"You Know, Abraham Was Really the First Immigrant": Religion and Transnational Migration

Peggy Levitt
Wellesley College and Harvard University

The purpose of this article is to summarize what we know about the role that religion plays in transnational migration and to outline a strategy for further research in this area. While migration scholars now generally acknowledge the salience of migrants' economic, social, and political transnational activities, we have largely overlooked the ways in which religious identities and practices also enable migrants to sustain memberships in multiple locations. My goals in this article are threefold. First, I provide a brief overview of related bodies of work on global, diasporic and immigrant religion and differentiate them from studies of migrants' transnational religious practices. Second, I selectively summarize what we have learned about the role of religion in transnational migration from prior research. Finally, I propose an approach to future research on these questions.[1]

GLOBAL, DIASPORIC AND TRANSNATIONAL RELIGION VS. THE RELIGIOUS PRACTICES OF TRANSNATIONAL MIGRANTS – WHAT IS THE CONNECTION?

The study of world or global religions has a long history. Much of this work grew out of the West's attempt to make sense of non-Christian or Eastern religions. With the exception of research on the Catholic Church, most of these studies focus on specific religious traditions in a single setting rather than on

[1]My thanks to Josh DeWind, John Eade, Sarah Mahler, Manuel Vásquez, and an anonymous reviewer for their insightful comments on earlier drafts of this paper. The names of respondents are all pseudonyms. My focus is on the United States because, to the best of my knowledge, no systematic attempt has been made to summarize the scholarship on the transnational religious practices of migrants to this region. In addition, much of the literature on the religious lives of North American and European migrants focuses primarily on the receiving country (*i.e.*, Metcalf, 1996; Clarke, Peach, and Vertovec 1990; Vertovec and Peach, 1997; Ebaugh and Chafetz, 2002; Warner and Wittner, 1998; and Schiffauer, 1988. Selective notable exceptions include Gardner, 1995; Huwelmeier, 2001; Eickelman and Piscatori, 1990; and Sahin, 2001). By purposely narrowing my focus, I do not wish to suggest that European and U.S. scholarship should be considered separately. In fact, one goal of the conference that produced this volume was to explore the continuities and discontinuities between the two.

the cross-border connections that like communities share. Recent work on global religions brings to light the ways in which they create international connections that engender universal identities. Because, as Beyer (2001) argues, religion is a global societal system as transnational in its operation as the economy or the nation-state, it is no surprise that migrants use religious institutions to live their transnational lives. Religion and, in particular, religious movements operating in broad geographic contexts, engage in increasingly homogenized forms of worship and organization creating global communities that locals then join. Followers can choose from an array of membership options which reach far beyond their communities and cultures and transform local religious life (Van Dijk, 1997).

A second body of work concerns religion's role in heightened globalization. These researchers debate whether religion functions as a discrete, homogenizing force in its own right or if it is an arena within which individuals assert particularistic, localized identities in the face of globalization. Neo-institutionalists, such as John Meyer and his colleagues (1997), describe globally-diffused models of cultural, political and economic organization which limit the construction of difference. In contrast, Robertson (1991) argues that globalization allows for greater religious diversity because individuals construct local religious identities in relation to the world as a whole rather than in response to their small corner of it.

Studies of diasporic religion or religion in the diaspora grew out of heightened scholarly interest in diasporas in general. This work responds to the widespread recognition that social, economic and political life increasingly transcend national borders and cultures and that individuals sustain multiple identities and loyalties and create culture using elements from various settings (Cohen, 1999). Notions of diaspora and diasporic religion have played a more central role in European scholarship than they have in the United States.[2] The distinct intellectual traditions these conversations build upon partially explains this difference. The Birmingham School, for example, explores identity construction and the role of consciousness and subcultures in encouraging collective solidarity at the social margins. Postcolonial studies, with its emphasis on the continuing legacy of empire, has also strongly influenced diaspora studies. These explore how discursive practices and identities are constructed and imagined during the colonial, national and post-colonial periods. While this work generally tells us a lot about the trans-

[2]Exceptions are U.S.-based scholars of diaspora and postcolonialism such as Kachig Tololyan, James Clifford, and Arjun Appadurai who are also important contributors to these debates.

formation of religious life in the immigrant context, it has less to say about the ways in which migration continues to transform sending-country life. It tends to treat migrant and nonmigrant religious life as discrete entities rather than as occurring within the same transnational social field and influencing each other.

In contrast, studies of transnational migration are largely an American product that are, in part, intended to counterbalance race and ethnic and immigration scholarship's focus on immigrant incorporation. These researchers seek to challenge conventional wisdom about immigrant political and economic integration by demonstrating that individuals stay connected to their host communities even as they put down roots in the United States. The role that religion plays in enabling transnational membership has only recently begun to be taken into account. For instance, Rudolph and Piscatori's *Transnational Religion and Fading States* (1997), one of the few books employing a vocabulary of transnational religion, has little to do with immigration. Instead, "transnational" is used to capture the ways in which global or world religions create a transnational civil society that challenges nation-states and security interests as they have been traditionally understood (Eickelman, 1997; Levine and Stoll, 1997) Another set of articles documents the macro-level connections between global religious actors that cross national boundaries (Baker, 1997; Della Cava, 1997).

Research on the religious practices of transnational migrants are connected to the literature on global and diasporic religion because transnational migration households, congregations and communities are sites where diasporic, global and transnational religions are created. The hybridized or creolized religious beliefs and practices that the migration experience gives rise to emerge where local and global religious influences converge. Global religious institutions shape the transnational migration experience at the same time that migrants chip away at and recreate global religions by making them local and then starting the process anew. Transnational migrants bring particular incarnations of global religion with them, create new forms by combining what they bring with what they encounter, and then reintroduce these ideas, practices, identities, and social capital – or what I call social remittances – back to their sending communities (Levitt, 1999). Furthermore, migrant religious institutions are also sites where globally-diffused models of social organization and local responses come together to produce new mixes of religious beliefs and practices. The study of transnational migration and religion, therefore, provides an empirical window onto one way in which religious globalization actually gets done.

