

Determinants of Transnationalism among New Legal Immigrants in the United States

In the current heightening of nationalist sentiment in a globalized economy, transnational migration is playing a complex and significant, yet little noted role.¹ The concept of transnationalism has allowed social science researchers to take into account the fact that immigrants now live their lives across national borders, optimizing the benefits of and responding to the constraints of two or more states. The purpose of this article is to analyze the determinants of transnational engagement among adult immigrants newly admitted to legal permanent residence in the United States.

Social scientists have increasingly recognized the importance of studying transnational activism, or “regular interactions across national boundaries where at least one actor is a non-state agent or does not operate on behalf of a national government or an intergovernmental organization”². However, most research on transnationalism until recently focused on the strategies and successes of multinational corporations³, non-profit organizations⁴, principled networks⁵ and social movements⁶ – the level of aggregation is thus, institutional. This scholarship largely leaves out the role of migrants as an alternative group with potential for engaging in transnational action. Migrants employ a

¹ Miles, Robert, *Racism After “Race Relations”*, London: Routledge, 1993.

² Risse-Kappen, Thomas (ed.) *Bringing Transnational Relations Back In: Non-State Actors, Domestic Structures and International Institutions*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 1995.

³ Sell, Susan, *Private Power, Public Law: The Globalization of Intellectual Property Rights*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press; 2003.

⁴ Anheier, Helmut, “Reflections on the Concept and Measurement of Global Civil Society”, *Voluntas*, Vol. 18, No. 1; 2007, pp. 1-15.

⁵ Keck, Margaret E. and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998.

⁶ Smith, Jackie and Dawn Weist, “The Uneven Geography of Global Civil Society: National and Global Influences on Transnational Association”, *Social Forces* Vol. 84, No. 2; 2005, pp. 621-652.

wide range of activities to contribute to socioeconomic and cultural change and community empowerment, and even affect political change in their home countries and communities.

The emergence of transnationalism as a key field of study in international migration only proceeded in the latter part of the 1980s.⁷ A 1990 workshop organized by Glick Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton on transnational migration and the United States, is widely recognized as the birthplace of the field of transnational migration studies.⁸ They define transnationalism as “*the processes by which (im)migrants and refugees forge and maintain multi-stranded social relations that link together their places of origin and places of settlement*.” These processes are called transnationalism to emphasize that many migrants today build from below social fields that cross geographic, cultural and political borders.”⁹

Other migration scholars have also sought to define and trace the development of transnational communities and practices, and examine the ramifications for identity and citizenship in an increasingly globalized world¹⁰. Smith and Guarnizo coined the phrase ‘transnationalism from below’ – a people-led process that exploits the economic and political opportunities presented by globalization and challenges the centralizing tendencies of nationalism, on the one hand, and the traditional transnational focus on the corporate and inter-governmental sectors, on the other, to develop transnational

⁷ Al-Ali, Nadej, R. Black, and K. Koser, “The Limits to Transnationalism: Bosnian and Eritrean Refugees in Europe as Emerging Transnational Communities”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 2001, vol. 24, pp. 578-600.

⁸ Nolin, Catherine, “Transnational Ruptures and Sutures: questions of identity and social relations among Guatemalans in Canada”, *GeoJournal*, 2002, Vol. 56, No. 1, pp. 59-67.

⁹ Basch, Linda, Schiller, Nina Glick and Szanton-Blanc, Cristina, *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments and Deterritorialized Nation-States*, Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach, 1994, p. 7.

¹⁰ S. Vertovec, “Transnationalism and Identity”, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 2001, vol. 27.

linkages.¹¹ The level of aggregation in tracing such processes is thus, at the individual/group level. In this paper, I focus on the phenomenon of transnationalism as it manifests itself among individual immigrants in the United States.

