

# ROOTS AND ROUTES: UNDERSTANDING THE LIVES OF THE SECOND GENERATION TRANSNATIONALLY

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## Abstract

Migration scholars now recognize that many people maintain ties to their countries of origin at the same time that they become integrated into the countries that receive them. Immigrant incorporation and enduring transnational practices are not antithetical but simultaneous processes that mutually inform each other. Many argue, however, that transnational attachments are primarily the purview of the first generation. The children of immigrants are unlikely to engage with the same intensity and frequency in their ancestral homes nor will they be as influenced by homeland values and practices. While I agree that the children of immigrants will not maintain the same level of activism in their parent's homelands, this article argues that homeland influences cannot be entirely discounted. Using a transnational lens to understand the migration experience, reveals that the lives of immigrants and their children are shaped by values, ideas, and practices from the multiple sites and levels of the transnational social fields they inhabit. Looking solely at the factors shaping economic and social mobility inside the country of settlement is to see only one side and one layer of the coin.

Keywords: Immigration, transnationalism, second generation, values, globalization.

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While I agree that the children of immigrants will not maintain the same level of activism in their parent's homelands, this article argues that homeland influences cannot be entirely discounted. Using a transnational lens to understand the migration experience, reveals that the lives of immigrants and their children are shaped by values, ideas, and practices from the multiple sites and levels of the transnational social fields they inhabit. Looking solely at the factors shaping economic and social mobility inside the country of settlement is to see only one side and one layer of the coin. My argument is not that home country factors are always at work or that the prospects of the second generation are not primarily shaped by the social and economic institutions in the countries where they live. It is that the children of

immigrants bring homeland values, ideas, and social relations to bear on their encounters with these institutions which imbue them with opportunities and obstacles. If we are really concerned about the second generation's prospects, we have to use this broader optic to bring these influences into sharper focus. Otherwise, the questions we ask and how we answer them will be incomplete.

My comments are based on my ongoing research on Dominican migrants in the Boston metropolitan area and on a second study of the transnational religious lives of four immigrant groups also living in Boston, including Muslims from Pakistani, Hindus from Gujarat State in India, Protestants from Governador Valadares in Brazil, and Irish Catholics from the Inishowen Peninsula in County Donegal (247 interviews in all). I also interviewed 28 Irish, 13 Brazilian, 38 Gujarati, and 10 Pakistanis members of the second generation. I then traveled to each community of origin where I spoke with at least 50 family members and friends in each community of origin and took part in numerous religious ceremonies, family events, and celebrations (Levitt, 2007)<sup>1</sup>. This research strategy allowed me to assess how people using multiple repertoires construct boundaries, meaning, and morality across borders. It also allowed me to observe "the conversation" between actors located at different sites and levels of the transnational social field. I could observe how migrants and nonmigrants who belong to the same households, communities, and nations see the two sides of their shared coin.

## **THEORETICAL DEBATES**

Basch, Glick Schiller, and Blanc-Szanton initially defined transnationalism as “the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement” (Basch *et al.*, 1994: 6). More recent scholarship understands transnational migration as taking place within fluid social spaces that are constantly reworked through migrants’ simultaneous embeddedness in more than one (Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2004; Pries, 2005; Smith, 2006). These arenas are multi-layered and multi-sited, including not just the home and the host-country but other sites around the world that connect migrants to their co-nationals and co-religionists. Both migrants and non-migrants inhabit them because the dense and frequent flow of people, money, and “social remittances” (ideas, norms, practices, and identities) within these spaces also transforms nonmigrants’ lives, even though they do not move (Levitt, 2001). While the numbers that regularly engage in transnational practices may be fairly small, those who engage in occasional, informal transnational activities, in response to elections, economic downturns, lifecycle events, and climactic disasters are much greater. Taken together and over time, their combined efforts add up, and can alter the economies, values, and practices of entire regions (Kyle, 2000; Levitt *et al.*, 2003; Portes and DeWind, 2004).<sup>2</sup>

Transnational migration scholars have identified striking changes in social life, documenting transformations in kinship and family structure and the ways in which these influence the construction of class, gender, and race which, in turn, potentially influence the mobility trajectories of the second generation.