One of the reasons the connections between these bodies of work have been underdeveloped in much of the literature is that the levels, scope and sites of transnational migration and their position within the global arena have not been well specified. Let me suggest one mapping of this terrain. My comments are summarized in Table 1.

TABLE 1
LEVELS AND COMPONENTS OF THE TRANSNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FIELD

1.	Individual transnational religious practices, including such things as formal and informal devotional practices enacted alone or in groups and in popular and institutionalized settings, tithing or periodic contributions to home-country religious groups, fundraising, hosting visiting religious leaders, consulting home-country religious leaders, and pilgrimages. Both the objective and subjective dimensions of the religious experience must be taken into account.
2.	The organizational contexts in which transnational migrants enact their religious lives.
3.	The ties between local transnational organizations and their host and home-country regional, national, and international counterparts.
4.	The role of states.
5.	The role of global culture and institutions.

Transnational migrants are individuals who live aspects of their social, economic and political lives in at least two settings. They establish themselves in their host countries while they continue to earn money, vote and pray in their countries of origin. In certain settings, the impact of these activities is felt primarily by those who actually move, while in others their strength and scope is so powerful and widespread that aspects of nonmigrants' lives are enacted transnationally as well. Some migrants participate in transnational activities on a regular basis while others do so only occasionally, in response to a crisis or special event. Some migrants engage in a wide range of economic, social and political transnational practices, while others confine their activities to a single arena of transnational activism. They have business interests in their sending communities but belong to religious organizations and participate in political activities that firmly locate them in the countries where they now reside (Levitt, 2001a).

The targets of these activities also vary. Some migrants participate in practices directed at local, bounded communities in their home and host countries, while the transnational practices in which others engage reinforce their membership in the sending country as a whole. For example, Dominican migration to the Jamaica Plain neighborhood of Boston from the sending community of Miraflores created a transnational village to which nonmigrants and migrants belonged. Many of the economic, social and political transnational activities in which these individuals participated were directed toward these local sites (Levitt, 2001b). In contrast, other migrants

engage in transnational practices which attest to their continued membership in the broader sending nation. When Irish Catholic migrants from the Inishowen Peninsula, who have settled in Boston, attend church and receive services from the Irish-government-supported Irish Pastoral Center, these activities do more to reinforce their ties to the broader nation of Ireland than to specific local settings.

One way that migrants stay connected to their sending communities is through transnational religious practices. These practices exhibit the same variations in form, intensity, target and scope that I have described. They are also reinforced by and give rise to religious organizations that may, in turn, assume transnational properties of their own. For example, some migrants sustain long-term, long-distance memberships in the religious organizations to which they belonged prior to migration. They still make significant financial contributions to these groups, raise funds to support their activities, host visiting religious leaders, seek long-distance spiritual and practical guidance from them, participate in worship and cultural events during return visits, and are the subject of nonmigrants' prayers in their absence. Other migrants participate in religious pilgrimages, worship particular saints or deities, or engage in informal, popular religious practices that affirm their continued attachments to a particular sending-country group or place.

Transnational religious identities and practices have both objective and subjective dimensions. The unobservable dimensions of religious life have often been given short shrift because the analytical tools we have to study them are undeveloped and undervalued. Religion plays a critical role in identity construction, meaning making, and value formation. Migrants also use religion to create alternative allegiances and places of belonging. The ways in which memory and imagination are used to create transnational identities must be taken into account.

The transnational religious practices of individuals are often reinforced by the organizational contexts within which they take place. For example, migrants may belong to host-country religious institutions that have formal ties to a home-country "sister congregation." They may belong to a group that functions as a franchise or chapter of a sending-country group that is regularly supervised and funded by home-country leaders. Or, the denomination that they belong to may form part of a worldwide religious institution that accepts them as members wherever they are.

To understand the role of religion in transnational migration, then, we must build from the ground up. We need to start by examining the ways in

which ordinary individuals live their everyday religious lives across borders, explore the ways in which these activities influence their continued sending and receiving-country membership, and analyze the relationship between cross-border religious membership and other kinds of transnational belonging. We need to understand what difference it makes for sending and receiving-country communities when migrants express their continued allegiances through religious rather than ethnic or political arenas. We need to explore these changes in both the home and host-country contexts and observe the ways in which they iteratively transform one another over time.

Research on the religious lives of transnational migrants must also be concerned with how local sending and receiving-country religious organizations respond to migration and with what changes, if any, these trigger at the regional, national and international organizational levels. For example, localized connections emerging between members and leaders of Brazilian Baptist churches in Governador Valadares in Brazil and in Framingham, Massachusetts must be analyzed within the context of the broader national and international denominational connections within which they emerge. This context-specific approach is particularly important when studying religious traditions not characterized by a unitary set of beliefs and practices, and with no central authority, because these vary considerably across settings.

Transnational migrants clearly live in multilayered global worlds. So while research on religion and transnational migration focuses on individuals and the local, regional and national organizations in which they participate, it must nest these processes within the multilayered social fields in which they take place. Of singular importance is the role of states, which regulate movement and religious expression and thereby strongly influence the magnitude and character of migrants' transnational religious practices.[3] The religious institutions created by Turkish migrants in Belgium, for example, are fostered by the almost wholesale transplantation of the Turkish religious infrastructure via official Belgian-Turkish channels. In his comparison of Moroccan (primarily Berber) and Turkish migrants in Belgium, Lesthaeghe (2002) found that Turkish migrants and their children were much more likely to engage in transnational practices, such as home ownership in Turkey or returning to Turkey to find a marriage partner, than their Moroccan counterparts. He partially attributes this difference to the Turkish government's ongoing involvement in the religious lives of its emigrants.