I aim, in this paper, to probe the social determinants of cross-border relationships initiated and maintained by contemporary migrants to the United States. I operationalize transnational activities as ownership of property abroad and sponsorship of immigration of relatives to the United States. As I shall explain further later in the paper, I draw on potential determinants of immigrant transnationalism from three different theoretical literatures: (a) the role of demographic characteristics in immigrant transnationalism; (b) immigrants' incorporation into host societies; and (c) the dependence of transnationalism on availability of resources.

This is an important question to investigate because, as I illustrate in the next section, the existing literature leaves little doubt about the existence of the phenomenon of transnationalism and its transformative potential, but it provides little insight into the actual numbers involved or immigrants' characteristics and motivations.¹² Hence, I attempt to fill this gap in the literature by investigating the determinants of transnationalism among a broad cross-section of recent immigrants surveyed by the New Immigrant Survey.

Theoretical Perspective

¹¹ Smith, Michael Peter and Guarnizo, Luis Eduardo (eds.), *Transnationalism From Below*, New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2004

¹² Two exceptions are Guarnizo et al. (2003) and Itzigsohn and Saucedo (2002), but they both restrict their studies to Dominican, Salvadoran and Colombian immigrants in the U.S.

The term ‘transnational’ has been used in the social sciences and cultural studies to signal an abatement of national boundaries and the development of ideas or political institutions that span national borders and include actors that are not states.¹³ The term is especially relevant to migration studies; migration scholars locate transnational processes within the life experiences of individual migrants and families, constituting the ups and downs of daily activities, concerns, fears and achievements.¹⁴

Until recently, however, in the United States, several generations of researchers have viewed immigrants as persons who uproot themselves, leave behind home and country and face the painful process of incorporation into a different society and culture. Oscar Handlin, in *The Uprooted*, writes about broken homes, interruptions of a familiar life, the becoming of a foreigner and ceasing to belong in describing the emigration experience.¹⁵ The impact of separation from known surroundings was that immigrants were taken out of their traditional environments and replanted in a strange ground, among strangers, where strange manners prevailed. As Handlin sums it up, the history of immigration is a history of alienation and its consequence: the immigrants lived in crisis because they were uprooted.

Assumptions about the uprootedness of immigrants also filtered the way in which immigrant history was interpreted: the rupture of home ties or their transformation into sentiment rather than connection is a central aspect of multicultural imaginings of America in which immigrants groups are encouraged to preserve their culture, custom

¹³ Glick Schiller, Nina, Basch, Linda and Blanc-Szanton, Cristina (eds.), *Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration: Race, Class, Ethnicity and Nationalism Reconsidered*, New York: The New York Academy of Sciences, 1992

¹⁴ Rouse, Roger, “Making Sense of Settlement: class transformation, class struggle and transnationalism among Mexican immigrants in the United States”, in *Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration: Race, Class, Ethnicity and Nationalism Reconsidered*, New York: New York Academy of Sciences, 1992.

¹⁵ Handlin, Oscar, *The Uprooted*, 2nd Ed., Boston MA: Little, Brown and Co., 1973 [1951]

and identity, yet be fully embedded in an American mosaic.¹⁶ What has been uniformly defined as unacceptable was a migration in which immigrants or refugees settled permanently in their new country while maintaining tie to countries they still saw as homelands.¹⁷ And yet this is an emerging pattern among immigrant populations currently settled in the U.S.

Starting in the 1980s, a handful of scholars of contemporary migration rejected the prevailing view of immigrants as persons who had uprooted themselves from their old society to settle themselves in a new land and took note of the transnational networks of immigrants.¹⁸ Calling attention to the fact that a significant proportion of the migrants who settle in and become well-incorporated in the United States still maintain home ties, they proposed transnational migration or transnationalism as a new paradigm for the study of migration across the borders of nation-states.

