

Roots and Routes: Understanding the Lives of the Second Generation Transnationally

Peggy Levitt

While using a transnational optic to study first-generation immigrants is now widely accepted, most scholars assume that the same approach is not necessary when studying migrants' children. They claim that, while immigrants might be involved in the economic, political and religious life of their homelands, their children are unlikely to follow suit. In this paper I argue against summarily dismissing the power of being raised in a transnational social field. When children are brought up in households that are regularly influenced by people, objects, practices and know-how from their ancestral homes, they are socialised into its norms and values and they learn how to negotiate its institutions. They also form part of strong social networks. While not all members of the second generation will access these resources, they have the social skills and competencies to do so, if and when they choose. Capturing these dynamics, and tracking how they change over time, requires long-term ethnographic research in the source and destination countries.

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Introduction

Migration scholars now recognise that many people maintain ties to their countries of origin at the same time as 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 (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004; Morawska 2004). Many predict, however, that transnational attachments will confine themselves to the first generation. The children of immigrants are not likely to engage in their ancestral homes with the same intensity

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and frequency as their parents, nor will they be as influenced by homeland values and practices (Kasinitz *et al.* 2008).

While I agree that the children of immigrants will not participate in their ancestral homes in the same ways and with the same regularity as their parents, I argue that we should not dismiss outright the strong potential effect of being raised in a transnational social field. When children grow up in households and participate in organisations in which people, goods, money, ideas and practices from their parents' countries of origin circulate in and out on a regular basis, they are not only socialised into the rules and institutions of the countries where they live, but also into those of the countries from whence their families come. They acquire social contacts and skills that are useful in both settings. They master several cultural repertoires that they can selectively deploy in response to the opportunities and challenges they face.

In addition, the norms governing family and community life are constantly renegotiated when they are enacted across borders. The lines between the home and the host country and between the first and the second generation blur, making them one interconnected social experience. The children of immigrants are at least witnesses, if not active protagonists, in this drama. The thicker and deeper these social ties become, the more they are institutionalised. The religious organisations, social groups and political parties in which the second generation participates reflect this reality and therefore perpetuate it.

The ability to manage several cultural repertoires at once and to access social networks in several contexts can strongly influence mobility trajectories. Children apply these values and social contacts at school, at work or at the church or mosque. Just as membership in tightly-knit ethnic communities in a host country embeds children in powerful, often protective social networks that create opportunities as well as obligations, so even indirect, almost-by-osmosis membership in the homeland community is also a potential source of power, information and support.

The extent to which the second generation takes advantage of these resources changes over the life-course. Some social relations and skill sets remain latent. Others are activated when someone faces a particular occupational or social challenge. Still others come in handy every day. Bringing these dynamics to light requires studying transnational practices ethnographically over time and space. Looking solely at the factors shaping economic and social mobility inside the country of settlement, or evaluating them at only one point in time, is to see just one side of the relevant coin.

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 Pakistan, 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 Pakistani members of the second generation. I then travelled to each community of origin, where I spoke with at least 50 family members and friends and took part in numerous religious ceremonies, family events and celebrations (Levitt 2007).¹

This research strategy allowed me to assess how people construct boundaries, meaning and morality using multiple repertoires 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 track how migrants, non-migrants and their children who belong to the same households and communities, saw both sides of their shared experience.

As my fieldwork focused on the first generation, I want here to raise a cautionary flag based on what my limited conversations with the second generation revealed. While their lives were shaped overwhelmingly by the experience of growing up in the United States, it was clear as well that values and practices from their ancestral homes also figured large and small in their daily lives. To varying degrees they participated in homeland social and economic life and they were hard at work trying to figure out how to somehow combine home- and host-country values and practices in order to meet competing expectations about gender, generation and community. The opportunities and challenges that arise from simultaneously managing several cultural repertoires are described below.