[3]Faist (2000), Menjívar (2002), and Smith (1995), among others, also stress the role of the state in shaping transnational activities.

Moroccans, in contrast, encountered a religious vacuum that was initially filled by Saudi-sponsored Islamic cultural activities and later by a range of cross-cutting fundamentalist influences. The net outcome for second generation Moroccans is that they form few religious or political linkages to their ancestral home and that the immigrant community is characterized by a high degree of secularism and religious fragmentation.

A second example of state influence becomes evident when we think about migrants from countries with little separation between church and state and contrast them with those who come from countries with greater religious pluralism. In countries such as Ireland or Pakistan, migrants are often hard-pressed to separate what is Pakistani or Muslim or Irish or Catholic about them. Religion and nationality reinforce one another. Such individuals are more likely to be transnational activists because two allegiances motivate their continuing identification.

Finally, global culture and institutions clearly shape migrants' transnational religious practices. Widely available and accepted models of religious institutionalization strongly influence the ways in which migrants combine host and homeland traditions. Because the "model" for praying and for administering Pentecostal churches is recognizable around the world, migrants can locate themselves in almost any church, no matter of where they are. They also have access to a familiar and agreed upon set of tools with which to organize their collective religious lives. That the tradition of pilgrimages or establishing holy sites is also readily recognizable and replicable is another way in which global religious institutions provide migrants with the tools and language they need to assert transnational belonging.

Again, this mapping of the transnational religious field that I have proposed tries to make explicit the link between studies of global and diasporic religion and studies of the religious practices of transnational migrants. Having said this, relatively little work has been done that directly examines the relationship between transnational migration and religion. In the following section, I selectively review research on three aspects of the religious lives of transnational migrants: their organizational dimensions, the relationship between transnational religious space and other forms of belonging, and the relationship between transnational religion and politics.

VARIATIONS IN TRANSNATIONAL MIGRANTS' RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS

Many transnational religious activities take place in individualized, infor-

mal settings. They combine formal religious elements with popular folk prac-
tices. But an important part of transnational religious life occurs within
organizational contexts. When migrants turn to religious arenas to assert
their memberships, religious organizations change in response. The more
these groups are structured, led and financed transnationally, the more they
facilitate transnational practices. Researchers have suggested several
approaches to categorizing transnational religious groups.

Ebaugh and Chafetz (2002) propose using network analysis to under-
stand religious connections across boundaries. They argue for studies that
examine variations in the density of network nodes and ties, the direction of
material and social flows, and the intensity of these flows. Their research
examined the relationship between network ties between individuals, local-
level corporate bodies, and international religious bodies and found that ties
frequently crossed between various types of nodes. For example, at one end
of their proposed spectrum, ties between a Mexican Catholic Church in
Houston and its sending community of Monterrey were almost completely
interpersonal, although they formed within the context of a vast internation-
al organization. At the other extreme, Vietnamese Catholics and Buddhists
in Houston formed transnational connections to their homelands based sole-
ly on institutional, as opposed to, interpersonal connections. These authors
conclude that socioeconomic status, legality, distance from the homeland,
the geographic dispersion of the immigrant community and English language
fluency influence network types.

Yang (2001) also uses a network approach to analyze transnational Chi-
nese Christian communities. He finds three-layered trans-pacific networks
formed by contacts between individuals, single churches and parachurch
international organizations. These connect migrants in Taiwan, Hong Kong
and Mainland China to their counterparts located primarily in the United
States and Canada. Political and economic instability in Asia propels indi-
viduals and institutions to create transnational ties. These networks also arise
because the absence of a strong denominational infrastructure in China
encourages the emergence of loose associations between local congregations.

My own work reveals at least three types of transnational religious orga-
nizational patterns[4] The first, exemplified by the Catholic Church, is an

[4]My research is an ongoing study of transnational migration among Dominicans, Irish, Indi-
ans, Brazilians, and Pakistanis to the greater Boston Metropolitan area. Findings from my
work on Dominicans from the village of Miraflores who live in the Jamaica Plain neighbor-
hood of Boston, Irish from the Inishowen Peninsula who live in Dorchester, Indians from
the Baroda District of Gujarat State who have settled around the city of Lowell, and Brazil-

extended transnational religious organization.[5]   From the mid 1800s to the present, the Catholic church has sent out religious orders, mounted mission-ary campaigns, operated schools, built pilgrimage shrines, and organized international encounters that produced a vast, interconnected network of transnational activities (Casanova, 1994).   When transnational migrants cir-culate in and out of parishes or religious movement groups in the United States, Ireland, the Dominican Republic or Brazil, they extend and tailor this already global religious system into a site where membership in both the sending and receiving communities is expressed.

These intensified connections are evident in the Brazilian, Dominican and Irish communities in the Boston Metropolitan area that I study and in the work of other scholars of immigrant religion. They grow out of interper-sonal ties between individuals and clergy in the home and host countries. They also arise because migrants and nonmigrants sometimes participate in parallel social and religious activities, and use the same worship materials, all within the context of an institution that espouses universal Catholicism. For example, several priests in Governador Valadares (where many of the Brazilians in the Boston area come from) said they received frequent requests to say prayers or dedicate masses to their emigrant parishioners. Brazilian immigrant Apostolate churches in Massachusetts read from the same hand-out of weekly prayers and hymns used in Brazil (printed in Brasilia, the Brazilian capital) and organized mission campaigns that corresponded to those taking place in Brazil.   When the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops launched a year-long campaign against homelessness, Brazilian immigrant churches undertook a campaign for better housing and stronger neighborhoods. Religious leaders chose these activities because they resonat-ed with those undertaken in Brazil, while more directly addressing the prob-lems facing immigrants in Boston. Brazilian and U.S. Church leaders have also explored ways to coordinate staffing and training with one another,

ians from Governador Valadares who live in Framingham are discussed in this paper. The pro-ject research team includes myself, colleagues in each sending country, and a group of gradu-ate and undergraduate researchers. In the United States, we collect data by interviewing first and second-generation individuals and organizational leaders, observing meetings and special events, and reviewing pertinent documents. After each interview in Boston, we ask for the names of nonmigrant family members to contact. We then travel to each sending country and work with colleagues there to conduct a parallel set of interviews with individuals and orga-nizational leaders at the local, regional, and national level.

