Migration and Transculturation in the Digital Age: A Framework for Studying the "Space Between"

Padmini Banerjee Ph.D.
Delaware State University, pbanerjee@desu.edu

Myna German Ph.D.
Delaware State University, mgerman@desu.edu

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Abstract

Transnational immigrants today appear to live dual or even multiple lives across national borders, with help from a range of new technologies involving media and channels of communication such as Internet-based chat or telephony, mobile phones, and interactive online social networks. The authors explore the implications of accumulated findings on this aspect for researchers and scholars investigating the contemporary experience of global migration in relation to diasporas and their technology-enabled interconnections with home and host societies. Against the context of existing conceptual frameworks, the utility of the multi-dimensional construct of *transculturalism* (Ortiz, 1995 [1940]), involving the three processes of acculturation, deculturation, and neo-culturation, is considered as a guiding concept in this emerging area of study.

Introduction

One of the ongoing challenges confronting researchers on issues of migration is that of clarifying appropriate and stable guiding constructs in a field that is itself in rapid motion. In the span of a few decades, the scale of human migration (an age-old phenomenon) has expanded significantly, and the internal experience of migration has changed through the rapid introduction of new informational and communication technologies (ICTs), which make it possible for twenty-first century immigrants to transcend time and space in a way that was inconceivable a decade ago. According to the Global Commission on International Migration Report (GCIM, 2005), international migrants and displaced peoples in the world number over 200 million, a number that has more than doubled since 1972. Koser (2007) used the term *transnational* to describe migrants who live "in between nations, sustaining social, economic, and political interest across national boundaries, living 'dual lives'" (Portes, as cited in Koser, 2007), often bilingual if not multilingual, maintaining homes in both countries and traveling between them. For the serious researcher exploring the "space between" languages, cultures, and disciplines (Donald and Mackie, 2009), it may be helpful to trace some of the earlier attempts at defining the parameters and constructs within this emergent interdisciplinary area before examining more recent empirical studies and theory-building efforts.

Early conceptualizations

The recognition of the need to appropriately study today's migrants, many of whom live "dual," even "multiple," lives spanning national borders connected to social networks in both "countries of origin and settlement" harks back to the questions raised by Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton (1992). These and other researchers have asserted that contemporary migrants' sense of connectedness to multiple contexts is fostered through continuous access to a wide range of media and communication channels, often across vast distances (Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007). According to Glick Schiller et al., this multiplicity of connections and involvements can be seen a defining element of transnationalism, one that brings its own complexity and contradictions to the research process.

For the better part of two decades, researchers have attempted to situate the study of migration processes historically as well as theoretically. During the proceedings of an interdisciplinary conference on transnationalism held at the New York Academy of Sciences in 1992, participants, including Glick Schiller et al. (1992), argued that any viable research agenda pursued by social scientists must seriously consider the validity of the analytical categories that they employ to study migration so that the ways in which "transmigrants" construct their "racial, ethnic, class, national and gender identities" (p. x) can be better understood. At the same time, they said, the dominant role played by political and economic factors in both the host and home countries in shaping these processes must be acknowledged, and a "global perspective" must be adopted in order to recognize the interconnectedness of these often separate realities. On yet a more fundamental level, pioneer researchers warned that unless questioned and challenged, existing bounded conceptualizations of race, class, ethnicity, and nationalism would themselves enter and occupy an unexamined "space between" that which was being examined and the examination itself, thereby implicitly shaping, influencing, and even inhibiting the development of any fresh new discourse and insight that would otherwise arise. They suggested, therefore,

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that a focus be placed on charting a new territory in which transnational lives of migrants are lived, without any predisposition from previously constructed models.

These early researchers also questioned the extent to which transnationalism is really a new phenomenon and whether the experience of recent migrants is really different in its essence from the experiences of earlier migrant populations, who were also involved in two or more geographical settings, in terms of kinship, social responsibilities, interactions with their social networks, and other connections. In so doing, the researchers (Glick Schiller et al., 1992) asserted that instead of labeling transnationalism a new phenomenon, perhaps the notion of transnationalism might simply require a paradigm shift in order to accommodate newly-discovered aspects of age-old issues. Other questions these early researchers raised included: (1) how best to study the impact of the new technologies on the lives of transmigrants, (2) the extent to which migrants assimilate or integrate with their host societies, (3) the implications of immigrants' access to resources, education, work, power, and positions within society, and, finally, (4) whether transnationalism was a "phenomenon of the first generation only" or whether it could become an intergenerational experience, and if so, how it was transmitted.