Theoretical Debates

Transnational migration takes place within fluid social spaces that are constantly reworked through migrants’ simultaneous embeddedness in more than one context (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004; Pries 2005; Smith 2006). These arenas are multi-layered and multi-sited, including not only the home and the host countries 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, goods and ‘social remittances’ (ideas, norms, practices and identities) within these spaces also transforms non-migrants’ lives, even though they do not move (Levitt 2001). While the numbers who regularly engage in transnational practices may be fairly small, those who engage in occasional informal transnational activities—in response to elections, economic downturns, life-cycle events and climatic 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).²

There is a large body of work on the experiences of the children of immigrants in the United States and their social and economic incorporation, based on data collected almost entirely within its borders. Much of this work engages only superficially in a dialogue with transnational migration scholarship.³ It continues to view incorporation as a product of forces at work within receiving countries rather than as a combination of factors in the source and receiving societies as well as around the world. Because most of the children of immigrants have no plans to return to live in their ancestral homes, and because they are not completely fluent in their parents’ mother tongue, many scholars conclude that transnational activism among the second generation is of little importance. A recent study of the second

generation in New York City found that transnational practices varied by group, according to geographic distance between the home and host countries, homeland politics and the frequency of visiting and remitting money home (Kasinitz *et al.* 2008). Transnational parents, according to Alba and Nee (2003) and Kasinitz and his colleagues (2004), do not necessarily produce transnational children.

On the other hand, transnational migration scholars—many of whom collect data in the host *and* home countries—have identified striking changes in social life, documenting transformations in kinship and family structure. They find changes in the construction of class, gender and race that also affect the lives of the second generation. Gendered differences in power and status characterise family networks that cross borders (Pessar and Mahler 2003; Smith 2006). Because migrants need to maintain ties so that they have social contacts and support if they decide to return home, kin networks can be used exploitatively, through a process of transnational class differentiation in which more-prosperous family members extract labour from less-powerful people whom they have defined as kin (Ballard 2001; Bryceson and Vuorela 2002; Chamberlain 2002). A transnational moral economy often involves putting family first—for example, pursuing kin-based strategies for collective mobility or marrying into the right kinship network in order to accumulate social capital in the host society (Ballard 2001; Fog Olwig 2002; Schmalzbauer 2004). For the children of immigrants, marriage options, occupational choices and the amount of resources available to pursue life plans are all dependant on the weave of this moral economic fabric.

The boundaries of family and kinship also change over the life-course (Espiritu 2003; Levitt and Waters 2002; Smith 2006). In many households, living transnationally across generations becomes the norm. Whether individuals ultimately forge or maintain some kind of cross-border connection largely depends on the extent to which they are 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, individuals who previously showed little regard for a parental homeland and culture activated 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 gendered experiences of parents, children and the elderly. This work finds that the downside of transnational motherhood is that 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 allow parents to be actively involved in the everyday lives of their children, even over long distances (Levitt 2001; Mahler 2001; Parreñas 2005; Schmalzbauer 2004). Mazzucato (2008) 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 also documented increases in the number of 'circulating' children and elderly people who move constantly between places of origin and of settlement in order to reduce the costs of social reproduction, promote learning of the mother tongue and culture and remove children from what is perceived as the negative and undisciplined social environment in the United States (Menjívar 2002; Parreñas 2001).

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 conceptualise and act upon gender norms, and can cause clashes between the ways in which migrants and non-migrants view the world. Carling (2008) argues that three intrinsic asymmetries characterise 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 a more egalitarian footing with men (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001). They provide their children with a different kind of role model. The flipside, however, reveals that gender distinctions are sometimes reinforced and reinvented to create hierarchies that are even more rigid and 'traditional' than in the homeland (Alumkal 1999; Çağlar 1995; Espiritu 1992). This complex web of gender relations extends beyond the family, as women work at jobs they may never have had at home, join community associations or become active at church. Messages regarding appropriate public and private behaviour in the homeland and the receiving context are sometimes difficult to reconcile (DeBiaggi 2002; Pessar and Mahler 2003; Salih 2003). Moreover, state policies pertaining to welfare, child care, maternity benefits and voter registration also affect men's and women's differing abilities to exercise multiple memberships, reflecting the gendered nature of migration (Çağlar 2002). Finally, the sheer number of women who migrate has grown tremendously over the past two decades—a special volume of *International Migration Review* focuses on 'the feminisation of migration', emphasising 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 (Gardner and Grillo 2002; Mahler and Pessar 2006; Willis 2000). The impetus to participate across borders and the ability to do so varies by each. The differentiated nature of labour migration affects more than 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 to selectively assimilate elements of where they come from and where they settle (Levitt 2007; Pluss 2005; Raj 2003).