[5]I propose these types as heuristic tools. They are not static, impermeable categories. In fact, religious institutions may pass from one form to another over time.

including a 1999 Brazilian Bishops' plan to expand their Pastoral for Immigrants to Brazilians around the world.

In the case of Dominicans from Miraflores who migrated to Massachusetts, the parish-to-parish connections which developed between the United States and the Dominican Republic mutually transformed sending and receiving-country religious life. New immigrants were incorporated into multi-ethnic congregations which used a generic "Latino" worship style that included many familiar elements while excluding those that were uniquely Dominican. They told those at home about these changes in their religious practices and beliefs. Subsequent migrants arrived already pre-socialized into many elements of U.S. Latino Catholicism. They continued to infuse fresh "Dominicanness" into the church, though it was a "Dominicanness" that was each time more pan-Latino in tone. Continuous, cyclical transfers ensued which consolidated these pan-ethnic practices while blanching out their nation-specific elements. In this way, transnational ties both reinforced religious pluralism and abbreviated its scope (Levitt, 2001b).

McAlistar's (2002) work also highlights how Catholic and voodoo practices make transnational lifestyles possible and how the Haitian community uses these to make a space for themselves in the United States. Many of the Haitian migrants in New York that she studied live transnational lives. They work to support households in Haiti, send their children to school in Haiti, or return to Haiti for extended periods to rest. Religious pilgrimages, processions and rituals are just some of the ways that these migrants express their enduring attachments to Haiti. The Feast of our Lady of Miracles, for example, is commemorated in the United States at the same time that it is commemorated in Haiti. It signifies migrants' continued attachment to Haiti and serves to differentiate them from the African-American community in the United States.

Not all migrants take part in transnational religious practices, even when the organizations they belong to redefine their constituencies as those living within and outside of national borders. Menjívar (1999) found that Catholic church membership was far less conducive to transnational activism than membership in Evangelical churches. Because the Catholic Church in Washington, D.C. wanted to develop a sense of pan-ethnic identity among its new immigrant members, it emphasized common projects and discouraged activities directed at particular home communities. Religious leaders also feared that homeland-oriented activities would politicize and divide the Salvadoran community.

The Charismatic, Neucatecumenal, and Cursillo movements that are associated with the Catholic Church also expand the radius of Catholic activities across borders. These groups articulate a life view that is disseminated globally through international conferences, fellowship meetings, prayer links, and the media (Peterson and Vásquez, 2001). Research on these groups provides mixed evidence about their role in promoting transnational belonging. Charismatic groups formed by migrants and nonmigrants in Boston and the Dominican Republic worked in partnership with one another. Migrants visiting Miraflores, and nonmigrants visiting Boston, were warmly welcomed at meetings. This access to "a membership card that works everywhere" encouraged participants' sense of transnational membership and constantly reminded nonmigrants that they too belonged to a social and religious cross-border community (Levitt, 2001b).

Peterson and Vásquez's (2001) work on the Charismatic Catholic Renewal Movement (CCR) in El Salvador and among Central American migrants in Washington revealed different effects. Many of the leaders of the immigrant community in Washington were active in the Charismatic movement in El Salvador. They brought this experience to bear on their lives in Washington, and when they visited El Salvador they also participated in CCR activities. Some members became transnational activists in response to the personal transformations they experienced by joining the CCR. Because of their new religious outlook, they began to send remittances to their families and money for community development projects. But these changes produced few organized transnational activities. Peterson and Vásquez found no connections between religious groups in El Salvador and Washington and no transnational missions. They conclude that the individual transnational allegiances prompted by religion do not necessarily translate into collective efforts.

Protestant churches with affiliates in the United States and in Latin America typify a second type of negotiated transnational religious organization. These groups also extend and deepen organizational ties already in place but within the context of less-hierarchical, decentralized institutional structures. Instead, flexible partnerships that are not already pre-established need to be worked out. I focus on Brazilian immigration to the Boston Metropolitan area as a case in point.

Protestantism has grown tremendously in Latin America, and particularly in Brazil, in the last four decades. In 1997, Governador Valadares, a city of approximately 300,000, had an estimated 430 Protestant churches (Levitt,

2003). These congregations ranged from Mainline Protestant denomina-
tions to start-up Pentecostal groups. They prayed in modest private homes
and storefronts as well as in large, elegant churches that seat hundreds. Even
some of the smallest, most incipient groups, however, had plaques outside
their doors indicating that they belonged to larger organizations with chap-
ters in the United States.

Both interpersonal and organizational ties produce this negotiated
transnational religious space. As in the Catholic Church, individual migrant
and nonmigrant church members and religious leaders often kept up relations
with one another. Organizational connections ranged from narrowly-focused
ties between the sending-country congregations that migrants used to belong
to and the churches where they currently worship to newly-mediated arrange-
ments between sending and receiving-country denominational branches with
long histories of missionary work in Brazil.

Like the Catholic Church, relations between Protestant individuals and
churches also broaden and thicken what, in some cases, are already global
institutions or, in other cases, create new global connections. In contrast to
the Catholic case, however, these are negotiated with respect to authority,
organization and ritual. There is no leader or administrative hierarchy to set
policy and dictate how things are done. When transnational migrants deep-
en these cross-border connections, issues like power sharing, financing, and
administrative practice must be worked out. These negotiations produce a
diverse, diluted set of partnerships that are unstable and shift over time. They
function like what Manuel Castells (2000) has called a network society –
decentralized, flexible yet connected networks providing customized services
and goods. Just as decentralized, adaptive modes of production are better suit-
ed to compete within the global economy, so flexible production and dis-
semination of religious goods may be better suited to serve contemporary
religious consumers.