A transnational approach posits that even though today's migrants invest socially, economically and politically in their new society, they forge and sustain simultaneous social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement from the very beginning of their immigration experience in the United States. Such an approach accents the attachments migrants maintain with families, communities, traditions and causes outside the boundaries of the nation-state to which they have moved.¹⁹

Scholars of transnational migration emphasize the ongoing and continuing ways in which current-day immigrants construct and reconstitute their simultaneous

¹⁶ Glazer, Nathan and Moynihan, Patrick, *Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, the Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians and Irish of New York City*, Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1970

¹⁷ Glick Schiller, Nina; Basch, Linda; and Blanc, Cristina Szanton, "From Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transnational Migration", *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 68, No. 1, Jan 1995, pp. 48-63.

¹⁸ Glick Schiller, Nina, "Transmigrants and Nation-States: Something Old and Something New in the U.S. Immigrant Experience" in Hirschman, Charles, Kasinitz, Philip and DeWind, Josh (eds.) *The handbook of International Migration: the American Experience*, New York: Russel Sage Foundation, 1999

¹⁹ Vertovec, "Transnationalism and Identity"

embeddedness in more than one society.²⁰ On the one hand, they become incorporated in the economy and political institutions and patterns of daily life in the country in which they now reside. On the other hand, they continue to maintain connections, conduct transactions and influence local and national events in the countries from which they emigrated. Glick Schiller et al. call this process that of transnational migration and these immigrants “*transmigrants*” – immigrants who construct and reconstitute their simultaneous embeddedness in more than one nation-state. Transnational migration, therefore, is the process by which immigrants forge and sustain simultaneous multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement.²¹

What distinguishes this immigrant experience from earlier remittances and home ties that immigrants have always maintained and makes it truly “transnational” is the emergence of a social process in which migrants “*establish social fields that cross geographic, cultural and political borders*”²² and make decisions, take actions and develop identities within these *social networks* that connect them to two or more societies simultaneously. According to Portes et al., it is the scale and intensity of such relations that differentiates transnational activities from those of earlier migrants.²³

Today’s transmigrants are also different from those of the past as they are more likely to come from the peripheral world, be persons of color and include a large number

²⁰ See Glick Schiller, Nina, Basch, Linda and Szanton Blanc, Cristina, “From Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transnational Migration”, *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 68, No. 1, (Jan. 1995), pp. 48-63, p. 48 and N. Al-Ali, R. Black, and K. Koser, “Refugees and Transnationalism: The Experience of Bosnians and Eritreans in Europe,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 2001b, vol. 27, pp. 615-34.

²¹ Glick Schiller et al, “From Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transnational Migration”

²² Basch, Linda, Schiller, Nina Glick and Szanton-Blanc, Cristina, *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments and Deterritorialized Nation-States*, Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach, 1994

²³ Portes, A., Guarnizo, L.E. and Landolt, P., “The Study of Transnationalism: Pitfalls and Promise or an Emergent Research Field”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 1999, vol. 22, pp. 217-37.

of professionals.²⁴ Another distinctive feature is that they hold on to their native cultures and traditional networks in unprecedented ways. Participants are often bilingual, move easily between different cultures, frequently maintain homes in two centers, and pursue economic, political and cultural interests that require their presence in both.²⁵

Transnationalism offers an arena in which to investigate the agency of collectivities described as “unbound” by national borders.²⁶ Following this, migrant transnational relations and activities include economic investments made abroad, sending remittances to friends and relatives back home, voting or lobbying in home country politics, promoting international awareness of the human rights situation in the home country or sponsoring relatives for migration to the U.S. in the country of settlement.

In this paper, I focus on immigrant transnationalism in the form of a) ownership of property abroad and b) sponsorship of immigration of relatives to the United States. The question is part of a broader concern with the practices of people who orient their lives around more than one nation-state. This is not to minimize the importance of other forms of transnationalism such as political activism or cultural-ideational exchanges. Instead, I am particularly interested in the means of transnationalism from the perspective of immigrants as part of broader kinship networks. *I, therefore, seek to establish the determinants of property ownership abroad and family sponsorship that prevails among new immigrants in the United States.*

²⁴ Rios, Palmira N., “Comments on Rethinking Migration: A Transnational Perspective” in Glick Schiller, Nina, Basch, Linda and Blanc-Szanton, Cristina (eds.), *Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration: Race, Class, Ethnicity and Nationalism Reconsidered*, New York: The New York Academy of Sciences, 1992

²⁵ Portes, A., “Immigration Theory for a New Century: Some Problems and Opportunities,” *International Migration Review*, vol. 31, 1997, pp. 799-825.

