or even as traitors to its cause. This stance was more common prior to the current period of globalization. Even today, however, when governments face vocal and powerful political opposition abroad, they may try to discredit emigrants’ influence. Cuba’s relationship to Cubans in the United States provides one such example that is particularly interesting since remittances factor so importantly in Cuba’s economic life. (Cervantes-Rodríguez, 2003; Eckstein and Barberia, 2002). Slovakia kept populations abroad at

arm's distance following the Cold War, allowing them no representation within the new political system (Skrbiš, 1999).

## **MEMBERSHIP AND CITIZENSHIP**

Understanding migration from a transnational social field perspective also entails revisiting the meaning of nation-state membership (Yuval-Davis, 1997; Delgado and Stefanicic, 2003). While states grant membership through laws that accord legal citizenship and nationality, people also make demands of states regardless of their legal status. Therefore, persons without full citizenship may act as substantive or social citizens, claiming rights or assuming privileges that are, in principle, accorded to citizens (Flores and Benmayor, 2000). This is the case when immigrants without citizenship fight and die as members of a host country's military, as they can legally do in the United State military, protest in the streets about public policies, and access various social programs and services without being citizens. Individuals connected through social networks to a transnational social field, make claims, take actions, and may even see themselves as members of a country in which they have not lived.

Substantive citizenship as exercised within transnational social fields differs from findings of proponents of post-national citizenship (Soysal, 1994). These scholars put aside the domain of nation-states and look to global rights regimes to protect and represent individuals living outside their homelands. Persons in transnational social fields who are refugees or religious or racial minorities may draw on plural legal systems in their quest for rights. But the international rights regime, as has often been noted, is still very much dependent on individual states for enforcement (Foblets, 2002; Woodman, 2002)

Persons living within transnational social fields may not make claims on states as legal or substantive citizens until a particular event or crisis occurs. They may engage in lobbying, demonstrating, organizing or campaigns of public information to influence either the government of the state in which

they now reside, their homeland, or some other state to which they are connected. Simply focusing on legal rights and formal membership overlooks this broader set of people who, to varying degrees, act like members of a society, while not formally belonging to it. By so doing they influence and are influenced by the state. Glick Schiller and Fouron (2001a) propose the term “transborder citizens” to reflect those who may or may not be citizens of both their sending and receiving polities but who express some level of social citizenship in one or both.

Partial membership in two polities challenges core aspects of governance in at least two ways. First, dual belonging calls into question the very notion of governance because it is not readily obvious which state is ultimately responsible for which aspects of transnational migrants’ lives. Where should those who live across borders get health care, pay taxes, or serve in the army? Which state assumes the primary responsibility for migrants’ protection and representation? What happens when migrants are sentenced to the death penalty in their host country while the death sentence is prohibited in their country of origin?

Furthermore, transborder citizens’ multiple experiences of governmentality and political socialization do not occur in isolation from one another. Persons in transnational social fields are exposed to different ideas of citizen rights and responsibilities and different histories of political practice. As a result, they enter the political domain with a broader repertoire of rights and responsibilities than citizens who live only within one state. The fact that migrants may also have direct experience with international rights regimes also provides them with grist from which to reconceptualize their relationship to the state (Pessar, 2001; Levitt and Wagner, 2003). Migrants bring ideas about governance with them that transform host-country politics, they reformulate their ideas and practices in response to their experiences with host states, and they communicate these social remittances back to those in their homelands or members of their networks settled in other states (Levitt, 1999). The kind of political culture that emerges

and the kinds of claims made of states vary as a result. Haitian migrants, for example, infused the U.S political system with calls for a Haitian government that was more responsible to its people (Glick Schiller and Fouron, 2001a). Shared experiences of democratic incorporation in the receiving state may feed back into transnational activities that lead to more transparent politics at home (Shain, 1999).

## **RELIGION: FIELDS OF BEING AND BELONGING WITHIN AND BEYOND THE STATE**

While most scholars acknowledge the salience of migrants' transnational economic, political, and sociocultural practices, they have only recently begun to pay attention to the relationship between transnational migration and religion. In contrast to the other sections of this paper, where we focus on the implications of research findings to date, our goal in this section is to summarize this emergent literature and suggest directions for further work.

Religion as an ideology or as a set of practices is not coincident with the borders of nation-states. Its very lack of fit might partially explain why social scientists have largely ignored religion. Grand sociological theory in its various unilinear forms posited an evolution of society from religion to reason. Immigration theorists expected immigrants to develop religious institutions in the new land, as part of the process of incorporation, but these institutions were expected to lose their force over several generations.