Several studies support this view. Wellmeier (1998) argued that
because Guatemalan Mayans belonged to independent storefront ministries
that were ethnically homogeneous, it was easier for them to devote their ener-
gies toward improvements in their hometowns. Because the evangelical
church that León (1998) studied formed part of a network of more than
twenty-five churches in the United States, Spain, and Mexico, members felt
like they belonged to a broad, powerful supranational movement that could
sustain their interest and support. Menjivar's (1999) work also lends cre-
dence to this view. In contrast to their Salvadoran Catholic counterparts,

the Protestant churches she studied were not restrained by an extensive and demanding formal institutional network. They did not have to create new, more inclusive identities to encourage newcomers to feel like they belonged to the U.S. church. Instead, because leaders and members often came from the same regions of El Salvador and because they were all Christians, engaging in home-country oriented activities produced little conflict. In fact, one migrant church in Washington had sister churches in Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina and eastern El Salvador. They broadcast a two-hour radio program in El Salvador at least three times a week, including a call-in component so listeners could hear friends and relatives from back home. According to one member, "We are related to the church there in El Salvador spiritually and in practice. We are oriented to them and they are to us. It's like one church in two places" (Menjivar, 1999:605).

The experiences of Gujarati Hindus from the Baroda district in India, suggest a third type of recreated transnational religious organization.[6] Migrants had to start their own religious groups when they came to the United States because there were few Hindu organizations when they first arrived. Some migrants initiated this process on their own and then sought direction from homeland religious leaders. In other cases, Indian religious leaders came to areas where there were large numbers of migrants and identified individuals who could help them establish themselves in the United States. Most of these groups now function like franchises or chapters of their counterpart organizations in India. Franchises are run primarily by migrants who receive periodic support, resources and guidance from sending-country leadership while chapters receive regular support and supervision from sending-country leadership.

The Devotional Associates of Yogeshwar, or the Swadhyaya movement, is an example of a group that was recreated in the United States. Swadhyaya groups in Baroda are organized informally. According to Didiji, the group's leader in Bombay, leadership emerges consensually; those who are most knowledgeable or experienced become the *motobhais* or elder brothers of each chapter. In the United States, however, such groups need to look and act like formal congregations to be able to raise funds, obtain tax exempt status, or rent meeting halls (Warner and Wittner, 1998). In response, the organi-

[6]Williams (1988:230) calls these Hindu Organizations of Indian Americans "made in the U.S.A. ... assembled in the U.S. from imported components by relatively unskilled labor (at least unskilled by traditional standards) and adapted to fit new designs to reach a new and growing market."

zation in America is divided into nine geographic regions, each with its own coordinator. Although these leaders are allowed to make decisions on their own, they say that they consult with officials in Bombay on a regular basis.

Gibb (1998) described Harari Muslims in Ethiopia and Canada whose experience of diaspora prompted them to construct an identity that could be meaningful transnationally. To reinforce group cohesion over time and space, they felt that they needed to articulate values that were relevant in both the home and host country. Although Harari ethnicity was constructed within the context of a transnational movement, and in response to pressures from the Ethiopian and Canadian states, the meaning of "Muslimness" is no longer local and culturally-specific but instead reflects a more homogenized, globalized tradition that is similar to that of other Muslims in Canada. As a result, Hararis are more oriented toward other Canadian Muslims than to other Ethiopian groups. By developing a pan-Muslim identity, they can communicate with a wider community based on their shared religious traditions.

Because few of the studies I describe here are longitudinal, they tell us little about how transnational religious organizations change over time. Work on the Soka Gakkai International (SGI-USA), a Japanese Buddhist group, is one exception. At first, most members were Japanese immigrants married to American military personnel. They relied heavily on the organization in Japan for practical and financial support. Initially, SGI-USA maintained much of its Japanese character – it was organized hierarchically, leaders achieved their posts based on personal mentor-disciple relations, and women were excluded from holding office. Taking part in religious pilgrimages to the principal Nichiren Shoshu temple reinforced members' attachments to Japan. Until temples were constructed in the United States, new converts either had to travel to Japan or wait until priests came to the United States to become official members of the group. The subsequent influx of U.S. converts, who quickly predominated, transformed the SGI-USA. The group began holding its meetings in English, and Japanese customs, such as kneeling and taking one's shoes off during worship, were abandoned in favor of more American worship styles. When the Japanese organization became embroiled in scandal, the U.S. chapter, which until then relied heavily on the mother temple, formally separated itself from its Japanese leaders. Becoming more American was also a way to avoid falling victim to the anti-cult fever spreading through the United States (Machacek, 2000).

The research I have summarized highlights variations in migrants' transnational religious organizations. But migrants' transnational religious

practices are also frequently enacted outside of organized settings. We must therefore examine the ways in which believers use symbols and ideas to imagine and locate themselves within religious landscapes and analyze how religious and political geographies overlap with one another. The following section lays out these issues in greater detail.

TRANSNATIONAL RELIGIOUS SPACE AS AN ALTERNATIVE LANDSCAPE

Ancient pilgrims traveling from one sacred landmark to another, and their contemporary counterparts, create imaginary religious topographies whose boundaries are delineated by these holy places (Eickelman and Piscatori, 1990). Transnational migrants also use religion to delineate an alternative cartography of belonging. Religious icons and sacred shrines, rather than national flags, mark these spaces. The imagined moral and physical geographies that result may fall within national boundaries, transcend but coexist with them, or create new, alternative spaces that, for some individuals, have greater salience and inspire stronger loyalties than politically-defined terrain.

