

Looking for Lived Religion in Immokalee, Florida
Philip J. Williams, University of Florida
Patricia Fortuny Loret de Mola, Programa CIESAS Peninsular

Our research in Immokalee, Florida was based on the assumption that religion would be highly salient for Mexican and Guatemalan migrants. The notion of the saliency of religion among immigrants is well established in the literature on religion and immigration. Contrary to secularization theory, Warner (1998, 3) argues that immigrants' "religious identities often (but not always) mean more to them away from home, in their diaspora, than they did before." The immigration experience raises questions of meaning that religion can sometimes answer, "if not for the immigrants, then for their children" (1998, 16). Similarly, Raymond Williams (1988, 29), in his study of Indian and Pakistani immigrants in the United States argues that "Immigrants are religious – by all counts more religious than they were before they left home – because religion is one of the important identity markers in helping them preserve individual self-awareness and cohesion in a group" (1988, 11). Orsi's study of Italian immigrants in Harlem, demonstrates the importance of religion in affirming ties to the homeland and maintaining the "psychic and cosmic integrity of the immigrants" (2002, 168).

Recent work on religion and immigration has tended to concentrate on congregational life (Warner and Wittner 1998; Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000). This approach emphasizes "what new ethnic and immigrant groups [are] *doing together religiously* in the United States, and what manner of religious institutions they [are] developing *of, by, and for themselves*" (Warner 1998, 9). During our preliminary research in Immokalee, we learned that congregations can provide limited "spaces of sociability," which function as intimate spaces where immigrants can find voice, fellowship, and develop civic skills (Ammerman 1997, Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). Nevertheless, given their "mobile livelihoods,"¹ our preliminary research found that most migrants in Immokalee are not spiritually connected to religious congregations. On the contrary, it is the more established immigrants that are most active in congregational life; however, they represent only a small percentage of the migrant population in Immokalee.

Recent debates in anthropology have questioned the notions of locality upon which congregational studies are based. In the context of globalization characterized by transnational flows of capital, goods, people, ideas and culture, the "natural" connection between culture and locality can no longer be assumed (Appadurai 1996, Clifford 1997). Instead, as Giddens (1990, 21) argues, global modernity facilitates the "disembedding" of social relations from local contexts of face-to-face interactions and restructures them "across indefinite spans of time-space." This transformation of the place-culture relationship is often referred to as deterritorialization – "the weakening attachments to place, to territorially defined communities and cultures ranging from the household, the urban neighborhood, and the town or city, to the metropolis, the region, and the most powerful of contemporary territorial communities of identity, the modern nation-state" (Soja 2000, 151-2). Paralleling these debates, in religious studies there has been a move to study religion beyond localized congregations (Hall 1997, Orsi 1999, Brown 1999). As Vásquez and Marquardt argue (2003, 225), "the relation between culture and locality has been unsettled by the current episode of globalization, bringing particularistic difference into tension with hybridity and the global circulation of religious practices and

narratives that stake universalistic claims.” These new approaches focus on lived religion, “what people *do* with religious practice, what they make with it of themselves and their worlds” (Orsi 1997, 7)

Our research in Immokalee sought to build on these developments in anthropology and religious studies, assuming that religious life was just as likely to take place at home, the workplace or in the streets as in religious congregations. At the same time, we were careful not to ignore congregational life altogether. As Orsi (1997, 9) warns: “it would be unfortunate if the turn to lived religion meant simply changing the valence of the familiar dualities while preserving them, just substituting religious practices in the streets and workplaces for what goes on in churches.”

We found that religion, while important, may be less salient for Mexican and Guatemalan migrants in Immokalee than in their communities of origin. Religion appears to be lived and practiced less intensively by migrants in Immokalee. To make some sense of these findings, we begin with a brief description of Immokalee including a discussion of comparative survey data from Immokalee and Jupiter. We then turn to the congregational life of migrants, focusing particularly on two churches – one Catholic and one Pentecostal. The following two sections examine lived religion, including prayer, popular devotions, and public religious practice. We conclude with some reflections on the implications of the research for the broader literature on religion and immigration.

Immokalee - Background

Immokalee is located in Collier County² in southwest Florida very close to the Everglades, about two and a half hours from Miami. The economic importance of Immokalee is a fairly recent phenomenon, given that up until 1870 the region was populated by Seminole and Mikasuki Indians dedicated to hunting and gathering. During the 1930s and 40s, because of ideal climate and soil conditions, the area was transformed into a principle site for the production of winter crops, especially, tomatoes, cucumbers and watermelons. The expansion of winter crop production resulted in the establishment of several packing plants in Immokalee that generated additional sources of employment. During the early decades of agricultural expansion, the labor force was made up primarily of African-Americans and poor whites from the South. It was not until the 1950s and especially after 1962 (when a hard freeze caused major damage to citrus production in central Florida) that Immokalee came to play a major role in Florida’s agricultural expansion. Citrus producers, attracted by Immokalee’s favorable climate and soil, began to significantly expand production there after 1962. Subsequent freezes in other parts of the state accelerated the process of expansion, so that by the 1980s citrus production had doubled in the area.