The Globalized Citizen

Possibly one of the most over-used words in recent years, *globalization* has been defined in terms of cultural flows, interactions, and exchanges (Featherstone, 1990). Global cultural flows have five dimensions, according to Appadurai (1990): *ethnoscapes* (flow of people), *technoscapes* (flow of technology and machinery), *finanscapes* (flow of capital), *mediascapes* (flow of images and information), and *ideoscapes* (flow of ideas, images, and ideology). One of the consequences of any change in the world economy is that many more people are increasingly likely to migrate and come into contact with other cultures—although not all individuals will necessarily seek cross-cultural contact or immersion in another culture. According to Featherstone (1990) there exists a select group of culturally-bounded people who consciously regulate their exposure to other cultures and cosmopolitans and who seek to be engaged and changed by the contact. The "intensity and rapidity" of the global flows can heuristically create a sense of the world as a singular place, though it would be misleading to assume an eventual decline of sovereign nation-states or the rise of a world state, let alone a "unified global culture" (Featherstone, 1990, p. 10). In fact, the very idea of a "global culture" has been called into question by some. For instance, Smith (1990) describes today's global culture as "artificial," "context-less," "widely dispersed in space," "cut off from any past (or history)," and a "mélange of disparate components drawn from everywhere and nowhere, borne upon the modern chariots of global telecommunications systems" (p. 177). Ultimately, Smith maintains that a global culture is, above all, "constructed" and, like a nation-state, an "invented" or "imagined" community. Since it is a "social construction," it can also be deconstructed. At the same time, transnational migration is undoubtedly a global phenomenon that requires a global perspective (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton, 1992), which will throw some light on the transnational life-experiences of migrants. Glick Schiller et al. explain how, in a globalized economy, migrants always "keep their options open" (p. 12) by building up their political, social, and economic capital.

Technology in the lives of migrants

Informational and communication technologies, often referred to as ICTs, serve to enhance a sense of collective identity in diasporas; in short, they help to "develop, maintain, and re-create" (Alonso and Oiarzabal, 2010, p. ix) transnational social networks through the flow of spontaneous, interactive, and real-time flows and exchanges of selective and relevant information. At the same time, the technologies vary in the extent to which they (1) permit brief, intermittent or long, detailed glimpses and explorations into other worlds and (2) provide the user the ability to experience (either first-hand or vicariously) other ways of being. For example, the personal computer and access to the Internet are considered essential resources for migrants who, according to Alonso and Oiarzabal (2010), use them to maintain their transnational social networks in a way that pre-digital age migrants were simply unable to do. Besides staying in touch with their families in their countries of origin, ICTs are also seen as facilitating for migrants entry into the host country job market. In this way, Alonso and Oiarzabal emphasize that the impact of technology on international migration is "unquestionable" and real. Alonso and Oiarzabal cite the findings of several researchers pertaining to the utilization of online and mobile technologies by many emigrant communities to maintain their sense of identity and as antidotes to feelings of social dislocation and isolation. They also mention many others who have addressed the patterns of consumption of communication media (film, radio, television, video/ DVD) and the Internet by these populations.

Although it may indeed be the case that personal computing and online technologies benefit their users in specific ways, it must be kept in mind that fewer than one in three people around the world has access to the Internet (Internet World Stats, 2010). Interestingly, countries with lower rates of Internet usage typically have higher emigration rates than do the destination countries, which display higher rates of access to technology among their populations. Despite this, immigrant populations within the destination countries are often among those with limited or no access to technology. This lack of equal access to ICTs in an environment otherwise recognized for its access to ITCs may eventually result in the migrants' feeling a sense of exclusion within the new country as well an increased detachment from their home countries and any changes that may be taking place there (Alonso and Oiarzabal, 2010). Other immigrants may choose not to stay connected. It is important to include all these segments of the immigrant population in the overall framework. We should not assume that ICTs necessarily play a pivotal role in the lives of all migrants today. Still, the historical trend of a close connection between technology and migration has been noted by many, both in terms of motivating skilled professionals to emigrate for better pay and good working conditions and attracting immigrants who seek better lifestyles and prospects.