Further, migrants and their children often confront an entirely different racial and class hierarchy than the one in place in their homeland. Their home- and host-country mobility trajectories are not always in sync. They may move up with respect to the home and host countries, 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 at least two, often conflicting, socio-economic and racial stratification systems and to locate themselves within them, using measures that reflect the multiple places where they live (Ferree and Tripp 2006; Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004; Raj 2003; Roth 2006; Smith 2006).

Smith's work (2006) on second-generation Mexican Americans in New York makes a compelling argument for the need to take seriously the impact of growing up in a transnational social field, and its effect on socialisation and social networks. The young people he studied inhabit social spaces where competing gender values were at play. Changes in Mexico and the US, and those precipitated by migration, actively transform these competing masculinities and femininities. They are not enacted in two separate social spaces but in one interconnected social field. It is not simply a matter of more freedom in the US and more repression in Mexico. Instead, writes Smith, gender roles are simultaneously and interactively renegotiated in Mexico and the United States. Gender strategies are reconstructed with respect to several competing referents: Mexican American men, white middle-class men, the striving immigrant and other Mexican and American stereotypes. A child's need to compensate his or her parents for migrating by succeeding at school and at work also shapes identity formation. The resulting compromise and the values that undergird it work differently in Mexico than in the United States.

Moreover, transnational attachments among the second generation changed over time. While incorporation and transnational activism seemed to reinforce each other among adolescents, they seemed to work at cross-purposes in early adulthood. The story did not end there; many among the first generation saw Mexico as a place where they could comfortably rest and retire. According to Smith, this sowed the seeds for the potential transnational involvement of the third generation, brought back to visit by retired grandmothers now responsible for their care.

Thus, intrinsic asymmetries characterise relations between migrants, non-migrants and their children but there are strong imperatives for reconciling them. Migrants need non-migrants to care for young and old relatives who stay behind, to manage their affairs, compensate them for the decline in status which migrants 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. Non-migrants need migrants for economic support 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 which the migrant remembers is not the same as non-migrants' everyday realities. Thus, asymmetries result from temporal as well as moral disjunctures. They also arise

because of the increasingly distinct cultural references and meanings used by each group.

This is the context of the second-generation experience. Even if they rarely visit their ancestral homes or are not fluent in its language, they are often raised in settings that reference the homeland ideologically, materially and affectively each day. They are socialised directly and indirectly into the asymmetries and disjunctures inherent in the transnational social field and are part of the cast of characters who resolve them.

In the following section, I offer three vignettes that show how the lives of the second generation are shaped in subtle and not-so-subtle ways by values and practices from near and far, and the balancing act that ensues in order to manage the tensions between them. These examples bring to light the potential power of growing up in a transnational social field, how it shapes ideas about gender, generation and morality, and the expanded repertoire accessed by the second generation.

Doing *Dharma* Transnationally

Pankaj, a 59-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.

While doing fieldwork I met Brazilian, Irish and Pakistani 'Pankajs' who also had clear notions about family responsibility. For them, caring for family was a religious as well as a cultural duty. How well someone fulfills that duty reflects on that person and on his or her family as well. 'I may be 90', said Dharati, a 32-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 migrate to a place where it becomes more difficult to satisfy those obligations? How are *dharma* and responsibility redefined for children and grandchildren who fulfill their responsibilities across borders?

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 20s, 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 study. '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 their children's best interests at heart, and over 20 years more life experience, 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 to college, most Indian informants 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. Their logic is that, if you marry someone who shares your culture and values, your marriage is more likely to succeed because he or she has been raised like you. Since marriage is understood to be between two families as well as two individuals, the prospects for success 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. Gujarati associations around the country publish newsletters where people looking for partners post information about their physical characteristics, schooling, caste and profession so that interested parties may contact them. Regional caste associations host semi-annual gatherings where young people and their families can meet. As the young people get to know one another during the whirlwind of lectures, meals, dances and cultural performances, their futures are decided between breakfast and dinner.

Preserving the group and fulfilling obligations across borders require a re-scripting of ritual and responsibility and subtle shifts in power. Most families, and communities in general, want to remain cohesive. To do so they must rewrite the rules, make space to manoeuvre at the margins and diminish the social distance between the traditional decision-makers and those who have typically obeyed them. In some cases, fathers can no longer demand absolute rule of the roost because they are economically dependent on their children, who gain greater autonomy but are also saddled with more responsibility. The respect parents show their children and how well they listen may ultimately determine how much money they receive. As a result, even daughters are sometimes invited to the decision-making table.