Gendered differences in power and status characterize family networks that cross borders (Pessar and Mahler, 2003). Because migrants need to maintain ties, so that they have social contacts and support should they need to return home, kin networks can be used exploitatively, a process of transnational class differentiation in which the more prosperous extract labor from persons defined as kin (Ballard, 2001; Bryceson and Vuorela, 2002; Chamberlain, 2002). A transnational moral economy often involves putting family first, such as pursuing kin-based strategies for collective mobility or marrying into the right kinship network to accumulate social capital in the host society (Ballard, 2001; Fog Olwig, 2002; Schmalzbauer, 2004).

The boundaries of family and kinship also change over the life course (Levitt and Waters, 2002; Espiritu, 2003; Smith, 2006). In many households, living transnationally across generations becomes the norm. Whether individuals ultimately forge or maintain some kind of transnational connection, at some point in their lives, largely depends on the extent to which they were brought up in transnational spaces (Abelman, 2002). Pries (2004) found that transnational strategies were adopted over several generations, depending on individuals' needs and desires at different ages. 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 Tran, 2002).

While much research has focused on living arrangements, finances, and generational reproduction in everyday family life, recent studies have begun to look more closely at the experiences of parents, children, and the elderly, and how they are gendered. This work finds that, on the one hand, transnational motherhood takes a toll because care-giving at a distance is emotionally stressful for parents and children and also challenges prevailing Western norms of motherhood (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila, 1997; Parreñas, 2005). On the other hand, increasingly affordable communication and travel allows parents to be actively involved in the everyday lives of their children even via long distance (Mahler, 2001; Schmalzbauer, 2004; Parreñas, 2005). Mazzucato (2007) shows how migration changes inter-generational relations between parents in Ghana and their migrant children by affecting the ways in which elderly care is provided, and in some cases not provided, by migrant children.

Researchers have documented increases in the number of “circulating” children and elderly who move constantly between places of origin and settlement to reduce the costs of social reproduction, promote learning of the mother culture and tongue, and remove children from what is perceived as the negative and undisciplined social environment in the United States (Parreñas, 2001; Menjívar, 2002).

Micro-level family and kin connections and practices scale up to affect broader social processes, especially gender relations (Itzigsohn and Giorguli-Saucedo, 2005). These strongly influence how migrants and their children

conceptualize and act upon gender norms as well as clashes between the ways in which migrants and nonmigrants view the world.

Carling (2005) argues that three intrinsic asymmetries characterize relations between people who move and people who stay behind. First, migrants and their children and non-migrants are differently positioned in relation to transnational moralities. Second, migrants and non-migrants do not enjoy equal access to information in the transnational social field. Third, there is an asymmetrical distribution of resources between these two groups. As a result, we see many contradictions. It can be liberating when migrant women become breadwinners and find themselves on more egalitarian footing with men (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001). They provide their children with different kinds of role models. The flip side, however, reveals that gender distinctions are sometimes reinforced and reinvented to create hierarchies that are even more rigid and "traditional" than in the homeland (Espiritu, 1992; Caglar, 1995; Alumkal, 1999). This complex web reaches outside of family - as women go to their jobs (which they may never have had at home), join community associations or become active at church. The messages around appropriate public and private behavior, in the homeland and receiving context are sometimes difficult to reconcile (DeBiaggi, 2002; Pessar and Mahler, 2003; Salih, 2003). Moreover, state policies around welfare, child care, maternity benefits or voter registration, which affect men and women and their ability to exercise multiple memberships differently, also reflect the gendered nature of migration (Caglar, 2002). Finally, the sheer number of women who migrate has

grown tremendously over the past two decade - a special volume of *International Migration Review* focuses on the "the feminization of migration," emphasizing the need for theoretical and analytical tools that go beyond the study of sex roles (Donato *et al.*, 2006).

Along with gender, class and race are also constituted in transnational social fields and structure the ideologies and experiences of immigrants and their children (Willis, 2000; Gardner and Grillo, 2002; Mahler and Pessar, 2006). The impetus to participate across borders and the ability to do so varies by each. The differentiated nature of labor migration affects more than just economic outcomes; it translates into differences in migrants' access to informal, but crucial knowledge and networks for success in the mainstream. In contrast, middle class and professional migrants have sufficient social and cultural capital that they can selectively assimilate elements of where they come from and where they settle (Raj, 2003; Pluss, 2005; Levitt, 2007).