²⁶ Goldring, Luin, “The Power of Status in Transnational Social Fields” in *Transnationalism From Below*, New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2004

Treating immigrants from the same country, or even a certain group of migrants, as homogenous does not lead to an accurate explanation of the specific individual and social factors relating to home country and resettlement contexts that foster or hamper transnational practices that are enacted. According to Al-Ali, variation in intensity and frequency of transnational activism is linked to the great level of heterogeneity among immigrants²⁷ Likelihoods and possibilities for the emergence of transnational activities and relations are thus shaped by factors which distinguish immigrants from one another. Such factors include individual (demographic) characteristics, incorporation in host society and resources available.

Demographic Characteristics affecting transnationalism

Demographic factors which include age, gender and education, are the standard demographic variables that control for background factors.²⁸ To these, I add a measure for whether the respondent has received any education in the United States. Literature on the relationship between *gender* and immigration tells us that males experience occupational downward mobility upon relocation and may tend to form, participate in and lead ethnic political organizations whose interests and focus is in the country of origin in order to compensate for the loss of status in the host country²⁹. Women's experience tends to go the opposite way, as many of them become paid workers for the first time in the United States; they are, therefore, more likely to shift their orientation

²⁷ Al-Ali, Nadjé, "Trans- or a-national? Bosnians in the UK and the Netherlands" in Al-Ali, Nadjé and Koser, Khalid (eds.), *New Approaches to Migration? Transnational communities and the transformation of home*, New York: Routledge, 2002

²⁸ Itzigsohn, Jose and Silvia Saucedo, "Immigrant Incorporation and Sociocultural Transnationalism", *International Migration Review*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (Autumn 2002), pp. 766-798.

²⁹ Guarnizo, Luis Eduardo, Alejandro Portes, and William Haller, "Assimilation and transnationalism: determinants of transnational political action among contemporary migrants", *The American Journal of Sociology*, (May 2003) Vol. 108, No. 6, pp. 1211-48.

towards the host state³⁰. The hypothesis then is that men are more likely to engage in political transnationalism.

Contexts of Incorporation

Immigrant transnationalism is not only affected by demographic factors but also by their contexts of incorporation.³¹ The greater the socio-cultural differences between newcomers and the host society, the more difficult their process of incorporation. Proficiency in English then becomes an important factor in influencing assimilation of immigrants. Satisfaction with life in the immigrant-receiving country, intent to live there permanently and ownership of property do not necessarily imply incorporation but they are strongly correlated; the latter is considered an important landmark in the process of becoming part of the country of settlement.

The length of settlement is especially important in determining maintenance of transnational relations and activities, with recent immigrant arrivals more likely to maintain ongoing relationships with the country of origin.³² The hypothesis then is that longer periods of U.S. residence should lead to progressive disengagement from home country loyalties and attachments. The competing argument is that the immediate concern of new immigrant arrivals is to try to secure their positions in their new host countries. Most lack the financial resources and social networks vital to transnational engagement,

³⁰ Jones-Correa, Michael, "Different Paths: Gender, Immigration and Political Participation", *International Migration Review*, (1998), Vol. 32, No. 2, pp. 326-49.

³¹ Portes, Alejandro and Rumbaut, Ruben G., *Immigrant America: A Portrait*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996

³² Guarnizo et al., "Assimilation and transnationalism: determinants of transnational political action among contemporary migrants"

which are acquired over time.³³ The corollary hypothesis then is that longer periods of U.S. residence should lead to more frequent, organized forms of transnational activity.