In the late nineteenth and most of the twentieth century, the national media—newspapers, radio, television and cinema—contributed to a vast "info-space" (Alonso and Oiarzabal, 2010, p. 7), which helped to reinforce the sense of nationhood and belonging in many countries around the world. Today, in our postmodern era, we are able to realize the extent to which these technologies were consciously or unconsciously employed in the "imagining" of nationhood, responsible citizenship, and other constructed social realities of eras past. As such, it is critical to bear in mind the possibility that today's technologies may be the very tools with which we create other such constructions more salient to our times. Still, in the 1990s and the 2000s, new devices involving satellite communications, the Internet, and the mobile or cellular phone brought significant changes by promoting greater horizontal communication with more active roles for

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players. Cell phones, possessing instantaneous long-distance calling ability, along with that of sending instant text messages (SMS), enable not just interpersonal and family communication at the micro-level but have also been known for their involvement in community-organizing, the canvassing and recruiting of political support, the organizing of global opinion around important issues of the day, and even the overthrow of regimes at the meso- and macro-levels. Even more recently, the increasing presence of user-initiated and managed content—as in online blogs, virtual social networks, such as *FaceBook* or *Orkut*, and Wikipedia (or "cloud computing")—suggests that the media, like the transnationals, are also transcending their conventional frontiers. In their classic article on the computer as a communication device rather than a calculating machine, Licklider and Taylor (as cited in Alonso and Oiarzabal, 2010) introduced the concept of "de-territorialized" communities bound by common interests rather than by time or space constraints.

Whereas earlier modes of communication might have involved the physical absence of the individual, such as in written communication, today's forms of communication often involve the virtual but disembodied presence of the person, visual and/or auditory, without the actual physical presence of the other. This creates a reality in which individuals are "electronically present but physically absent" (Lijtmaer, Forthcoming, 2011). This is the hyperspace conceived by Kearney (1996), cited in Megele and Buzzi (Forthcoming, 2011), within which de-territorialized communities create and recreate their social identities. It is in this hyperspace that the transnational/global migrant can be located. Buzzi and Megele (Forthcoming, 2011) draw a distinction between *countries*, which have *borders* (*border* is defined as a geographic territorial limit or a geopolitical boundary) and *cultures* which have *frontiers* (*frontier* is defined as a socio-cultural limit/boundary). The Internet provides users with instantaneous and unlimited opportunities to connect with other users across both borders and frontiers and exchange information. In so doing, users create *imagined* de-territorialized communities in which individuals from anywhere can connect and form a sense of "family" or "community." These communities can be based on existing networks of relationships and so, to that extent, they are *real* and reflect reality. Other communities can be less real or completely virtual or simulated, based on imagined instead of real identities, with personas that can transcend natural human limitations, as is the case in the virtual-world game known as *Second Life*.

From the researcher's standpoint, each of these technologies and their respective developments have engendered different vocabularies with both disparate and overlapping meanings, leading to veritable thickets of terminology (or virtual Towers of Babel) with regard to their validity and ability to be decoded by interested researchers. Terms such as *hyper-reality*, *cyberspace*, *virtual community*, *digital nomads*, *cyborg identity*, for instance, seemingly possess a certain clarity of meaning, but they can also function as a yawning trap for the unwary researcher, particularly when called upon to guide research on these aspects. At best, we can conclude that research on the role of technology vis-à-vis the experience of migration is still in its nascent stage. Therefore, the most appropriate and effective approaches are likely to involve descriptive methods and detailed documentation and differentiation of the various forms of the technology and their impact, as well as meticulous clarification of the specific terminology used to navigate the areas of interest.