Extended visits by the older generation also pose difficult challenges. These in-house babysitters anxiously pass on homeland culture to grandchildren whom they fear are in danger of becoming too Americanised, and can thus be a demanding, unsatisfied presence. How to care for them is not only being reconceptualised by people in America but also by those who weigh in from India and Pakistan.

When grandparents come to the US for extended visits they often feel extremely isolated. They are stuck in suburban neighbourhoods, far from the friendly neighbours and shopkeepers they normally interact with every day. Their children spend long hours away at work and their grandchildren are busy at school. Most grandparents 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 in living-rooms in Karachi and Gujarat. 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 that they are better off back among their neighbours and friends. Yet some acknowledge that they 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, and 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 23-year-old second-generation Indian American told me. She and her friend Sonali were recalling the many Saturday nights they spent growing up together. '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 north-eastern Massachusetts with few other Indian residents. In a way, it was a relief for them to get together on Saturdays and Sundays with kids who looked, ate and had parents just like them. They didn't have to do any explaining or worry that their friends wouldn't like the way the house smelled or the food their 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 tremendous pressure to exhibit 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, youngsters like Sonali 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 do not 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. Children 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 which 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 25 other girls who had families just like mine.’

While these young people grapple with being ethnic in America, they also struggle with how to be a second-generation American in their ancestral home. This is another test with multiple masters. Most of the families I interviewed 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 (the bugs and the lack of air conditioning or running water took some getting used to). Perhaps the greatest challenge 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 30-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 at the weekend to teach religious school. Swadhyaya, she said, helped her to believe in herself and have the confidence to do the right thing even when others were making the wrong choices. If anyone has been well trained in 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 finding her a potential mate. Her father told her to be herself but she could tell that 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 every day, but that the rules were slightly different. I couldn't quite get it.'

Yet, 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 much to fit in, find it difficult when they can only get so far. Ahmed, a 17-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 17, recalled how he felt so at home when he first went back to Brazil but then gradually realised 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 and not at speaking Gaelic or performing religious rituals. When Pat Jordan, a second-generation Irish-American in his 50s, spoke about what was important for his children 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 . . . sing 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.

What it means to be a good hyphenated-American and what it means to be a good Indian or Brazilian raised in another land are also being rewritten across space. The expectations often conflict with each other and it is not necessary to move to feel their effect. Children who never travel back to their ancestral home nevertheless often come into contact with its values and practices through regular phone calls, instant messaging and visits from those in the homeland. They learn its rules, belong—if only marginally—to its social networks and know how to access its resources, if and when they choose to do so.

The Ossification Effect

Sanjeev would not have called himself a religious man before he emigrated from India. He allowed his wife to do *puja* (prayers) in their home, just as he had humoured 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, Sanjeev changed his tune once he reached the United States. He feared losing his roots. A visit to his children's school sent shudders down his spine—the girls wore such short skirts and there was no discipline. Although he had always taken his family to the temple during the 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, and then started bringing his family to the temple every weekend.

Ramchandra, Sanjeev's uncle, whom 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 as 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.⁴ While people in India do not have to work at their faith, those living outside the country do. For the first time, they have to *choose* Hinduism, rather than *be* it by living and breathing it every day. They have to make decisions about how to practise 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. Yet, 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.⁵ ‘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 recognise 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, 55, non-migrant in Baroda).

I call this disjuncture between emigrants’ and non-migrants’ journeys, the ‘ossification effect’. Economic liberalisation opened the floodgates to a range of goods and ideas that transformed the Indian middle class. Most migrants, however, left India when it still revolved firmly 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 realise that things have changed. Their relatives, in turn, look at them as Rip Van Winkles who have been asleep while the world kept turning. Their children not only have to figure out how to be a good hyphenated-American and member of the homeland at the same time, they have to do it with conflicting information.