Religious cross border connections are not all linked to migration; however, migrating populations may identify as religious diasporas rather than cling to a nation-state identity or use religious arenas to express membership in two polities. Conceptualizing society as intersecting transnational social fields that exist within and across the borders of states provides us with powerful tools for mapping and researching religious domains. Perhaps the most productive distinction to be made is between religious ties that connect people to a homeland state and religious ties that form transnational networks of connection that are not state based, such as charismatic Christianity. A fairly large body of work charts the course of Christian, Hindu, and Muslim beliefs and institutions that cross-national borders and link various

populations (Beyer, 2001; Robertson, 1991; Vertovec and Peach, 1997). Global religious institutions shape migrants' transnational experiences, while migrants chip away at and recreate global religions by making them local. Migrant institutions are also sites where globally diffused models of social organization and individuals' local responses converge and produce new mixes of religious beliefs and practices. The study of transnational migration and religion, therefore, provides an empirical window into ways of being and belonging that cannot be encompassed by a nation-state (Levitt, 2003a). At the same time, these practices and ideas can be mobilized for specific state projects by transnational migrant populations, as in the case of support for Hindu nationalist politics on the part of Indians migrants who are fully incorporated into the United States.

Research on transnational migrants' religious practices has addressed a set of common themes and questions. Some of these studies are concerned with the kinds of religious institutional connections produced by transnational migration (Ebaugh and Chafetz, 2002; Yang, 2002; Levitt, 2004). Other studies ask how religion encourages or impedes transnational membership (Wellmeier, 1998; Menjívar, 1999; Peterson and Vásquez, 2001; Kastoryano, 2000). A third set of questions focuses on the relationship between religion and politics and how it changes when actors are engaged transnationally. Such questions touch on ways of belonging, whether to two or more states or to a transborder religious community, asking whether access to the power of God or Gods is a way of gaining protection from the power of states (Peterson and Vásquez, 2001; Menjívar, 2002). Often migrants denied citizenship and excluded from mainstream economic institutions, look to their religious communities as sites for establishing alternative identities (Guest, 2002).

Transnational migrants often use religion to create alternative geographies that may fall within national boundaries, transcend but coexist with them, or create new spaces that, for some individuals, are more meaningful and inspire stronger loyalties than politically-defined terrains (Levitt, 2003a). By doing

so, they extend the boundaries of their spiritual practices and superinscribe them onto the actual physical landscape where they settle (McAlister, 2002). By building and conducting rituals at a shrine to their national patron saint, Cuban exiles in Miami created what Tweed (1999) calls transtemporal and translocative space. The rituals enacted within it enable migrants to recover a past when they lived in Cuba and to imagine a future when they will return.

## **EXPANDING THE CONVERSATION**

Clearly, migration is only one of a range of social processes that transcend national boundaries. Numerous social movements, businesses, media, epistemic communities, and various forms of governance are also organized across boundaries. Persons living in transnational social fields can engage in multiple transnational processes at the same time. The transnational identities and institutions that emerge in response to these other processes are not well understood. Although they are the subject of an increasing body of scholarship, more often than not, this research treats transnational economic, political, and social processes as if they were not connected to each other. We must explore how transnational practices and processes in different domains relate to and inform one another to understand how these developments are defining the boundaries of social life.

Migration scholars can begin this conversation by systematically examining the forms and consequences of different kinds of transnational activities and collectivities, analyzing how they relate to one another, and exploring how they define and redefine our world. How do migrant cross-border activities compare to those engaged in by indigenous rights proponents and religious group members? How do organizing strategies, diffusion of ideas, and cultural negotiations compare in transnational social movements to those undertaken in transnational professional groups or production networks? In what ways do these different kinds of transnational memberships complement or subvert one another? What are the rights and responsibilities that actors and institutions associate with transnational belonging?

New methodological and conceptual tools are needed to understand these processes. Because the social sciences originated in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as part of the project of creating modern nation-states, terms like “government,” “organization,” and “citizenship,” carry with them embedded nationalist assumptions that impair our capacity to see and understand transnational processes. Our conceptual categories implicitly take as given that the nation-state is the natural default category of social organization. The best that social science generally does is compare corporations, migrants, or institutions across national contexts rather than focus on firms and markets as parts of transnational *fields* of investment, production, distribution, and exchange. Persons can engage simultaneously in more than one nation-state and a nation-state does not delimit the boundaries of meaningful social relations. We need new analytical lenses that can bring to light the myriad social processes that cross boundaries. We need new conceptual categories that no longer blind us to these emergent social forms or prevent us from reconceptualizing the boundaries of social life.

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