Connected Migrants and Digital Diasporas

The accumulated literature on migration, including theoretical and empirical efforts, falls naturally across three main levels of inquiry and analysis: *micro*, *meso* and *macro*. Alonso and Oiarzabal (2010) provide a useful differentiation of the major theories of migration across these levels. *Micro*-level inquiry focuses on the day-to-day level of decision-making and functioning of migrant individuals or families include the "rational-choice" theory, and others. Theories at the *meso* level explore the social relationships and networks that influence migrants, such as the "social network" theory, "institutional theory," and "accumulative causation" theory. Theories pertaining to "neo-classic," "dual labor market," and "new economics" address major structural political and economic conditions at the *macro*-level that "push" or "pull" individual migrants (Alonso and Oiarzabal, 2010). Along with the pre-existing base of established knowledge, it is the *level* of inquiry in which a particular researcher is most interested in examining that will often determine (1) the choice of theory that might be most suitable for study and (2) the subsequent articulation of guiding constructs and the operationalizing of those concepts, (3) the type of research design employed—whether descriptive, experimental or quasi-experimental— and (4) the specific method and tools that will be used (Rich, Forthcoming, 2011).

Over time, the essential experience of migration has been captured in a plethora of expressions—literary, autobiographical narrative, film and fiction. It is a topic that catches the interest of almost everyone and conjures universally recognized themes: migrants leaving the shores of their homelands and arriving on foreign soil (bringing up mental images of the Ellis Island scenes), the relentless efforts to recreate a sense of home and belonging in the new country through new social networks and rituals and the maintenance of old familiar ones, the sense of nostalgia surrounding festivals, familiar food, music, worship, re-telling of stories and legends, and so forth. However idealized, these familiar themes of the immigrant experience are based on truth. Migration does impose many requirements on the new initiate, in terms of the recreation of a viable living environment in the new country, the setting up of new networks of friends, new work and family routines. In effect, it involves recreating the basic things presumed to be "already settled" prior to migration and "great psychic effort, sacrifice, and acceptance of many changes in a short time" (Grinberg and Grinberg, 1989, p. 176). In an interesting turn of phrase, Alonso and Oiarzabal (2010) liken the Internet to the "emblematic Ellis Island in the United States" in that it has become the "new harbor for contemporary immigrants" (p. 2), through its ability to provide a window into the new imagined life prior to migration as well as an interactive link to the old life back home and other places in the world where family and friends may be living. Multiplied many millions of times, this interconnectedness has created a virtual communal space which has been called *cyberspace*.

This continuous interconnectivity in the digital age has implications for migrants. While, on the one hand, it can help to diminish homesickness and severe nostalgia, it can also compromise the finality of closure on the old way of life and entry into the new one, especially if the two are significantly different from each other. The euphoric sense of living a hybridized or multi-layered life can quickly change to ambivalence, anxiety, and stress from dealing with conflicting expectations and the feeling of being pulled in different directions all at the same time, resulting in high levels of stress spillover (Ros, 2010).

Ros mentions an example of a young migrant woman in Barcelona who stays connected with her family in Casablanca by speaking daily on Skype at a pre-arranged time. Sometimes, if she is delayed, she has to explain her tardiness to a traditional and controlling father on the other

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side of the Internet connection. Ros explains that the category of "space" needs redefinition but also introduces the concept of the "connected migrant." Migrants in this kind of situation soon realize that the "new sociability means permanent, ubiquitous forms of connectivity – staying in touch anytime, from anywhere and keeping multiple channels of communication open" (Ros, 2010, p. 25). Such examples bring to life the complexity of the day-in day-out micro-level experiences of "connected migrants."

At the meso-level, a closely related area of inquiry involves *digital diasporas.* In a brief span of time, the term "digital diasporas" has not only entered the literature on migration but achieved saliency, recognition, and currency as a present-day "global phenomenon" and a valid construct for study. The original meaning of *diaspora* is "to sow" or "to scatter" from the Greek term *diasperein* and refers to the dispersal of a population from its original territory to other territories. Today, while contested as to its appropriateness for use for all migrant groups (Safran, 1991), the term continues to carry with it the connotation of displacement from the homeland. Alonso and Oiarzabal (2010) describe diasporas as a "truly global" phenomenon and note that diasporans use ICTs both to connect with their homelands and to develop a collective sense of identity while away. Alonso and Oiarzabal believe that the concept of *diaspora* continues to provide insight into understanding transnational communities within a global context, while others, like Safran (1991), argue that the concept is losing its analytical ability because many groups are subsumed under the term while not meeting the strict criteria that were originally listed.