For example, Haitian migrants in New York simply added Harlem to the roster of places where they carry out their spiritual work. By doing so, they extended the boundaries of their spiritual practices and superinscribed them onto the actual physical landscape where they had settled (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. These rituals allowed migrants to recover a past when they were still in Cuba and to imagine a future when they would return. Through these enactments, migrants also asserted their enduring membership in their community of origin. Families brought their newborns to the shrine to formally transform those born in America into citizens of the imagined Cuban nation. In this way, the community used religion to extend the boundaries of Cuba to incorporate those living outside it.

Haitian migrants from Ri Rivyé who settled in Palm Beach County not only use religion to locate themselves within an alternative sacred landscape, but to extricate themselves from it as well (Richman, 2002). Although most of the members of this community are Catholic, many also believe in *lwas* or "saints" who can afflict and protect members of the descent groups to which they belong. *Lwas* must be fed, entertained, and lavished with copious offerings because when they feel neglected or ignored by their heirs, they often retaliate by afflicting illness, hardship, or property loss.

According to Richman (2002:14)

> Although they are characterized as ancient, immutable symbols of "African" tradi-
> tion, the Iwa have shown that they can be most adaptable to changing conditions of
> global reproduction. With so many of their "children" now living and working "over
> there" the Iwa is busier than ever. I once had the opportunity to interview a spirit
> about her protection of migrants. The female spirit was possessing a male ritual
> leader, who was conducting a healing rite for an absent migrant in the presence of
> the migrants' parents and myself. The spirit, whose name is Ezili Dantó/ Our lady
> of Lourdes, said to us, "Every three days I am in Miami...I have to keep watch over
> everything that goes on. Miami is where the core is...like all of the spirits whose
> movements are said to be like the wind, Ezili Dantó can instantly traverse these
> international boundaries.

Those who believe in these saints situate themselves in a ritual space tran-
scending political boundaries where spirits easily move back and forth to take
care of them. In return, they must continue to take care of their *Iwa,* often
at tremendous expense and effort. While some see their success in Miami as
proof of the *Iwa's* intervention on their behalf, others feel that too many of
their remittances are wasted on the *Iwa's* care. They convert to Protestantism
as a way to extricate themselves from this system of kinship and ritual oblig-
ation.

Suh's (2002) work brings to light the complex relationship between
ethnic and religious transnational landscapes. The Korean American Bud-
dhists in her study use religion to locate themselves more centrally with
respect to both Korea and the United States and, in particular, in relation to
their Korean-American Christian counterparts. Many of the Buddhists in
her study associate Buddhism with a nationalistic sense of belonging to
Korea. They see Buddhism as an authentic marker of Korean identity and use
it to construct a barrier against the undesired Westernization and American-
ization that, from their perspective, characterizes the Korean-American
Christian experience. At the same time, they claim that Buddhism makes
them better Americans because Buddhist doctrines of self-enlightenment are
more in line with American democracy than the Christian doctrines they
associate with a lack of free will.

Suh argues that Chogye temple membership reinforces homeland ties,
even if members never return to Korea. The group hosts numerous Korean
monks who give lectures and train members. Because religious leaders trav-
el frequently to Korea, there is always news from the Order back home. The
main order of the Chogye established a Los Angeles Branch of Seoul-based

Eastern Mountain Buddhist College, which offers a two-year certificate course in Buddhist Studies to lay members. Although the Sa Chal Temple is run independently, unlike many other U.S.-based groups which are still officially administered by leaders in Seoul, Abbot Lee, the group's leader, still feels that his ties to Korea are crucial to the development of Buddhism in the West.

Many of the Salvadoran youth that Gomez and Vásquez (2001) studied felt they belonged neither in the United States nor in El Salvador. They joined transnational gangs which provided them with a close, tight-knit community and helped counteract their feelings of marginality in the society at large. Gang members shared many of the characteristics of transnational migrants because they acted, made decisions, and developed identities shaped by relationships and resources that crossed borders. In fact, when the Salvadoran peace accords were signed in 1992, they were approved in El Salvador as well as Los Angeles.

The appeal of gang life gradually wore thin when some members became involved in drug trafficking and gangs became a less effective safe haven for adolescents trying to fit in. Pentecostal churches stepped in to fill this gap. They functioned much like gangs, "saving souls transnationally" by using contacts in El Salvador and the United States to reach potential converts. These efforts worked because they "combined deterritorialization (the operation of transnational webs) with reterritorialization (re-centering of self and community)" (Vásquez et al., 2001:34). Religion engendered an alternative, ultimately more satisfying space, because it successfully synthesized self and community.

Some of the Brazilians and Pakistanis I am studying in Massachusetts also use religion to create alternatives places of belonging. Some imagine themselves within global Muslim or Christian denominational communities which are grounded in particular national contexts by their ties to particular sending and receiving churches. Others locate themselves within global religious communities that supercede national boundaries. Pastora Eliana, a leader of a renewed Brazilian Baptist church in Watertown, Massachusetts, said she felt invisible when she first came to the United States because the state offered her no official category to express her Brazilianness. She began to feel she belonged in the United States only when her church formed a partnership with the American Baptist Convention (ABC). It is through her identity as a Baptist, rather than as a Brazilian American, that she began the

process of integration into the United States. But her Baptist identity also firmly grounds her in a global religious community that welcomes and empowers her as well.

> Q.: Why wouldn't one be a Baptist? Could you imagine a world where the salient identity would be a Baptist rather than Brazilian or American?
>
> I think that this identity already exists. I mean being a Brazilian person and being a Baptist is synonymous with being smart. It is synonymous with wisdom because among us we know that Baptists are capable of thinking or being in a relationship with one another, of having disagreements but at the same time finding solutions and agreement among ourselves. Calling ourselves Baptists is something that we as a community are proud of. When the denomination (the American Baptist Convention) showed that it was open to establish this relationship with us, giving recognition to us, it was something that we celebrated because it means that we are no longer invisible. So far, we have been an invisible culture without any connection with the new system that we are in. But now, this kind of feeling is so strong because we really feel that we are becoming family in a very constructive way.