Availability of Resources

Another explanation for the emergence of variation in transnationalism among immigrants is that they try to reconstitute linkages to the country of origin or relatives living in other countries, but are unable to do so because they do not have the time, resources or financial means to engage in transnational practices. In order to engage in transnational entrepreneurship, such as investing abroad or philanthropic acts, such as sponsoring a relative for immigration, immigrants need to have a stable employment status and have accumulated a certain amount of capital. From this point of view, then, those who engage in transnational practices are the most economically successful immigrants.³⁴

Data and Methods

The data for this analysis is drawn from the New Immigrant Survey (NIS) dataset which is a unique study conducted among adult immigrants newly admitted to legal permanent residence in the United States. The NIS study was motivated by research goals such as to evaluate the assimilation of immigrants as well as their children in American society, to examine the transition from temporary to permanent citizenship, including the process of finding a home and becoming financially successful and to compare the health and wellbeing of immigrants with native citizens, in terms of child-rearing as well as

³³ Al-Ali N, Nadjé, R. Black, and K. Koser, "The Limits to 'Transnationalism': Bosnian and Eritrean Refugees in Europe as Emerging Transnational Communities," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 24 (2001), pp. 578-600.

³⁴ Itzigsohn and Saucedo, "Immigrant Incorporation and Sociocultural Transnationalism"

individual health. A survey pilot project (NIS-P) was carried out in 1996 to inform the fielding and design of the full NIS. The pilot survey included four waves of data collection: a baseline survey and three-month, six-month, and twelve-month follow-ups. The completion rate for those contacted for the baseline survey and who were subsequently chosen was 95 percent at the twelve-month follow-up. For this reason, the following analysis is based on data drawn from the baseline and twelve-month surveys. A total of 976 respondents were surveyed.

Dependent variables

The following questions in the twelve-month survey record transnationalism among immigrants: “Right now, do you own any property outside the United States?” and “How many petitions have you filed to sponsor the immigration of a relative or employee?” The dependent variable “ownership of property abroad” is a dummy variable measured as No=0, Yes=1. 22% of the respondents owned property abroad while 78% did not. The other dependent variable “number of sponsorships” is measured as count data ranging from 0 to 6 sponsorships, with a mean of .11.

Independent variables

Demographic variables: Respondents were asked, “In what year were you born?” I recoded the year of birth to measure the independent variable “age” as 25 years or less, 26-35, 36-45, 46-60 and 60+ years. The modal age category is 36-45 years. Gender was recoded as Male=0, Female=1. Education was measured in the survey as number of years, which I recoded to measure high school or less (12 years or less), college degree

(13-16) and graduate education (16 years or more). 53% of the respondents were female while the modal category for education was those who held a college degree. Education received in the U.S. was measured in number of years (ranging from 1 to 20). The mean number of years of education received in the U.S. was 1.

Incorporation variables: Respondents were asked “In what year did you first enter the United States?” I re-coded the year of entry to measure the independent variable “length of stay” as less than 5 years, 5-15, 16-25, 26-35, 36-45 and 45+. Most respondents had been in the U.S. for 5-15 years. English proficiency was coded as Not Well At All, Not Very Well, Average, Fairly Well, and Very Well and owning property in the U.S. as a dummy variable (No=0, Yes=1). Most respondents reported an average level of English proficiency and 25% of the respondents owned property in the U.S. Respondents were also asked whether they plan to live in the U.S. permanently or not – this variable was coded as a dummy variable (No=0, Yes=1, 2=Don’t Know) while satisfaction with life in the U.S. was measure as Dissatisfied, somewhat Satisfied, Satisfied. Most respondents planned to live in the U.S. permanently and were somewhat satisfied with life in the U.S.

Resource variables: Respondents’ employment status was coded as Unemployed=0, Employed=1 and their savings were measured in amount of dollars. These point to immigrants’ economic incorporation and imply their gradually acquiring control over increasingly more resources. 70% of the respondents were employed and the mean amount of savings was \$25,125.