Like migrants at the micro-level, meso-level diasporans re-create their own "psychological or emotional communities" (Alonso and Oiarzabal, 2010, p. 9) in the virtual space between the lands of origin and settlement. In recent decades, their prolific use of ICTs, ranging from e-mail and text-messaging to visual Web-cam or Skype, has earned them the name "digital diasporans." For example, among the online "Orkut" communities, there is a large group devoted to "Brazilians in the United States" composed of no less than 35,366 members (Bertagnoli, Forthcoming, 2011). Digital diasporas connect migrants and entice new generations to follow in their path. *Skype, Facebook, and Second Life*, for instance, can provide a kind of "hyper-reality" in which soon-to-be migrants can peek into the living rooms of the new culture (through digital access to that world via friends and family members who have already immigrated) and get a glimpse of their potential lives. This hyper-reality can, in a sense, permit individuals who have not yet immigrated to "try on" the immigrant persona and create alter-egos for themselves through the immigrants to whom they are digitally connected. In this way, twenty-first century migrants have a better idea of what to expect in the new country, than did migrants one hundred years ago. However, whether this hyper-reality serves to control immigrants' expectations vis-à-vis what they will encounter in the destination country, creating for them a greater sense of realism than previous generations of immigrants enjoyed or whether this hyper-reality in fact boosts immigrants' expectations remains to be seen (Megele and Buzzi, Forthcoming, 2011.) A web address (be it email, web page, blog, social networking website, or others) can provide a valuable link for communication and maintenance of identity. Such an address can provide a stable and consistent point of reference in a globalized world, referentiality that remains constant regardless of the changes in migrant's physical location and spatial realities or 'real-life' circumstances, according to Megele and Buzzi (Forthcoming, 2011). In effect, the migrant's web address can offer a temporary respite in a strange new world..For the researcher, this adds yet another level of complexity. Terms like "online communities," "digital diasporas," "virtual

communities," and "cyberspace" can all seem to mean the same thing, or they can mean different things, depending upon one's perspective or orientation. Typically, digital diasporans have an existing real network of relationships and grounded community before they use the Internet to connect with one another and build their digital communities. Virtual communities, on the other hand, are commonly understood to be created by individuals who use the Internet to communicate with other like-minded individuals about common interests and who may never meet in real life (such as an online group of environmentalists, for example). Researchers working at this *meso*-level of inquiry often find that digital diasporas, with their existing extensive social networks, prove to be ideal for studies involving social network theories.

Social Networks in Cyberspace

In recent years, more research is being conducted on international migration using the social network perspective (Alonso and Oiarzabal, 2010). Tilly (1990) (as cited in Alonso and Oiarzabal, 2010) stated that it is not people who migrate—but networks. According to Castells (1996), networks are typically interconnected nodes that make up the patterns of social life. In contemporary migration, with its high level of mobility, information flow and communication, interconnected multiple nodes and actors create parallel universes in the old country and new country, connected by technology. Buzzi and Megele (Forthcoming, 2011) see social network analysis as central to the study of international migration and social movements. One particularly common technological means of creating networks and communicating across contexts is the mobile phone. More than 3.25 billion people worldwide are estimated to be using mobile or cellular phones (Osborne, 2009). People use mobile phones in new and old culturally meaningful ways, as technological extensions of their natural behaviors, to the point where cell phone use completely permeates everyday life (Wei and Kolko, 2005). Although massively pervasive, however, the influence of mobile phone use on the migrant experience can vary. In describing the "sociology of the mobile phone," Geser (2004) wrote about how access to, and use of, the mobile phone can highlight differences between the socially integrated and socially marginal migrants. Having one's own mobile phone can empower and bestow a sense of personal autonomy and agency upon an individual. It can make possible a certain "nomadic intimacy." At the same time, a complicating feature of mobile phone use with respect to immigrants is that extensive mobile phone use can have the undesired effect of closing off the user from new social relationships. In other words, mobile phone use tends to strengthen existing relationship rather than open or enlarge new social networks. In Japan, Miyata (2006) corroborated this phenomenon, finding that different kinds of technology enhance different kinds of social networks. Specifically, people who send e-mails through PCs and laptops tend to have more diverse social networks than those who use mobile phones more often, who tend to have smaller, more limited networks. In another study, Bianchi and Phillips (2005) found that younger people are more likely to use mobile phones than are older people. Finally, in her examination of mobile phone use, Roy found from her sample of South Asians in different parts of the world that strict surveillance is practiced within networks in host countries, and misdeeds are reported back home instantaneously via phone. Mobile phones make the job of social control easier over long distances. Certainly, mobile phone use facilitates the immigrants' maintained connection to the home country network.