Being a Baptist enabled Pastora Eliana to find a place for herself in the United States. But because her religious life takes place within an ethnic Brazilian context, being a Baptist also reinforces her ties to Brazil. The religious landscape she creates fits within and grounds her within the Brazilian-American transnational landscape. Her religious identity inscribes her in a global religious community that is strongly rooted in the United States and in Brazil.

In contrast, Pastor Luis of the Brazilian International Church of the Four Square Gospel categorically tells his followers that they live in the Kingdom of God. One becomes a good citizen, he says, by becoming a good Christian. The main point, Pastor Luis says, is that

> ... when they are good Christians, they are good citizens. So when we teach them to be consistent in their faith, they will be, at the same time, good people, good husbands, good people in the sense that they will try to help others, to try to make a difference in their neighborhoods. They will be concerned about other's well-being. So it's not necessary to become legal and become naturalized and so forth. But in the Bible itself, in the way that Christians should be, would be enough for them to be good citizens .... There are a set of ways of being in the world that have nothing to do with whether you are Brazilian or whether you are from the U.S. but that have more to do with faith in Christ. I teach my followers that they have a responsibility to all mankind but especially to their fellow Christians. We live in a world where Christ is the king, not George Bush or Fernando Colar.

For Pastor Luis' followers, religious membership takes precedence over dual political membership. Believers inhabit a Christian world where God and Christ come before elected officials. This is not to say that national bound-

aries disappear – political as well as religious landmarks populate this religious space and the rules of national citizenship still apply. But Christian rather than civic values form the basis for membership-in-good-standing in local, national, and transnational political communities. Unlike Pastora Eliana, whose membership in a global religious community reinforces her dual national identity, the religious landscape for Pastor Luis and his followers forms the basis for national and ethnic membership.

RELIGION AS A GUIDE TO TRANSNATIONAL CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Just as religion furnishes the elements from which an alternative geography is created, so it guides believers about their collective rights and responsibilities. Religious institutions differ from other immigrant institutions in that they see themselves as embodying universal and timeless truths. They provide members with moral compasses and orient them to act upon these values in particular settings in particular ways. As global interconnectedness expands, to what extent do religious traditions articulate globally-oriented theologies? What lessons do transnational religious groups disseminate to members about the rights and duties of transnational, if not global, citizens?

Many assume, for instance, that Pentecostals are apolitical with respect to both transnational and national concerns. But despite what may be the apolitical or anti-political nature of their message, several researchers suggest that Pentecostal communities influence the secular settings in which they are located. The Salvadoran Pentecostal churches in Washington that Menjívar (1999) studied kept in close touch with their sister congregations in El Salvador. They supported community development projects in their home communities, sponsored speaking exchanges between sending and receiving-country pastors, shared a monthly newspaper, held conventions that brought congregations together, and participated in international Evangelical church councils. Evangelization rather than community development motivated these efforts. Members' primary goal was to strengthen and extend the community of God and any political or civic achievements were of secondary importance.

Peterson *et al.* (2001) lend support to this view. Pentecostal communities can erect clear boundaries between the safe, sanctified world of faith and its dangerous, violent secular counterpart with only partial success. Because members fulfill multiple roles and participate in multiple settings they influ-

ence the secular world and it continues to influence them. Pentecostal churches also reproduce patterns of domination and exclusion. Their rhetoric of spiritual warfare creates a "terrain of control" that is difficult to challenge.

> Since this closed social terrain is ultimately grounded in the radical deterritorializa-
> tion demanded by the reign of God, it mirrors the erasure of borders and identities
> that is central to globalization. In other words, for all its emphasis on the self, Pen-
> tecostalism, like global capitalism, homogenizes, making particularity only a strate-
> gy or stepping stone toward the production of globality/universality (Peterson *et
> al.*, 2001:40).

Peruvian migrants in the United States, Spain, Argentina, and Japan brought images of their patron saint with them to their new homes, raised funds for ritual celebrations, and conquered host-country public spaces by organizing annual processions (Paerregaard, 2001) Although some of these activities involved initial communication with the Mother Church in Lima, homeland ties gradually weakened. There was little evidence of coordination between Brotherhoods in the same receiving country or between different host country contexts. Instead, Paerregaard argues, members used religious engagement to pursue host-country-oriented goals such as carving out a place for themselves in the public sphere and differentiating themselves from other minorities. Transnational religious activities, to the extent that they took shape, promoted host-country political integration.

My work suggests a number of variations in the forms and conse-quences of religiously-motivated transnational politics. When new Irish, Dominican, and Brazilian migrants extend the global Catholic church through their homeland ties, they become part of powerful, resource-rich networks that are potential venues for protection and representation in their home and host communities. When Irish migrants attend church, for exam-ple, they learn about social and legal services that are available to them. Their native-born priests give them indirect classes in local community problem solving and mobilization. At the national level, the Irish Apostolate U.S., an umbrella organization which brings together Irish pastoral workers around the country, has joined forces with a coalition of Irish Immigration Centers and created an informal political action committee to advocate for immigrant rights and amnesty. The Irish Apostolate also functions as the Irish govern-ment's window onto the emigrant community in the United States.

> The Minister of Foreign Affairs came here three years ago and the Minister for Social
> Welfare came last year. Any time a President comes, like Mary Robinson or Mary
> McCalese, they come and talk to us. Mary Robinson came and talked to us at lunch

and asked us about the different issues we confront. We also visit Irish prisoners here and we keep the government informed about whether they are being treated properly, what their sentences are, whether they can be sent back home. We are the voice of the immigrant community for the Irish government (Father Mike, Boston, 2001).

The clergy working for the Irish Apostolate in the United States and their counterparts in Ireland also represent Irish emigrants to the Irish public. They receive a yearly grant from the Irish government and must report back to their legislators about their activities. Father Ronald of the Irish Episcopal Commission for Emigrants in Dublin, who supervises the priests working outside of Ireland, sees himself as an advocate for the diaspora. The commission is one of the few institutions, he says, that fights to keep emigrants on the public's radar screen.