Missing values on variables were reassigned mean or modal values where applicable. For instance, 9 missing values for the dependent variable “ownership of

property abroad” were assigned the modal value of No. Similarly, missing values for education level and length of stay in the U.S. were assigned the modal values of 13-16 (college degree) and 5-15 years respectively. Missing values for employment status and intent to live in the U.S. permanently were also assigned the modal values of Employed and Yes respectively. Missing values for English proficiency were assigned the modal value of Average while those for satisfaction with life in the U.S. were assigned the modal value of Somewhat Satisfied. Missing values for number of years of education in the U.S. were assigned the mean value of 1 while those for savings were also assigned the mean value of \$25,125.

I conducted the analysis in two stages. First, I conducted multivariate analysis and estimated models for owning property abroad as a measure of transnationalism. The logit model is an ideal method for this analysis, as it models the association between individual, incorporation and resource variables and an individual’s log-odds ratio of owning property abroad. Let P_i denote the probability of the i th individual, with $i=1, 2 \dots N$, where N is the sample size. Let x_i denote a vector of explanatory variables that are specific to each individual. The probability is specified as:

$$P(x) = \frac{\exp(\alpha + \beta x)}{1 + \exp(\alpha + \beta x)}$$

I then modeled the number of sponsorships using Poisson regression analysis, which is appropriate for count data. The baseline Poisson model takes the form:

$$P(y) = \frac{e^{-\lambda} \lambda^y}{y!},$$

where y is the number of sponsorships. The parameter λ is specified as the log function

$\lambda = \exp(x\beta)$. The exponential function ensures that the sponsorship rate is a non-negative integer.³⁵ In the Poisson formulation, the assumption that the conditional mean and variance of Y given X are equal fails to account for over-dispersion (when variance exceeds the mean). A common approach to this problem is to estimate the event count using negative binomial regression, which is a generalization of the Poisson model.³⁶

Results

Table 1 presents the logits from the multivariate analyses (See Table 1). Model 1 presents the baseline model which only includes the demographic variables. The effect of age on the log odds of owning property abroad is statistically significant in this model. The coefficient for age is .43 which is positively significant ($p < .001$). We can say that controlling for other demographic factors, age accounts for 54% ($\exp^{.43}$) of the variance in ownership of property abroad among immigrants. Older immigrants are thus more likely to own property abroad than younger immigrants.

Gender and education in the U.S. are the other significant factors; which means that compared to men, female immigrants ($b = -.48, p < .01$) are less likely to own property abroad. A higher number of years of education in the U.S. ($b = -.12, p < .05$) is less likely to be correlated with owning property abroad.

In Model 2, I test for incorporation variables. Length of stay and satisfaction with life in the U.S. are the significant variables in this model. The coefficient for length of stay is .13 ($p < .05$). We can say that controlling for other incorporation factors, length of stay accounts for 14% ($\exp^{.13}$) of the variance in ownership of property abroad among

³⁵ Minkoff, Debra, "The Sequencing of Social Movements", *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 62, No. 5, (Oct. 1997), pp. 779-799, p. 785.

³⁶ Ibid.

immigrants. Immigrants who have been in the U.S. longer are thus more likely to own property abroad than newer immigrants. Satisfaction with life in the U. S. ($b = -.23$, $p < .01$) has a negative effect on transnationalism in the form of owning property abroad. Those dissatisfied with life in the U.S. are thus more likely to engage in transnationalism.

In Model 3, neither of the resource dependent variables, employment status or savings, is significantly related to owning property abroad. Finally, in the full model (Model 4), age, gender, education in the U.S. and satisfaction with life in the U.S. – the same control variables as in the nested models – continue to be significantly associated with owning property abroad, thus accounting for some of the variance in ownership of property abroad among immigrants. Proficiency in English becomes positively significant in the full model, which means that immigrants who are proficient in English are more likely to own property abroad.

I also added a variable interacting two of the significant variables, age*length of stay. The interaction is highly significant ($b = .009$, $p < .001$), which means that immigrants' age, combined with length of stay, is an important indicator of transnationalism and explains nearly 97% ($\exp^{.06}$) of the variance in ownership of property abroad among new immigrants.