Although the nature of work has not changed much in Immokalee in recent times, the origin of agricultural workers has changed dramatically. Up until the 1970s, the permanent labor force in Immokalee was primarily Euro-American and the migrant labor force predominantly African-American. Today, Immokalee continues to be an agricultural town but with a highly mobile and multiethnic population. As in other regions of the US, there has been a process of “latinization” of Immokalee’s agricultural workers (Rothenberg, 1998, 44).³ According to the 2000 Census (<http://www.census.gov/>), the population is 71% Hispanic (81% of whom are of Mexican origin and 6% Guatemalan). During the harvest season, the population can reach 25,000

to 30,000, while during the off-season the population decreases by about a half. The majority of recent Mexican migrant workers in Immokalee are from rural communities, and above all indigenous communities in Oaxaca, Chiapas, Hidalgo, Guerrero, and Veracruz.

Immokalee’s migrant farm workers, who make up part of the migratory stream along the eastern corridor, are extremely vulnerable in social and economic terms. Compared to other migrants, they are the dispossessed, *los de abajo* (the underdogs), *los jodidos* (the screwed). Often separated from their families, they suffer most directly and dramatically the consequences of a hostile, alien environment. Subjected to these “multiple marginalities,”⁴ they are especially disadvantaged: first, because of their undocumented status; second, because of their limited social capital;⁵ and third, because their social networks are either non-existent, incipient, or with individuals in the same economic situation as themselves.⁶ With average annual earnings of approximately \$7,500, migrant farmworkers have few possibilities to accumulate the kind of economic, social, or symbolic capital available to other types of immigrants.

The Mexican migrant population in Immokalee is highly stratified in terms of class, ethnic, and regional origin, and there is generally limited interaction between Mexican migrants and other immigrant groups (Guatemalans and Haitians). Instead of working together to overcome obstacles to socioeconomic improvement, some “immigrants launch their antagonisms at each other” (Mahler, 1995, 215). The structural obstacles that undermine the accumulation of social capital for most migrant workers also limit the possibilities for collective solidarity and mobilization in Immokalee. Not surprisingly, the overwhelming majority of migrants in Immokalee do not participate in civic, religious, or political organizations. Moreover, the mobile livelihoods of migrant farmworkers make it difficult for organizations to sustain collective action.⁷

Our survey of Mexican and Guatemalan migrants in Immokalee highlights their extreme economic deprivation, ethnic/cultural heterogeneity, and low levels of social capital.⁸ The mean score for weekly income in Immokalee was only \$271.00. This is not surprising, as the biggest employment category for Immokalee was “agricultural worker,” with over 50% of all respondents in this group. Regarding the mobile livelihoods of migrants in Immokalee, 60% of respondents said that they had lived elsewhere in the U.S. and 32% reported frequently traveling to other states.

Immokalee’s population is geographically diverse, with the largest concentrations from Oaxaca (13.1%) and Chiapas (13.1%) Mexico. The next largest concentrations come from Guanajuato, Mexico (11%) and Huehuetenango, Guatemala (10.3%), with the remainder primarily spread throughout the other Mexican states.

Comparative data from Immokalee and Jupiter on why respondents came to the United States confirm some of the key differences between the migrant populations in the two communities. In table 1, we see that significantly less Immokalee residents (only 33.1%) came to that city for family reunification reasons than did residents of Jupiter (50.7%). Less than 5% of Immokalee respondents reported that they came due to contacts or friends, while 15% reported this reason in Jupiter (see Table 1).

Table 1

	JUPITER	IMOKALEE
--	---------	----------

Why did you come to this city?	%	n	%	n
Job, work, salary, study	19.4	26	52.0	77
Coyote brought me here	6.0	8	4.7	7
Family reunification	50.7	68	33.1	49
Contacts, friends	14.9	20	4.7	7
Weather, quality of life, personal choice	5.2	7	3.4	5
Guatemalan or Mexican community	2.2	3	1.4	2
Other	1.5	2	.7	1

We also asked respondents to rate how often people in their city helped their co-nationals. As is clear from Table 2, nearly twice as many Jupiter residents believed that residents helped their co-nationals a lot. In Immokalee, nearly 20% of those interviewed believed that residents helped their co-nationals “not at all.”