People from the Inishowen Peninsula in Ireland suffered from the same syndrome, though it was even more pronounced because it extended over a greater number of generations. Second- and third-generation Irish-Americans still imagine an Ireland of thatched cottages, leprechauns and green beer. 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, built in part on his strong connections with the Irish-American community. Though he never thought much about Ireland, or travelled there until he was 40, he has become an ardent devotee. During our three conversations, he described numerous business schemes he was planning; several involved Inishowen.

One idea was to build holiday 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 and second cousins of Michael's, got to know him 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 with Angela and Tom's sentiments. 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. Irish-Americans 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, industrialised, computerised nation. We are not playing fiddles up on the bog any more'. New Irish felt they had much more in common with the Vietnamese immigrants living alongside them in Dorchester⁶ 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, I am going to die', said 28-year-old Liam.

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

The second generation is situated between a variety of different and 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. Their prospects for social mobility, and their stance on morality and inter-group relations, combine images, obstacles and possibilities from all levels and sites of the transnational social fields in which they live. Their possibilities for getting ahead are a function of the degree to which the children of immigrants actually participate in the economic and social affairs of their ancestral homes and how much circulating ideas and practices influence their social and economic activities, wherever they are enacted.

Most children of immigrants ultimately embrace the norms and institutions of the place where they are raised. Some children, more deeply and intensely embedded in transnational social fields, do not simply choose between the home and the host-land. Instead they strike a balance, albeit tenuous, between the competing resources and constraints circulating within these fields, and deploy them effectively in response to the opportunities and challenges that present themselves. Their experiences are not just a continuation of the first generation's involvement in their ancestral homes but an integral part of growing up in a new destination. This is a different picture of adolescence to that depicted by much of the literature. Rather than being caught between the pressure both to Americanise and to preserve homeland traditions, the children of immigrants create a complex set of practices of their own. Adolescence becomes transnationalised and institutionalised, such that it structures the lives of subsequent members of the second generation who later come of age.

How and when the second generation accesses particular elements of their cultural repertoire varies considerably by group. Kasinitz *et al.* (2008) found more transnational activism among their Dominican, West Indian and South American respondents. More women than men, respondents with co-ethnic spouses, people who preferred speaking a language other than English and frequent listeners to ethnic media were more likely to engage in transnational practices. Working in an ethnic enclave had surprisingly little impact.

My research also suggests the salience of class. The upper- and middle-class Pakistani and Gujarati families in my study, possessing the social and cultural capital to exploit advantages both in the US and in their homelands, choose transnational lives. They are raising their children to live and prosper in both settings—the business major who realises that speaking Urdu or understanding cultural cues in Pakistani society makes her a prime candidate for a career as a South Asian financial analyst, or the aspiring journalist who uses his family's connections to become the reporter for a London-based newspaper on Pakistanis living abroad.

Religion is also a powerful, under-explored motivator for second-generation transnational engagement. I conclude this essay with two stories to make my case. In a recent interview with two Indian-American Muslim college freshmen, the conversation turned to what they wanted to do when they grew up. The first, a boy who described himself as an observant Muslim, said he planned to study engineering so he could help build roads and bridges in Muslim countries. His faith taught him, he said, to choose a career that would allow him to spend his life helping his primary community—Muslims around the world. The young woman, who also described herself as observant, though less so, also said her choices were inspired by her faith. She said she wanted to become a lawyer so she could make a lot of money and help expand the Indian middle class. Her faith told her to work for poor people in her ancestral home. These experiences suggest that religion, as well as ethnicity and nationality, can motivate cross-border activism among the second generation and that the potential beneficiaries of these activities may be both co-religionists and co-nationals living around the world.

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] One notable exception is Haller and Landolt (2005), who use the third wave of The Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS) to explore the relationship between segmented assimilation, nationality, and identities and practices associated with transnationalism. They find that selective acculturation is associated with greater transnational involvement, and some evidence that downward assimilation is associated with higher rates of sending remittances among some nationalities. They argue that these findings are not contradictory; rather they are indicative of differences in transnational activism according to class, ethnicity and nationality.
- [4] There is a widespread perception among migration scholars that migration is a sacralising 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 why this heightened religiosity is such a frequent topic of conversation is the widespread belief that non-resident Indians are politically and financially behind the recent rise in Hindu nationalism in India (see, for example, Blom Hansen 1991; Kurien 2001).
- [6] A traditional immigrant-receiving neighbourhood in Boston.

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