Table 2 presents the multivariate analyses for the negative binomial model predicting number of sponsorships as an indicator of transnationalism (See Table 2).

Model 1 presents the baseline model which only includes the demographic variables. The effect of age on number of sponsorships is statistically significant in this model. The coefficient for age is .46 which is positively significant at $p < .001$. Older

immigrants are thus more likely to file a petition to sponsor relatives than younger immigrants. Gender is the only other significant factor in this model and is negatively correlated with number of sponsorships ($b = -.56, p < .05$); which means that compared to men, female immigrants are less likely to file a petition to sponsor relatives in the U.S.

In Model 2, I test for incorporation variables. Proficiency in English is the only significant variable in this model ($b = .19, p < .05$). This means that immigrants who are more proficient in English are more likely to file a petition to sponsor a relative than immigrants whose proficiency in English is low. Length of stay and satisfaction with life in the U.S., which were significantly correlated with owning property abroad, do not have a significant influence on sponsorship.

In Model 3, I include variables that measure availability of resources. Employment status, which was previously not significant, is significantly related to sponsorship ($b = .94, p < .01$). Employed immigrants are more likely to have the required resources and therefore more likely to file a petition to sponsor a relative than unemployed immigrants.

Finally, in the full model (Model 4), only age and employment status continue to be significantly associated with sponsorship. Gender and proficiency in English, which were significant in the nested models, cease to be significantly associated with sponsorship in the full model. The interaction between age and length of stay is also not significantly correlated with sponsorship.

Discussion and Conclusion

The analyses provide strong evidence that age is positively related to and is a significant factor in explaining variance in transnationalism among immigrants. Older

immigrants are thus more likely to own property abroad or file a petition to sponsor immigration of a relative to the U.S. than younger immigrants. The support for sex as a significant factor confirms the hypothesis in the transnationalism literature that male immigrants are more likely to engage in transnationalism than women. Since men experience occupational downward mobility upon relocation, they tend to mobilize around activities that focus on the country of origin in order to compensate for the loss of status in the host country³⁷. Women's experience tends to go the opposite way, as many of them become paid workers for the first time in the United States. They are, therefore, more likely to shift their orientation towards the host state³⁸ and less likely to become involved in transnational activities.

Proficiency in English and employment status are the other significant factors in explaining variance in transnational engagement among immigrants and provide some support for the theory that increased incorporation in the host society and being able to afford adequate resources lead to increased transnationalism. This can be explained by the fact that both proficiency in English and being employed increase one's social capital, which leads to increased transnational engagement.³⁹ Length of stay and its interaction with age are significantly associated with ownership of property abroad, but not sponsorship of relatives. I find no evidence for the effect of level of education, ownership of property in the U.S., intent to live permanently in the U.S. or amount of savings on transnationalism.

³⁷ Guarnizo et al., "Assimilation and transnationalism: determinants of transnational political action among contemporary migrants"

³⁸ Jones-Correa, Michael, "Different Paths: Gender, Immigration and Political Participation", *International Migration Review*, (1998), Vol. 32, No. 2, pp. 326-49.

³⁹ La Due Lake, Ronald and Huchfeldt, Robert, "Social Capital, Social Networks and Political Participation", *Political Psychology*, (Sep. 1998) Vol. 19, No. 3, Special Issue: Psychological Approaches to Social Capital, pp. 567-584.

The results present a clear picture of why there is variance in the level of transnational activism among adult immigrants newly admitted to legal permanent residence in the United States. I show that older male immigrants who are employed and proficient in English are most likely to own property abroad and file a petition to sponsor relatives to the U.S., indicating a higher level of transnationalism. The results, however, do not reveal any one of the sets of explanatory factors – demographic, incorporation or resource variables – as having a greater impact on explaining variance in transnationalism over the others.