Table 2

Do you think that people here help their co-nationals (<i>paisanos</i>)?	JUPITER		IMOKALEE	
	%	n	%	n
Not at all	11.6	18	19.7	29
A little	27.7	43	34.7	51
Some	26.5	41	29.3	43
A lot	26.5	41	13.6	20
No response	7.7	12	2.7	4

This data highlights some of the key contrasts between Immokalee and Jupiter. In Immokalee, the immigrant population is more geographically and ethnically diverse, with lower incomes, more mobility, and less family reunification. Immokalee residents are less likely to see their co-nationals as sources of support or assistance. Jupiter, in contrast, has a more geographically and ethnically homogenous immigrant population, with higher incomes, less mobility, and more institutionalized immigration networks and greater family connections. Jupiter residents are also more likely to believe that mutual assistance is available from their co-nationals.

So how do these differences translate into social capital? In order to get a more direct measure of social capital, we asked respondents about their number of friends before and after arriving in their current location. The disparity in terms of this measure of social capital was striking. The mean score for number of friends (living in the same city) in Immokalee was only 2.22, while the mean score in Jupiter was 7.01. When asked how many of these friends they knew prior to coming to the U.S. the mean scores were 1.07 for Immokalee and 4.08 for Jupiter. Clearly the Jupiter residents have a larger existing circle of friends as well as a greater transnational network of friends.⁹

The higher levels of social capital evident among the Jupiter Maya are accompanied by some more negative aspects of living among an affluent, largely Anglo population. When asked “what is the worst part of living in this city,” 29.8% of Jupiter

residents cited culture and communication barriers while only 12.4% of Immokalee residents cited these problems. In Immokalee, 52.4% cited material issues such as jobs, bills, and housing as the worst part of living in that city.

The data on perceived discrimination are even more revealing. When asked how often they felt discriminated against, 62.3% of Immokalee respondents said never or almost never. Only 51% of Jupiter residents gave those responses (see Table 3).¹⁰

Table 3

	JUPITER		IMOKALEE	
	%	n	%	n
Have you ever felt discriminated against in the US?				
Never	38.7	60	41.8	61
Almost never	12.3	19	20.5	30
Once in a while	36.8	57	28.1	41
Frequently	11.6	18	9.6	14
No response	.6	1	0	0

When asked who discriminates against them the most, 67.1% of Jupiter respondents specified Anglo Americans, while only 37.3% of Immokalee residents did so. In Immokalee, respondents perceived that they were discriminated against by blacks (12%), Chicanos (6%), and other Hispanics (16.9%) at a much higher rate than in Jupiter (3.5%, 0%, and 9.4% respectively). These findings are not surprising given that Mexican and Guatemalan migrants constitute an overwhelming majority of Immokalee’s total population. Societal reception of migrants tends to be more neutral than in Jupiter, in the sense that the minority Anglo population accepts the presence of migrant farmworkers as a necessary feature of the community and its principle economic activities. Several migrants whom we interviewed remarked that one of the reasons they like Immokalee was that “everyone speaks Spanish” or that “you can walk down the street as if you were in Mexico because it’s full of Mexicans.” In Jupiter, by contrast, the majority Anglo population has reacted to the presence of Mayan immigrants with some alarm. In 2004, a group of Jupiter residents formed a non-profit called Jupiter Neighbors against Illegal Labor (JNAIL) with the help of the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR). The group staged a series of protests against the town’s planned labor center and continues to operate and protest at public events.

Given these findings on discrimination and social capital, we would expect that associational participation and activities would be lower in Immokalee than in Jupiter. To some degree, the data substantiate this expectation. Immokalee residents do tend to participate in religious organizations less frequently than Jupiter residents (see Table 4). While 71.3% of Immokalee respondents said that they never or almost never participated in a religious organization, only 52.5% of Jupiter residents reported such infrequent participation. More than twice as many Jupiter residents reported very frequent participation in religious organizations (see table 5). Given that churches are the primary type of voluntary organization open and available to recent immigrants, religious participation provides a good proxy for associational participation in general.

Table 4

How often do you participate in a religious organization?	JUPITER		IMOKALEE	
	%	n	%	n
Never	50.6	78	65.0	93
Almost never	1.9	3	6.3	9
Once in a while	24.0	37	18.2	26
Frequently	11.0	17	4.9	7
Very frequently	12.3	19	5.6	8

When asked how often they teamed up with neighbors to improve something in their community Immokalee residents also answered that they did so less frequently than Jupiter residents. On a scale from never to very frequently, only 21.1% of Immokalee respondents reported that they teamed up with neighbors once in a while, frequently, or very frequently. In Jupiter, however, participation was much higher, with 35% reporting that they teamed up once in a while, frequently, or very frequently.¹¹ Not surprisingly, we found that rates of religious participation were also significantly correlated with teaming up with neighbors. While religious affiliation had no effect on such participation, the frequency of participation in a religious organization is significantly correlated with the frequency of teaming up with neighbors to improve the community.¹²

Congregational Life - “We come here to work”