Further, migrants often confront an entirely different racial hierarchy than the one in place in their homelands, which limits their socioeconomic status and how American, British, or Dutch they can become. Their home and host-country mobility trajectories are not always in sync. They may move up with respect to the home and host-country, move up with respect to one and downward with respect to the other, or experience downward mobility in both contexts. Migrants have to make sense of two, often conflicting socioeconomic and status ladders, and to locate themselves somewhere within them using measurements that reflect the multiple places where they live (Raj, 2003;

Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2004; Ferree and Tripp, 2006; Roth, 2006; Smith, 2006)

Thus, intrinsic asymmetries characterize relations between migrants and nonmigrants but there are also strong imperatives to reconcile and sustain them. In addition to their affective ties, migrants need nonmigrants to care for young and old relatives who stay behind, manage their affairs, compensate them for the status declines they experience in the countries they move to, and provide them with a social safety net and set of connections, if and when they need to return. Nonmigrants need migrants for the economic support they provide and for their potential role in making others' dreams of migration come true. Over time, however, the cultural repository each group draws upon to construct gender, generation, or morality changes. The national backdrop the migrant remembers is not the same as the everyday reality of nonmigrants' lives. Thus, asymmetries result from temporal as well as moral disjunctures. They also arise because the cultural references and meanings each group uses are increasingly distinct.

The following sections describe the types of asymmetries experienced across groups and their evolving resolution. They elucidate the ways in which growing up in transnational social fields influences the second generation, how their ideas about gender, generation, and right and wrong are produced within these spaces, and the powerful imperatives to amicably resolve conflicting pulls given migrants' and nonmigrants' strong levels of mutual interdependence.

#### **DOING DHARMA TRANSNATIONALLY**

Pankaj, a fifty-nine year old man who lives in the Indian city of Anand, has very clear ideas about how he expects to be treated by his children. Many things have changed during his lifetime but in his house, he says, certain things will always be the same. "Children, even when they are all grown up should still be completely obedient to their parents. They should be attentive to my every need. If I am sick, they should not just leave the pills for me to take. They should be there to make sure I take them. They should constantly be inquiring about my health and if I need anything. That is their *dharma* (duty) in America and at home."

There are Brazilian, Irish, and Pakistani Pankaj's who also have clear notions about family responsibility. Taking care of one's family is a religious as well as cultural duty. How well a person fulfills it not only reflects on that person but on her family as well. "I may be ninety," said Dharati, a thirty-two year old migrant from Gujarat, but what I do still affects my family's reputation. You can't get away from that until the day you die." But what happens when people move somewhere where it is more difficult to fulfill those obligations? How is *dharma* and responsibility redefined for children and grandchildren who carry out their responsibilities within transnational social fields?

One particularly challenging negotiation concerns the relationship between fathers and sons. Most Gujarati children remain under their parents' roof until they are married. Sons remain within the same joint-family household when they get married while daughters move in with their husband's

family. Most children remain dependent on their parents until they are well into their twenties since part-time jobs are practically unheard of in Gujarat. Parents consider it their responsibility to support their children until they finish college or graduate work. "A parent will ask a child if they need something," one middle-aged man claimed, "but they would prefer that even after their sons begin earning, they should save their money for themselves." In return, children are expected to consult their parents about major decisions. Since parents have twenty years plus more life experience, and they have their children's best interests at heart, who better to guide them through life's challenges?

American parents, on the other hand, are seen as abandoning their children when they reach their teens. Because teenagers can work part-time and because they often live on their own when they go off to college, most people saw American children as separate from their families in ways they could not comprehend. They equated economic independence with emotional distance. They proudly claimed that Indian children upheld their *sanskar* or culture at all costs while American children coldly disregarded their elders.

Generational tensions between Pakistani and Gujarati families are particularly acute when it comes to marriage. Both communities forbid dating. In most cases, parents still expect their children to marry someone from their own caste or religious community. They want to choose a mate for their children or at least play a role in the decision. If you marry someone who shares your culture and values, because they've been raised like you, your

marriage is more likely to succeed. Since marriage is understood to be between two families, as well as two individuals, the prospects are better if the potential partners come from the same group.

Some families go back to the homeland in search of a mate. Others rely on a new kind of "introduction service" created in the United States for that very purpose. Gujarati associations around the country publish newsletters where people looking for mates post information about their physical characteristics, schooling, caste, and profession so interested parties can contact them. Regional caste associations host semi-annual gatherings where young people and their families can meet. As young people get to know one another during the ongoing lectures, meals, dances, and cultural performances, their futures are decided between breakfast and dinner.