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Transculturation

Some of the earliest debates in the United States centered on how to assimilate all immigrants and make Americans out of them (Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007). In contrast, more recent theories of assimilation (the new assimilation theory and the segmented assimilation theory) accept that there are different trajectories for different migrants, ranging along a continuum from marginalization to complete assimilation and that everyone involved in the situation, whether a migrant or not, is somehow changed by the experience of cross-cultural contact across home and host societies (Berry, 1980; Gordon 1971; Jacoby, 2004, Portes and Rumbaut, 1993). A third perspective emerged in the 1990s that acknowledged the ways in which migrants continue to be active in their familial, social, economic, political, and cultural connections across national borders (Glick Schiller, Basch, Blanc-Szanton, 1992; Jacoby, 2004; Levitt and Sorensen, 2004; Mahler, 2001; Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt, 1999). Fernando Ortiz's concept of **transculturation** comprising the processes of *acculturation*, *deculturation,* and *neoculturation* provides a useful framework for examining the cross-cultural adaptation and hybridization that takes place when two or more cultures meet (Ortiz, 1995 [1940]).

The Conceptual Framework

Side by side, the burgeoning of research studies, theory building, publications, and online and on-the-ground forums for exchange of views on these intersecting areas of study have created a dynamic and stimulating infrastructure for scholars involved in migration, communications, and cultural studies. During one such international forum attended by the authors, participants discussed the challenges of "mapping" or positioning the study of migration and diasporas appropriately within academia. While the study of migration is commonly considered an interdisciplinary area, the vocabulary varies depending on whose perspective or discipline is involved, and therefore, the highest priority involves achieving consensus on terminology across disciplines and even continents (Pereira and Banerjee, 2010). For example, many European researchers are likely to construe "diaspora studies" as the study of those diasporas originating from Europe and migrating to other parts of the world and "migration studies" as the study of diasporas originating from other parts of the world and migrating to Europe and other parts of the world, thereby displaying an inherent Eurocentric bias.

Another area requiring further definition involves concerns about what or who constitute a diaspora, at what stage of the migration process they are currently in, at what point they will become assimilated to the point where they will cease to be seen as or consider themselves to be diasporans or migrants, and about how the same experience may be different for different individuals or groups through all these stages. Pereira and Banerjee (2010) emphasize the vital importance of situating diaspora communities in-context and describing specific experiences and processes while avoiding generic terminology. A related point of consideration is to do with who is asking the questions, who is providing the answers and whose point of view informs the main narratives. The answers and the narratives, which can become self-fulfilling prophecies, are likely to vary depending on who is directing the main discourses – the government, academia, arts or business – and whether the criteria are fresh and reflective of the contemporary *zeitgeist* or are outdated and stagnant relics of a bygone age (Pereira and Banerjee, 2010). Furthermore,

the point of view whether embodying an *etic* (outsider) or *emic* (insider) perspective can also play a major role in the writer's conclusions.

In an extensive and insightful review of theoretical and empirical approaches to the study of transnational migration, Levitt and Jaworsky (2007) described how the field of transnational migration studies has evolved as "an inherently interdisciplinary field, made up of scholars around the world, seeking to describe and analyze these dynamics and invent new methodological tools with which to do so" (p. 129). The field of migration studies has undergone significant self-redefinition and revision over the past two decades in particular, as have other fields, including history and international relations. For instance, the realization that much of the social life of migrants is lived across borders is now becoming much more commonplace; the notion of the "melting pot" has been gradually replaced by that of the "salad bowl" or the cultural "*smorgasbord.*"

The construct of *transculturation* described by Ortiz (1995 [1940]) may be useful in guiding research on migration, as it is multi-dimensional. It encompasses more than transition from one culture to another; *transculturation* does not consist merely of acquiring another culture (acculturation) or of losing or uprooting a previous culture (deculturation) but rather, it merges these concepts and additionally contains the idea of the creation of new cultural phenomena (neoculturation). Moreover, not only is it useful to employ the construct of transculturation in conceptualizing processes at different levels, the actual manifestations of the processes of transculturation may also provide real-life solutions. According to Ortiz, transculturation is driven by powerful forces at the macrosocial level, yet ultimately it can be resolved at the interpersonal level. The concept of "social spaces" has also become an important part of this discourse, signifying areas where migrants, the "social remittances," and other resources that they bring flow together in such a manner that their own and even non-migrants' lives are "transformed" (Levitt, 2001). Faist (2000) introduced related concepts such as dispersion, embeddedness, transnational exchange and reciprocity, networks, and transnational communities. Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004) used the term "social fields" to describe "multiple interlocking networks" of social relationships.