In Immokalee, migrants can choose from a diverse array of churches to live their religion communally.¹³ Here we will focus on the two most important congregations in Immokalee. The Catholic Church, Our Lady of Guadalupe, is the largest and possibly oldest Christian organization in Immokalee. It was founded in 1957 by a group of priests from the Scalabrini order.¹⁴ A significant sector of more established immigrants attends the Catholic Church. However, only a small minority of Catholics commit themselves to church activities beyond taking part in the sacraments (mass, Baptism, and other rites). The Catholic Church does not provide many opportunities for immigrants to build “spaces of sociability.” The time spent together is limited to the Sunday mass. Although Guatemalan and Haitian Catholics also attend the church, the organization of religious services in English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole tends to reinforce the segregation of groups along ethnic lines.

Concerning social services, the Catholic Church offers the most complete range of social services to the immigrant community. It runs a soup kitchen every day and Catholic Charities provides clothing and showers for the needy. Most importantly, the Guadalupe Center provides legal services and advice for immigrants. Since 1981, when Father Sanders was in charge, the Catholic Church has supported the rights of farmworkers. The current parish priest, Father Ettore Rubin (from Italy), is very supportive of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and has even obtained financial help from the Diocese of Venice for its members. In this sense, the Catholic church is

embedded in a broad network of Catholic and community organizations that provides important resources for its social service delivery to the migrant population in Immokalee.

After the Catholic Church, the Bethel Assembly of God Church (Iglesia Betel) has the next most important presence in Immokalee. The church was founded in 1979 and now boasts very modern facilities with a congregation of over 300 members. The steady growth of the congregation has prompted the church to offer two services on Sunday. Most of the members are Mexican and Mexican-American. The pastor, Josué Rincón, came to the US from Matamoros, Mexico in 1975 and has lived in Immokalee since 1977. After two years working “en la labor,” Rincón found work in a local school and then as a car salesman. Since taking over as pastor of the congregation in 1986, Rincón’s charismatic preaching style and appealing personal biography has facilitated the church’s efforts to win over new converts. As with the Catholic Church, the most active members of the congregation tend to be more established migrants, although many recent migrants attend services. The church is particularly effective in attracting younger couples and has a very active youth outreach program. In an effort to build a sense of community beyond the Sunday services, church leaders organize prayer groups that meet in different members’ homes during the week. Once a group reaches a membership of thirty, a new group can be spun off in a constant effort to cultivate new members and leadership for the church.

Pastor Rincón is politically conservative, and speaks openly in church of his fervent support for President Bush and his policies. He often employs an apocalyptic discourse and biblical literalism to denounce homosexuality and abortion, and to preach against drinking, smoking, and other pleasures “del mundo.” According to Rincón, alcoholism and drug addiction are the result of sin rather than social diseases. The asceticism required of church members can produce a transformation of household consumption patterns. When men convert, the resources normally spent on drinking, smoking, gambling, visiting prostitutes and extramarital affairs are redirected into the household, thereby increasing household economic capital.¹⁵

Although churches in Immokalee do provide some limited “spaces of sociability” for building ties between church members, they also tend to reinforce rather than bridge ethnic, regional, and social differences. Moreover, the social capital generated in these spaces is inward-oriented and tends to reinforce group identity.¹⁶ This is particularly the case with the Bethel Church, where established immigrants have achieved not only “spiritual well-being” but also a level of social and economic success. Most of the members of the youth group study at the local high school, several women hold good jobs in local businesses, and a few members own their own small businesses in the area. The church plays a fundamental role in reproducing social networks that facilitate members’ ability to find work in Immokalee or the surrounding area. Moreover, the church’s theological and political conservatism, and its social control over the lives of church members, can have a beneficial impact in a context of extreme poverty, domestic violence, crime, and job insecurity.¹⁷

Both churches generate social capital, but different groups of migrants access it differently. Not surprisingly, it is the more established immigrants that participate most actively in congregational life and tend to benefit most from their access to the social networks created within the churches. Migrant farmworkers, on the other hand, attend

Sunday services infrequently, as it is the only day that they can rest and take care of their household chores. Typical was the response of Pánfilo, a farmworker, to our question about whether he attended church: “Here we come to work.” Many migrants make a clear separation between their religious participation in Immokalee and in their communities of origin, where church attendance is often a family affair. For example,

I have no time to think about religion. Back home I go to the Catholic church when I’m there and our patron saint is St. John the Baptist and we organize a fiesta and everything. But here we don’t have time to go, I arrive home late from work. It’s important to go [to church], maybe one day I’ll be able to go. (Farmworker from Pacula, Hidalgo, Mexico).