Group self-preservation and fulfilling obligations transnationally requires a rescripting of ritual and responsibility and subtle shifts in power. Individual families, and communities in general, want to remain strong. To do so, they have to rewrite the rules, make space to maneuver at the margins, and diminish the social distance between the people who have always decided and those who have always obeyed their decisions. In some families, fathers no longer rule the roost since they now depend economically on their children. Their children enjoy heightened autonomy and are saddled with heightened responsibility. How respectful parents are and how well they listen may ultimately determine how much money they receive. As a result, even daughters are invited to the decision-making table.

How migrant children and grandchildren should care for their parents during their extended visits also poses difficult challenges. These in-house babysitters, who constantly teach homeland culture to grandchildren in danger of becoming too Americanized, can also be a demanding, unsatisfied presence. How to care for them is not only being rewritten by people in America but also by those who weigh-in from India and Pakistan. In such contexts, that still place a high value on consensus and conformity, the jury is still out on what an acceptable solution might be.

When grandparents come to the U.S. for extended visits they often feel extremely isolated. They are stuck in suburban neighborhoods, far from the friendly neighbors and shopkeepers they normally interact with everyday. Their children spend long hours away at work and their grandchildren are busy at school. Most do not drive, know little English, and find the cold weather unbearable. Shouldn't the daughter-in-law still be expected to make tea when she returns from her job even though she has been working all day? The weekend, these parents say, should be spent taking them to the temple or the mosque and to visit friends rather than attending their grandchildren's baseball games.

Stories about how children in America neglect their parents spread like wildfire. Sons and daughters considered so dutiful before they migrated now come up short. Their children are not being raised properly. Other parents cut short their visits and return home, all parties agreeing they are better off back among their neighbors and friends. Yet some acknowledge that you can't

expect the same things from people living in America. "Life is faster there and it's all about making money." Both parents have to work. The grandchildren have so many more pressures and activities. Appropriate generational relations are being renegotiated across borders. The meaning of morality is still a work in progress, negotiated across space, involving old and new actors and drawing upon a variety of scripts and assumptions from several places at once.

### **DO YOU PASS THE TEST?**

Becoming a pharmacist is an 'approved' career for Gujarati girls, Bindi, a twenty-three-year-old second generation Indian American told me. She and her friend Sonali were recalling the many Saturday nights they spent growing up together.<sup>3</sup> 'It was like you had your school friends,' Sonali said, 'but the message was clear that your real friends were the Indian families we got together with every weekend.' Bindi and Sonali live in middle-class towns in northeastern Massachusetts with few other Indian residents. In a way, it was a relief to get together on Saturdays and Sundays with kids who looked, ate, and had parents just like them. You didn't have to do any explaining or worry that your friends wouldn't like the way your house smelled or the food your mother served for dinner.

Growing up, Bindi said, you knew that all the Indian parents were watching you. If another family happened to live in your town, you were always looking over your shoulder to make sure they weren't there if you were with someone or going somewhere you weren't supposed to go. 'It was like the parents joined forces,' Bindi explained. 'The "uncles" and "aunties" were so

worried about us growing up right, they had no problem telling other people's children what to do.' Bindi felt under tremendous pressure to have proper manners and be a gracious host or guest because 'we were all expected to be perfect and we were constantly being compared to each other. In high school, she remembers always being asked what she wanted to do when she grew up. "I had no idea," she said, but I thought you were supposed to know, so I used to say "engineer" because that seemed to be a good answer. Everyone is supposed to be a doctor or an engineer but I really didn't even know what an engineer does.'

In many ways, kids like Sonalii and Bindi live between a rock and a hard place. Their parents are ambivalent about their assimilation into the United States and they communicate these mixed feelings to their children. They want their kids to fit in but not too much. The line between being 'too American' and 'too Indian' is never clear. Because they don't belong to a formal religious community that draws a line in the sand for its members, they have to figure out where that line is on their own. Kids often feel that if they excel with respect to one standard, they fail with respect to another.