Much discussion and debate have taken place around methodological concerns regarding the examination of contemporary migration, such as the appropriate parameters and levels of analysis to use. The debates have been far-ranging and diverse, involving such considerations as (1) the advantages of studying transnationalism from below (grassroots level) compared to studying it from above (global level) (Smith and Guarnizo, 1998), (2) what, exactly, should be studied (Portes, 2003), (3) "core" versus "expanded" transnationalism (Guarnizo, 1997) and "private" versus "public" spheres (Glick Schiller, as cited in Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007) and, as previously mentioned, (4) whether transnationalism, in fact, deserves to be examined at all given the assertion some make that it is an age-old phenomenon among immigrant populations. Nevertheless, there seems to be some consensus that in order to come into its own, the field needs to move from "thick description," "host-country studies," and "single case studies" to more coherently addressing enduring questions about the range of interconnected processes (Levitt and Jaworski, 2007, p.142)

Three "promising" areas for empirical inquiry suggested by Levitt and Jaworski are (a) "space, place, and nature of embeddedness," (b) "variable consequences" (positive and negative outcomes) of transnationalism, and (c) "comparative studies" of both internal and international migration (p. 142). The quieter terrain of internal migration is often eclipsed by the more visible and tumultuous processes of international migration. However, it is important to study all levels

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of the migration experience, and Roy (2012,forthcoming) notes that an feature common to both internal and international migration is *chain-migration*: involving the moving of entire social networks, interpersonal ties, and obligations. As such, the subjective internal experience should not be very different across the two types of migration; internal migration still involves separation, leaving the familiar behind, making the unfamiliar home, and building a new life in a new place among people one does not know, whether fifty miles away or on the other side of the world. Distance is a relative concept.

Many insights have emerged from the early forays into the area of contemporary migration studies, which prompted some rethinking about basic assumptions and resulted in new innovative approaches and methods of study, looking at (1) multiple transnational social fields beyond sending and receiving countries or nation-states and borderlands, including non-migrants as well as migrants, (2) seeing through the eyes of respondents ("from below") rather than ("from above"), and (3) trying to capture the full flow, motion, and dynamics of trajectories and patterns (Levitt and Jaworski, 2007). On the whole, social scientists have begun to study these macro-level processes across multiple sites within transnational social fields (Fitzgerald, 2006), across transnational social networks historically, by revisiting sites and groups previously studied through ethnographies (Burawoy, 2003), and in relation to localized everyday "lived" experiences (Fitzgerald, 2006). However, the persistent use of "nation" as a descriptive category is still very evident in most studies, even today, in spite of the fact that many migrants may be linked in to and be active within social networks that transcend national borders and that their lived identities may have multiple roots and dispersed sources of succor as well. Levitt and Jaworsky (2007) point out that there is no "single, exclusive path" for migrants to take, that several factors play a role in determining outcomes and that, in fact, there may be 'multiple pathways'" (p. 143). According to Levitt (2007), these factors may include the host-country environment specific to migrants; how racial, ethnic, and religious diversity is managed; and the balance of power between church and state. In order to understand these processes, it would be important to examine the effects of social fields on "migrant trajectories" (Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007, p. 144) in relation to class, race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, and gender.

Conclusion

To conclude, the fields of migration studies, technology, communications and media studies, and cultural studies have all made rapid strides in terms of clarifying key issues and concerns relevant to a "globalized" world, but these areas of emphasis are still somewhat mutually exclusive, in that they exclude one another despite the overlap in some of their basic constructs. There is, therefore, a need to connect and bridge, rather than keep separate and compartmentalized these various realms; there is a need to translate across these different areas so that the whole experience of immigrants can be appreciated, apprehended, perceived, and understood for greater insight, and appropriate interdisciplinary frameworks can be created for a closer examination of our present-day realities.

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