If I’m free and if I have time, because my day off I try to spend with my children, because since I work and I don’t have time for my kids. But when I can I go to the [Catholic] church but now I don’t go regularly. It’s like one doesn’t have much religion now because one’s work doesn’t allow it. (Farmworker from Mihuatlán, Oaxaca, Mexico).

In Mexico I was Catholic. But I came here and now I’m not of any religion because I don’t have time for it. Here it’s pure work, pure work. Here I don’t go to any church. But yes I read the bible, I read religious books. (Farmworker from Tamaulipas, Mexico).

I’ll tell you, here I’ve lost much of my emotional sentiment because you close yourself off in your work, everyone works, everyone is in this situation. When I was in Mexico I went to church, when I felt bad or sad I entered a church, even if I was alone, and I left feeling very at ease, at peace and with another emotional state. Here I’ve gone very few times to church, but the times I’ve gone it’s as if entering any other place, I don’t feel the same vibration, I don’t feel faith. So I hardly ever go to church. (Farmworker from Distrito Federal, Mexico).

For migrant workers in Immokalee, churches provide few opportunities for creating “alternative places of belonging” (Levitt 2003, 863), where they can form meaningful relationships with the locales they inhabit and transform “space” into “place.” This contrasts with other studies of religion and immigration that demonstrate the role of congregations in providing “spaces of sociability.” Ammerman (1997), for example, has documented congregational adaptation and entrepreneurship in response to the influx of immigrants in diverse communities in the U.S. Similarly, studies by Lorentzen (2005) and Marquardt (2005) demonstrate how congregations provide contexts for the development of civic skills and leadership, especially among women migrants. In Immokalee, on the other hand, churches, while an important source of social capital, appear to be ill-equipped to deal with the heterogeneity and high degree of mobility of the migrant population.

Evidence of Lived Religion

Despite migrants' lower levels of participation in congregational life in Immokalee than in their communities or origin, we found plenty of evidence to suggest that migrants continue to draw on their religious beliefs and practices to navigate the challenges of everyday life. For example, almost 70% of respondents in our survey claimed to pray regularly (table 5).

Table 5

How often do you pray?	%
Regularly	69.4
When having a problem	15.6
Almost never	9.5
Never	5.4

Several of the migrants that we interviewed emphasized the importance of prayer in facing the sometimes dangerous work conditions to which they are exposed. Daniel, a Seventh Day Adventist from Chiapas, Mexico, related the importance of prayer at his work place: “Yes, my boss taught us to say a prayer before going to work, after returning from work, because when one gets up one should entrust oneself to God. He guides us along our path so there are no misfortunes. Similarly, Salvador, a farmworker from Oaxaca, relates: “Yes sometimes I get up and entrust myself to God so that everything goes well at work, that a tree won’t fall on me, that I won’t get run over on the highway. These things I have to say to God so that he helps me to be able to survive here and that there are no disasters ... in the fields many bad things can come to pass.”

Despite the lower level of participation in congregational life in Immokalee, previous connections to churches in the communities of origin appear to shape religious practice in Immokalee. Such is the case of Marcelino, a recent migrant worker from an indigenous community in Tlatlauquitepec, Puebla. Marcelino is forty-five years old, married, and has eight children. Unable to support his family back in Puebla, he journeyed alone to the US five years ago. He was recruited on the border to work in Immokalee, where he had no contacts or family. In addition to working in the tomato harvest in Immokalee, he has worked in the Carolinas, Kentucky, Virginia, and Maryland. Since arriving five years ago, Marcelino has returned home once to visit his family.

Although Marcelino grew up Catholic he identifies more closely with a Pentecostal church back home. The influence of Pentecostalism is evident when he speaks of religious idols: “Here in Exodus 20 it says that one should not bow before idols made by man, because they can’t speak or listen. So I learned to respect them but not to worship them.” In Immokalee he never attends church and claims that God does not recognize any particular religion: “I know that there’s only one God and there’s only one God because I don’t know what religion stands for.” Although he says he has no time to attend church in Immokalee, he sometimes finds a spare moment to read the Bible and to pray to God: “Well yes, I sometimes pray, I don’t have a particular place, rather ... when I’m sleeping and I ask God to support me to take care of my family because I’m far away

from my family, I ask Him to take care of us and I always put myself in God's hands." Marcelino maintains a direct relationship with God, unmediated by religious institutions. Moreover, when he needs help with a personal problem, he seeks advice from the Coalition of Immokalee Workers as opposed to religious organizations in town.

Another interesting example is Tránsito from Altamirano, Guerrero. She is a forty-six year old single migrant who arrived to Immokalee in 1972. When she was sixteen she left home and went north to help her mother and twelve siblings. Over the years Tránsito has worked in the fields, sending money back to her family in Altamirano. Years after arriving, she helped some of her brothers to emigrate from Mexico. Today Tránsito works on and off in a storehouse packing tomatoes and oranges. Despite spending the better part of her life working "en la labor," she has been unable to accumulate sufficient capital or property to ensure some minimal level of economic security.