When they leave for college, these same young adults have to decide who they are outside the context of their families. Their South Asian classmates automatically expect them to join the Asian Students Association. Their roommates ask them questions about Hinduism or Islam they cannot answer. The world makes assumptions about who they are, and they feel that they somehow come up short. This propels the Gujarati young man to seek out

the Hindu Student Advisor or the Muslim young woman to experiment with wearing a headscarf. It's a combination of things, Sonali and Bindi explained – finally being interested in learning about your traditions, rather than being forced to by your parents; being thrilled at finding a like-minded community that welcomes you with open arms; and feeling responsible for representing your group to the rest of the world. 'It was such a relief,' Bindi said, 'to talk about your parents and not have to explain anything to anyone because all your friends were going through the exact same thing. I couldn't believe there were twenty-five other girls who had families just like mine.'

While these kids grapple with being ethnic in America, they are also struggling with how to be a second-generation American in their ancestral home. This is another test with multiple masters. Most of the families I spoke with while conducting this study took their children back to their homelands on a regular basis. Some went back every year, staying for three or four months at a time. These trips were generally remembered in glowing terms, although they presented challenges. Perhaps the greatest was knowing that everyone was watching you. Just as Sonali and Bindi felt they were given a 'well-brought-up-test' every Saturday night, homeland vacations felt like extended report cards for parents and children.

Anika, a thirty-year old second generation Gujarati, lives with her parents in a small town near the New Hampshire border. Her parents are pillars of the local Swadhyaya Hindu community. She attended meetings even after she went to college, coming home on the weekends and teaching religious

school. Swadhyaya, she said, helped her have confidence in who she was and to do the right thing even when others were making the wrong choices. If anyone has been well trained about Indian culture, it is Anika.

Four years ago, Anika went back to India with her father. While it was officially a trip to see her grandparents, everyone knew it was really about meeting a potential mate. Her father told her to be herself but she could tell she was being carefully scrutinised. If she didn't show enough respect, if she wasn't suitably humble, or if her compliments to the chef were not sufficiently effusive, she could sense the disapproval. She wasn't sure how to make things right. 'It felt like I was somewhere where all the things we learned at Swadhyaya were being lived everyday, but that the rules were slightly different. I couldn't quite get it right.'

Still, when I visited her family two years later, her relatives could not sing her praises loudly enough. She was right in assuming that they were watching her carefully. But they were satisfied by what they saw. They were also willing to give her the benefit of the doubt because they could see she was trying, as her uncle in Gujarat described,

My brother visited with his daughter Anika in 1999. We hadn't seen them in more than five years. We were wondering what she would be like. Some kids come back here and it's like they are allergic to India. They don't like the food, the dust, and the heat. She was very different. She was very interested in everything. She was very respectful. She didn't wait to be waited on. I told my brother he had done a good job raising her. It is possible to bring up good Indian children in America.

People like Anika, who want so hard to fit in, also find it difficult when they can only get so far. Ahmed, a seventeen-year-old second generation

Pakistani-American, said he tried to look more Pakistani when he went shopping in Karachi so the shopkeepers wouldn't try to cheat him. "I stayed out in the sun all day long so I'd be darker. Otherwise, they can tell you don't live there and always try to charge you more." Jao, also seventeen, recalled how he felt so at home when he first went back to Brazil but that he gradually realized he was more American than he thought. "I loved how everyone was so friendly and how they always had time to stop and spend time with you. But after a while, you ask yourself, how does anyone ever get anything done around here? I don't think I could live like that all the time."

The test for Irish-American authenticity is less strenuous. The bar is lower -- set at Irish step dancing or singing Celtic songs not at speaking Gaelic or performing religious rituals. When Pat Jordan, a second generation Irish American in his fifties, spoke about what was important for his kids to know about Irishness, he said he wanted to make sure "they could sing and dance with the best of them."

I could sing all the Irish songs, not like I was a great singer, but I enjoyed it, you know, and you know you get together at a party, have a few beers, relax and start singing. Then the next thing I know, lot of people start to do this, it's not just me, now my kids all do it. They all, the youngest is an Irish step dancer very accomplished. The older ones used to sing but they don't anymore. My sons can recite Irish poetry. Sings lots of songs. The girls will reluctantly, one of them actually can't carry a tune at all, but give her credit for trying. So I'm glad that it's caught on with my children. Last summer I met up with my son and a friend of his over in Belfast and although he was only with me for five days, we visited both sides of the family, in Malin head and down in Mayo, he can't wait to go back because now he sees what I saw. And the feeling that I felt, feel, of being home. It's amazing. It's hard to explain.