Yet, my results are limited to the available data in the 2003 New Immigrant Survey. A complete explanation of how much variance in transnationalism can be explained by demographic, incorporation and resource variables requires identifying other transnational activities among immigrants, such as sending remittances home, forming grassroots organizations aimed at affecting policies back home, level of political participation in the home country, other forms of cultural-ideational exchanges etc. Such in-depth analysis was beyond the scope of this paper due to data limitation, but can be the focus of future research in the field of transnationalism.

Nevertheless, my analyses demonstrate that a significant transnational field of relationships and activism connecting immigrants with their countries of origin or relatives in other countries does exist. The transnational field is significant not only for home countries but also for the United States, since it affects the ways immigrants incorporate themselves in the host society and, thus, opens up further avenues of research.

Table 1. Logit Coefficients from the Regression of Owning Property Abroad on Selected Independent Variables				
Characteristic	Demographic (Model 1)	Incorporation (Model 2)	Resources (Model 3)	Full model (Model 4)
<i>Demographic Characteristics</i>				
Age	.43*** (.08)	—	—	.46* (.21)
Sex (Female=1)	-.48** (.16)	—	—	-.42** (.17)
Education	.02 (.11)	—	—	-.07 (.11)
U.S. Education	-.12* (.34)	—	—	-.14* (.06)
<i>Incorporation Variables</i>				
Length of stay	—	.13* (.07)	—	.001 (.28)
English proficiency	—	.02 (.06)	—	.13* (.07)
Own property in U.S.	—	-.23 (.19)	—	-.36 (.2)
Live permanently in U.S.	—	.005 (.15)	—	.01 (.15)
Satisfied with life in U.S.	—	-.23** (.09)	—	.21* (.09)
<i>Resource dependent Variables</i>				
Whether employed	—	—	.07 (.17)	.16 (.2)
Savings	—	—	$3.77e^{-07}$ ($5.58e^{-07}$)	$2.96e^{-07}$ ($5.86e^{-07}$)
Age*Length of Stay	—	—	—	.06*** (.01)
Constant	-2.33*** (.34)	-2.15*** (.4)	-1.31*** (.14)	-2.72*** (.53)
-2 log likelihood	-487.92	-510.52	-515.58	-480.72

Note: Numbers in parentheses are standard errors; N=976.

*p < .05, ** p < .01, ***p < .001 (one-tailed tests)

Table 2. Negative Binomial Coefficients from the Regression of Number of Sponsorships on Selected Independent Variables				
Characteristic	Demographic (Model 1)	Incorporation (Model 2)	Resources (Model 3)	Full model (Model 4)
<i>Demographic Characteristics</i>				
Age	.46*** (.13)	—	—	1.01** (.36)
Sex (Female=1)	-.56* (.28)	—	—	-.22 (.29)
Education	-.15 (.18)	—	—	-.26 (.19)
U.S. Education	-.18 (.11)	—	—	-.19 (.11)
<i>Incorporation Variables</i>				
Length of stay	—	-.12 (.13)	—	-.17 (.51)
English proficiency	—	.19* (.09)	—	.06 (.12)
Own property in U.S.	—	-.24 (.36)	—	-.65 (.37)
Live permanently in U.S.	—	-.47 (.36)	—	-.51 (.28)
Satisfied with life in U.S.	—	.18 (.15)	—	.17 (.14)
<i>Resource dependent Variables</i>				
Whether employed	—	—	.94** (.34)	1.48*** (.39)
Savings	—	—	$5.48 e^{-07}$ ($8.82 e^{-07}$)	$1.08 e^{-07}$ ($8.33 e^{-07}$)
Age*Length of Stay	—	—	—	.03 (.03)
Constant	-3.12*** (.6)	-2.12*** (.71)	-2.85*** (.3)	-5.59*** (1.56)
-2 log likelihood	-342.31	-337.18	-338.84	-316.88

Note: Numbers in parentheses are standard errors; N=976.

*p < .05, ** p < .01, ***p < .001 (one-tailed tests)

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