Having living in Immokalee over 30 years, Tránsito knows well the different churches and the social services they provide. In fact, the day we met her she had just picked up some free clothing from the Catholic Charities office. As we walked with her, some members of the Baptist church greeted her. During our conversation, she mentioned that she had also visited the Bethel church. Nevertheless, she is not a regular member of any of these religious organizations. In her own words: "Being in a church is the same as having a job," ("estar en una iglesia es como tener un trabajo"). She sees institutional religion as overly demanding and coercive, and has not found personal or spiritual satisfaction in any church.

Tránsito's relationship with institutional religion goes beyond receiving social services and has played an important role during difficult phases of her life in Immokalee. Despite her rejection of formal religion, Pentecostal codes are pervasive in her discourse. Tránsito attended a Pentecostal church for many years back in Altamirano before emigrating. This was despite the fact that the rest of her family remained practicing Catholics. As a legacy of her childhood participation in a Pentecostal church, like Miguel she learned how to relate to God without intermediaries. During our conversation, Tránsito recounted two important dialogues she sustained with God during serious emotional crises. In the first one, she asked: "God, do you exist or not? Why do you allow people like me to suffer so much? If I have worked all my life to support my mother and my family, isn't it my turn to enjoy myself?" For several months Tránsito stopped believing in God, even attempting suicide. At that point she tried again to communicate with God. In her words: "I put myself in his hands, I asked him to give me light, I asked him to give me peace, and then I started to cry a lot, to sob for a long time. Afterwards, I felt a great sense of peace in my soul again." Thus, despite an apparently instrumental relationship with religion, Tránsito's ongoing dialogue with God has provided her with an important source of spiritual and emotional support during trying times.

Tránsito does not fit neatly into any category because despite having lived 30 years in Immokalee, she has not achieved the economic stability typical of more established immigrants. Apart from a few close neighbors and acquaintances in Immokalee, Tránsito is very much alone. She does not feel attached to either Mexico or the United States. In this sense, she is not only beyond institutional religion, but also beyond political identities and boundaries. Although Tránsito's may be an exceptional

case, it speaks to us about the consequences of life on the margins. Anthropologists have been criticized for trying to generalize from one single case to the whole community. We do not wish to fall into this “optical illusion” as defined by Kathryn Tanner (1997, 45). Rather, we think that Tránsito represents her own voice within Immokalee, our universe of study. However, Tránsito’s story demonstrates the diverse ways in which people living at the margins can participate in and relate to religion. Her account underlines the power of religious beliefs in the construction of meaning. Tránsito has succeeded in combining religious elements acquired during childhood with new religious content in a fluid manner to construct a coherent symbolic religious universe.

Popular devotions and Public Religious Practice

Along with Peggy Levitt, we found plenty of evidence that migrants “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” (Levitt 2003, 851). However, we found that many migrants were less likely to engage in these practices in Immokalee than in their communities of origin (table 6). This was especially true of popular Catholic devotions that appear to be practiced less frequently in Immokalee than in migrants’ communities of origin.

Table 6

	Immokalee		Mexico/Guatemala	
	% Yes	% No	% Yes	% No
Made promises to a saint	24.3	75.7	38.5	61.5
Offered candles/food to a saint	25.2	74.8	36.5	63.5
Cured miraculously	21.1	78.9	27.7	71.6
Participated in a Mayan ceremony	6.8	93.2	8.2	91.8
Spoken in tongues	10.8	86.5	11.5	86.5
Been possessed	3.2	94.8	8.2	90.5
Practiced witchcraft	1.4	98.6	2.0	98.0
Religious conversion	10.8	88.5	11.5	86.5

How do we explain these puzzling findings? As in the case of church attendance, it may be the case that some migrants make a clear separation between their religious practice at home and in Immokalee. Also, given that the majority of migrant farmworkers are young single males, they may not have been very well socialized into traditional religious practices back home. Even more significant may be the relationship between religion and space. As Orsi (1999, 43) writes with regards to urban landscapes, “The spaces of the cities, their different topographies and demographics, are fundamental to the kinds of religious phenomena that emerge in them.” Despite the apparent portability of religion, transnational migrants sometimes face significant spatial obstacles to living and practicing their religion. Among recent and marginalized immigrants, deterritorialization takes the shape of dislocation and “ecological dissonance,” leading to what Karen Brown (1999) has termed “cosmo-logistical problem,” the problem of

practicing religions that are tied to places when one is no longer in that place and when travel to that place can be difficult. The cosmo-logistical problem is heightened when sacred and public spaces are absent in the communities of settlement. In Immokalee, Mexican and Guatemalan immigrants have to contend with the cultural and psychological implications of the very different spatial arrangements they encounter.