## THE OSSIFICATION EFFECT

Sanjeev would not have called himself a religious man before he emigrated from India. He allowed his wife to do *puja* in their home, just as he had humored his mother by going along with her ministrations when he still lived under her roof. He was, after all, an Indian living in India. Hinduism was part of his everyday life without him ever having to do much about it.

But as is the case with so many immigrants, once he reached the United States, he changed his tune. He feared losing his roots. When he visited his children's school, it sent shudders down his spine. The girls wore such short skirts. There was no discipline. Although he had always taken his family to the temple on holidays, the school visit was his "tipping point." He knew something had to change. He became stricter about his diet. He set up a *mandir* or small temple in his home and started getting up early so he could say prayers before work. He started bringing his family to the temple every weekend.

Ramchandra, Sanjeev's uncle, who I met during a visit to India, was struck by the changes he observed in his nephew over the years. When Sanjeev first came back to visit Gujarat, he didn't notice much of a difference. Sanjeev would arrive, spend time with the family, visit his favorite haunts, and, maybe on his fifth or sixth day back, go to the temple. As time passed, however, Sanjeev changed dramatically. "He gets off the plane," said Ramchandra, "and the first thing he does is go straight to the temple. The whole day is spent praying and visiting holy sites. He tells us what we do wrong. He was never so interested in religion before and now, it's all he talks about."

Sanjeev's experience is not uncommon. Migrants often turn to religion to reaffirm their identities and values.<sup>4</sup> While people in India don't have to work at their faith, those living outside the country do. For the first time, they have to choose Hinduism, rather than imbibe it by osmosis. They have to make decisions about how to practice their faith rather than having everything decided for them. Since most people receive only minimal religious education as children, they need to study, figure out what it is all about, and then, pass it down to their own sons and daughters. But while they grapple with their faith, and often become more religious in the process, their relatives back home still operate according to the status quo.

The heightened religiosity of Gujaratis in America came up often in my conversations with people in Baroda.<sup>5</sup> "Do you know that they have prayer rooms in their houses?" one middle-aged man asked incredulously.

People who never thought twice about religion when they were here go to America and suddenly become super religious. It's awkward when they come back because you almost don't recognize them. They think that India is much more religious than it actually is and they come back expecting to find it that way. Well, India, for most of us, was never like that, and it's certainly not going to become like that now (Ram, age 55, nonmigrant in Baroda)

I call this disjuncture between emigrant and non-migrants' journeys, the Ossification Effect. Economic liberalization opened the floodgates to a range of goods and ideas that transformed the Indian middle class. Most migrants, however, left India when it was still firmly revolving around the Soviet axis and few products from outside the country crossed in. While migrants cling to the India or Pakistan of their memories, in which modesty, civility, and the

collective prevailed over the individual, their homelands have moved on. The consumer is king. The billionaire hi-tech entrepreneur, rather than the Gandhian humanitarian intellectual, is today's hero. Yet migrants still hold fast to the old version. They are shocked and deeply disappointed when they realize that things have changed. Their relatives, in turn, look at them like a kind of Rip-Van-Winkle who has been asleep while the world kept turning.

People from the Inishowen Peninsula in Ireland suffered from the same syndrome, though it was even more pronounced because it extended over generations. Second and third generation Irish-Americans still imagine an Ireland of thatched cottages, leprechauns, and green beer. Their contemporary counterparts blink at them in disbelief every time they have to listen to this fantasy.

Michael Clark is a second-generation "reactive" transnational activist. He enjoyed a successful career in public relations, in part, built on his strong connections with the Irish American community. Though he never thought much about Ireland, or traveled there until he was forty, he has become an ardent convert. During our three conversations, he described numerous business schemes he was planning; several involved Inishowen.

One idea was to build vacation homes outside Malin. There are so many people longing for a typical Irish experience, he explained. They want to stay in a thatched-roof cottage with turf burning in the stove. They want to go down to the local pub in the afternoons after a long walk in the countryside. "I thought we could make their dreams come true through a Time Share," he

said excitedly, "We'd be making people happy and making money at the same time."

Such plans make Michael's relatives in Ireland cringe. Angela and Tom, a young couple who are his second cousins, got to know Michael when they visited Boston about five years ago. While they cannot say enough about how kind and generous he was during their visit, they admit that they were overwhelmed by his love for their country. "He kept coming at us with these fantasies about leprechauns and sod. We're happy that he loves Ireland so much but it's not the Ireland that we know." By the time Michael visited the following year, his whole "act" had grown old. Even when he came here, they said, he couldn't see that the Ireland he imagined was a thing of the past. "And now he wants to make money by selling the fantasy. Well, maybe it will work."