The Irish Catholic experience represents one way in which the relationship between transnational religion and politics plays out. Churchgoing introduces migrants to U.S. political culture and practices. It is a potential springboard to civic engagement because it exposes migrants to political issues and teaches them tools to address them. At the same time, the Irish government and church officials still see themselves as responsible for their emigrant flock. The personal and organizational ties connecting the United States and Ireland are designed to reinforce migrants' continued sense of attachment to the Irish national and religious community.

The Protestant churches in my study also deliver services to, advocate for, and politically socialize their members but, within the context of weaker organizational networks. Most of these pastors work individually with their members to get jobs, find housing, or regularize their immigration status. The message of living "in God's Kingdom," though, produces different views on appropriate civic engagement.

Some churchgoers believe that their faith teaches them to go outside religious arenas and make a difference. They get involved because they take religious teachings as a call to exercise substantive citizenship and as a guide for how to do so.

I know there are some people who think of themselves as living in the Kingdom of Christ. Pastor Manuel talks about that a lot. But I see myself as firmly planted on the ground. My life is here and in Brazil. I feel very strongly about my church and about the lessons it teaches. But I see these lessons as telling me to get involved in the world around me. So when the police want to meet with the Brazilian community to understand us better or there are meetings to try to get people driver's licenses (which is illegal without a social security card), I go. My God tells me to be there and to help out (Umberto, 52-year-old migrant, Framingham).

For others, who locate themselves within a Christian geography, civic engagement is motivated by religious identities and beliefs more than a sense of ethnic pride or patriotism. Like the evangelical churchgoers studied by Menjívar (1999) and Peterson *et al.* (2001), these migrants worked with civic groups because this was what was available although they would rather have worked for religious groups. They are doing the work of God because they identify as Christians, although their actions may also happen to be political.

> When I volunteer at the soup kitchen or at my child's school, it is because this is what God would want me to do. I am not guided by what the Worker's Party has to say about Brazil or the Democratic Party has to say about here. I live in a Christian world that just happens to have national borders criss-crossing it. If what I do helps bring about political change, that's okay with me, but that's not my primary goal (Lourdes, 47-year-old migrant, Framingham).

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This paper proposes an approach to the study of one aspect of global religious life – migrants' transnational religious practices. I suggest that studies of transnational migration and religion focus on the everyday, lived practice of migrant religion in at least two locations. I propose that they examine the ways in which host country incorporation changes religious ideas and practice, how these changes affect sending-country religious life, and how these changes mutually reinforce one another over time. Research on migrants' transnational religious practices are not only about organizational manifestations of faith. They are also about the alternative places of belonging that religious ideas and symbols make possible and about the ways in which these sacred landscapes interact with the boundaries of political and civic life.

Clearly, there is much work to be done. This article offers only a brief, selective sketch of what is known about migrants' transnational religious practices based on the U.S. experience. This article is intentionally short on conclusions and long on calls for more empirical, grounded work. Many more studies are needed to flesh out how migrants' transnational religious practices are actually enacted, what their impacts are, what explains the variations between them, how transnational religious life differs from transnational life in other social arenas, and what these dynamics means for home- and host-country life.

These tasks pose methodological and epistemological challenges. How do we make concrete the landscapes and communities that people imagine? How can we move from the in-depth, grounded case studies we need to

understand the complexity of experience to be able to make comparisons across groups? How would our questions change if we shifted the central organizing principle from nation to faith community – if we took seriously, as many respondents do, a world that is primarily organized around Islamic, Hindu, or Baptist identities rather than ethnic or national affinities, and that is built upon religious principles rather than civic ones?

The study of religious and cultural life across borders raises particular challenges not posed by the study of economics or politics. Religion is not a fixed set of elements but a dynamic web of shared meanings used in different ways in different contexts (Gardner, 1995). It is as much, it not more, about individualized, interior, informal practices and beliefs as it is about formal, collective manifestations of faith carried out in institutional settings. Since so many features of religious life are imagined, it is difficult to hold them constant or to determine where they begin and end. They are deeply felt but often difficult to express. Many of the studies cited in this article speak to the complex relationship between religion and ethnicity. A very interesting, potentially-promising set of research questions would untangle this relationship and explore the unique properties of ethnic and religious identities in enabling transnational belonging and the possible synergistic relationship between them.

On the other hand, several studies indicate parallels between transnational religious, economic and political practices. Like economic and political transnational practices, religion plays a role in transnational community creation and perpetuation (Espinosa, 1999; R.C. Smith, 1995). Religious festivals, and particularly Patron Saint Day celebrations, have always been important sites of contact, maintenance, and renewal of relations between migrants and nonmigrants. Immigrants churches often contribute significant sums of money to community development in their sending communities. Furthermore, migrants' transnational religious practices also generate the same kinds of conflicts over legitimate membership and status between migrants and nonmigrants that others have described (Goldring, 1998; Levitt, 2001b; Espinosa 1999). We need to sort out what is unique about transnational life in the religious sphere and to systematically compare religious transnational practices to transnational activities in other arenas.

What also becomes clear from this overview is how the local "fights back" and continues to challenge global religious homogenization. The same global religious institution is organized very differently in local contexts, making different kinds of demands on its immigrant members, with very different consequences for the relationship between religion, immigrant incor-

poration, and enduring transnational belonging. Again, additional work on how migrants actually globalize religion can shed light on these broader debates in the field.

As the title of this article implies, the relationship between religion and migration has a long history. Abraham began a journey, guided by his faith, that millions have followed. The intensification of life across borders will only increase the numbers for whom social, political, and religious membership is decoupled from residence. It is time we put religion front and center in our attempts to understand how identity and belonging are redefined in this increasingly global world.

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