These new spatial configurations are especially evident in living arrangements. Migrant farmworkers are often crammed into dilapidated trailers with eight to ten strangers. This can present important obstacles to religious practice. For example, in explaining his cramped living quarters, a farmworker from San Pedro Xoconutla, Guatemala related the following:

There [Guatemala] at home all the family gets together and puts our candlestick in the corner. We express what we feel, from the heart. It's to ask [the spirits] to protect us, to guide us with good ideas and on a good path. I do this back home. But here I can't because I live with a heap of people and can't do anything. I bought my candlestick a little while ago and they kept putting it out and making fun of me. Because of this I stopped using it here. In my heart I hope the spirits will forgive me, I'm not giving it up because I want to, but because they won't allow me.

Similarly, the experience of a farmworker from Oaxaca, Mexico raises questions about the portability of religion.

I don't have any religious images because I rent, I move from one place to another, I don't have any furniture. I'm living in the living room of this woman because where we live they're all men. Now it's difficult because I don't have any way to move and because of this I don't carry anything, but where I am now, as it's the woman's trailer, she has images, of the Virgin of Guadalupe.

Public expressions of popular devotions, such as *fiestas patronales*, face even more difficult spatial obstacles. Unlike Orsi's immigrants in Italian Harlem, migrants in Immokalee find few opportunities to recreate images of home via popular religious practice. The Catholic church organizes a public procession in honor of the Virgin of Guadalupe on December 12 but, according to informants, the procession is not very well attended (often times the procession falls on a week day when most migrants are working) and is a poor imitation of the celebrations organized throughout Mexico.

The Catholic church also organizes a *viacrucis* during Holy Week. However, uncertain access to public space is often a constraint on public religious practices. In the case of Holy Week, in 2004 the parish priest, Father Ettore, proposed to organize the Good Friday procession on church grounds. His reasoning was the danger posed to participants from passing cars and the bureaucratic obstacles, including soliciting permission from county officials and the local police. Some of the more established immigrants, who make up the active lay leadership in the church, successfully lobbied Ettore to allow the procession to take place on the streets nearby the church. Although the procession began with only 200 participants, more and more people joined in. By the

time they arrived back at the church there were over 2000 in the procession. According to Father Ettore, this was the first time in his four years of ministry that the streets around the church had been converted into a sacred space.

The temporary appropriation of the streets during the *viacrucis* contrasts with Latin America, where religion is regularly “performed” in the public spaces of streets and town squares. With the exception of Holy Week and the Virgin of Guadalupe, we found few examples of public religious practice in Immokalee. Unlike Guatemalans in Jupiter, Mexican migrants in Immokalee prefer to celebrate their *fiestas patronales* in their homes or to return to Mexico for the celebration. For example, migrants from Chamácuaro, Guanajuato return each year in May for the Fiesta de Santa Cruz.¹⁸ The first migrants from Chamácuaro began arriving to Immokalee during the 1970’s and count themselves as among the “pioneers” of the Mexican presence in town. Despite lacking a formal organizational structure, each year migrants from Chamácuaro throughout the United States collect money to support the fiesta back home. In May 2004, migrants in Immokalee contributed approximately \$1,000 to the fiesta and about forty traveled together to Mexico to participate in the annual festivities. They were joined in Chamácuaro by a few thousand migrants from all over the United States. As demonstrated by a number of studies of Mexican migration (Durand 1994, Espinosa 1999, Gendreau and Gimenez 2002), *fiestas patronales* constitute one of the most important mechanisms through which Mexican migrants reaffirm their sense of belonging to their places of origin and use their economic wealth to gain personal prestige. The establishment of translocal networks between Chamácuaro and diverse localities in the United States, the systematic return of migrants, and the economic contributions from migrants in the US, have transformed the celebration into a transnational fiesta. However, given the increasingly restrictive border control policies, it is primarily migrants “con papeles” who are able return to Chamácuaro each year to participate in the fiesta and transform their economic capital into social capital back home.¹⁹

The absence of *fiestas patronales* in Immokalee may also have to do with the low levels of social capital and the ethnic/regional heterogeneity of migrants. As compared to Guatemalans in Jupiter who enjoy higher levels of social capital and ethnic/cultural homogeneity, in Immokalee migrants face less discrimination and social exclusion in their everyday life. Not surprisingly, in Immokalee we witnessed little of the reactive ethnicity that has emerged in Jupiter in response to the sometimes hostile reception on the part of the local community.²⁰ Reactive ethnicity, in turn, provides the basis for greater collective solidarity and mobilization in defense of ethnic group interests. These are often expressed through popular religious practice – like the Fiesta Maya in Jupiter - that stake “a claim to living in a particular kind of nation” (Orsi 1999, 42).