Many of the new Irish living in Boston agreed. They were sick of running into Irish Americans who thought they knew everything about Ireland and wanted to tell their "fellow countrymen" all about it. They needed Ireland to remain religious even though, as one immigrant noted, "the Church is imploding." "Ireland has the highest per capita growth in all of Europe," they wanted to scream. We are a modern, industrialized, computerized nation. We are not playing fiddles up on the bog any more. They felt they had much more in common with the Vietnamese immigrants living alongside them in Dorchester<sup>6</sup> who were also hard at work, saving money, and not living in some non-existent past. "If I have to listen to one more story about the old country," Liam, a twenty-eight year old said, "I am going to die."

Yeah, you know it always makes me laugh when there's some news story breaking in Ireland and they go to South Boston to get people's comments. And I think, they're Irish Americans, maybe two or three generations, not that there's anything wrong with that, but they're not Irish. They've got this old image of Ireland, the thatched cottage, you know what their grandparents told them, and I think what are they doing over there? What can people living in South Boston possibly have to say about what's going on in Ireland today? (Sean, 23-year-old migrant, Boston).

## CONCLUSION

Central to the project of transnational migration studies 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. We need a deeper and broader analytical lens because migrants and, to varying degrees, their children are 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, race, and class need to be revisited.

Once we rethink the boundaries of social life, it becomes clear that the incorporation of individuals into nation-states and transnational connections are not contradictory social processes. Simultaneity, or living incorporated into daily activities, routines, and institutions located both in a destination country and transnationally is the reality for increasing numbers of migrants and their descendents. While the children of immigrants will be socialized primarily by the institutions in the countries where they live, and their mobility prospects primarily shaped by these as well, they also have access to ideas, social networks, and

social capital in their ancestral homes that can strongly influence their life trajectories.

This article presents an ethnography of simultaneity which reveals the cross-border construction of gender, generation, and right and wrong. How the children of immigrants come to understand class, race, ethnic, and religious diversity, and what they want to do about it, are also composites of their experiences in the U.S. and their ancestral homes.

Moreover, the social fields in which immigrants and their children are embedded are not only multi-sited but multi-layered. Their ideas and values are not merely the product of trans-local linkages between communities of origin and destination. These shape and are shaped by other levels of cross-border connection that emerge between regions, states, and global organizational actors. What flows between families, households, and local communities is also influenced by the encounter and ultimate accommodation between different national ideologies and practices. In turn, encounters between national practice and ideology are also influenced by global values packages, articulated by global organizations and social movements, which produce and disseminate another cultural layer where ideas and practices can be appropriated by the second generation.

The potential impact of growing up in a transnational social field, therefore, cannot be overlooked. The second generation is situated between a variety of different, often competing generational, ideological, and moral reference points, including those of their parents, their grandparents, and their

own real and imagined perspectives about their multiple homelands.

Ultimately, their prospects for mobility and their stance on morality and inter-group relations combines images, obstacles and possibilities from all levels and sites of these fields.

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### Notes

1. For a more in-depth discussion of the study methodology, see Levitt 2007.
2. For a review of transnational migration scholarship to date, see Levitt and Jaworsky 2007.
3. These data were collected as part of a study of transnational migration and religion among four immigrant communities living in the Boston metropolitan area. Nearly 250 interviews were conducted with Irish Catholics from the Inishowen Peninsula in County Donegal, Pakistani Muslims from Lahore and Karachi, Hindus from Gujarat State, India, and Protestants from Governador Valadares in Brazil. I also conducted at least 50 interviews with their family members in each sending country. The study methodology and sample characteristics are described in detail in Levitt (2007).
4. There is a widespread perception among migration scholars that migration is a sacralizing experience (Hirschmann 2004). But the context of reception also plays a significant role in how religious, or not, migrants become. The same Italians, for example, who became devout Catholics when they moved to the United States, became anarchists when they moved to Argentina (Casanova 2003).
5. One reason this is such a frequent topic of conversation is the widespread belief that Nonresident Indians are politically and financially behind the recent rise in Hindu nationalism in India (See for example, Blom Hansen 1991, Kurien 2001, and others).
6. A traditional immigrant receiving neighborhood in Boston.