Conclusion

“Immokalee es un desmadre.”²¹ This was how a migrant whom we spoke to during the final day of the fiesta in Chamácuaro, Mexico described Immokalee, where he had spent three years off and on working in “la labor.” Comparing Immokalee to Windsor, California, where he works in a “winería,” he noted the absence of public spaces to “pasear” with his family during his days off in Immokalee. For many migrant workers, who are passing through Immokalee on their way to another destination,

Immokalee resembles the “non-places” described by French anthropologist Marc Augé (1995). These “non-places” are bleak locales of contemporary modernity, “transit points and temporary abodes ... proliferating under ... inhuman conditions” and distinct from “anthropological places” that provide cultural identity and memory which bind inhabitants to the history of locale (1995, 78). Most migrants do not come to Immokalee to make a home, to put down roots, to give meaning to the temporary locales that they inhabit. For the five to six months they are in Immokalee, they come to work, to earn “dólares” to send back home, and to one day return and reunite with their family.

However, Augé may go too far in accentuating the alienating nature of “non-places.” Even in his example of airport terminals, the ultimate “non-places,” for the permanent denizens – the baggage handlers, check-in clerks, security personnel, and janitors – the terminal “is clearly a ‘real’ place – their workplace” (Tomlinson 1999, 112). Similarly, for the established immigrants who live and work in Immokalee in a permanent fashion, it is a very “real” place “with all the anthropological richness...the subtleties of daily interpersonal contact, the friendships, rivalries and so on” that apply to any “anthropological” place (112).

According to Castells (1997, 66), in the face of intense social dislocation and atomization, “people anchor themselves in places, and recall their historic memory.” This is because “when the world becomes too large to be controlled, social actors aim at shrinking it back to their size and reach” (66). Nevertheless, our research in Immokalee shows that many migrants do not “draw on religion to make their own space and find their own place” (Tweed 1997, 136). Churches tend to reinforce the disparities between established immigrants and migrant workers. Although churches do provide some limited social spaces to develop social networks that can be used to accumulate social capital, it is mostly the more established immigrants that take advantage of these opportunities. Similarly, we found significant structural and spatial obstacles that inhibit migrants from living and practicing their religion as they do in their communities of origin. Public religious practices, like *fiestas patronales*, that are so important to building a sense of place, are largely absent in Immokalee.

Although we do not presume to generalize from this single case, our findings do present us with a cautionary tale. Within the social sciences, for those of us who study the poor, there’s the “propensity to romance the politically successful actors among the dispossessed” and to ignore “those who are not successful, not interested, or not aware” (Gutmann 2002, xxiii). Similarly in studies of transnational migrants there is a tendency to assume transnationalism exists and less concern with explaining when it doesn’t. And in religious studies, the temptation is to focus on good religion only, thereby defining off the table the less savory dimensions of religion. Recalling the words of Edward R. Murrow, our study reminds us of the importance of not ignoring “the forgotten people,” the “migrant workers in the sweatshops of the soil” (Murrow 1960). They may not built havens, let alone heavens, but they nonetheless deserve a place in our stories of new immigrant religions in the United States.

Bibliography

Ammerman, Nancy. 1997. *Congregation and Community*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

- Appadurai, Arjun. 1996. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Augé, Marc. 1995. *Non-Places : Introduction to the Anthropology of Supermodernity*. London: Verso.
- Bourdieu, Pierre and Loic Wacquant. 1992. *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Brettel, Caroline. 2003. *Anthropology and Migration: Essays on Transnationalism, Ethnicity, and Identity*. Walnut Creek, Calif.: AltaMira Press.
- Brown, Karen McCarthy. 1999. "Staying Grounded in a High-Rise Building: Ecological Dissonance and Ritual Accomodation in Haitian Vodou." In *Gods of the City*, ed. Robert Orsi. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press.
- Brusco, Elizabeth. 1995 *The Reformation of Machismo: Evangelical Conversion and Gender in Colombia*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Burdick, John. 1993 *Looking for God in Brazil: The Progressive Catholic Church in Urban Brazil's Religious Arena*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Castells, Manuel. 1997 *The Power of Identity*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Chesnut, R. Andrew. 1997 *Born Again in Brazil: The Pentecostal Boom and the Pathogens of Poverty*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Chidester, David and Edward Linenthal. 1995. *American Sacred Space*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Clifford, James. 1997. *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Durand, Jorge. 1994. *Mas allá de la línea. Patronos migratorios entre México y Estados Unidos*. México, D.F: Conaculta.
- Eade, John and Michael Sallnow. 2000. *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Ebaugh, Helen Rose and Janet Salzman Chafetz. 2000. *Religion and the New Immigrants: Continuities and Adaptations*. Walnut Creek, Calif.: AltaMira Press.
- Espinosa, Víctor. 1999. "El día del emigrante y el retorno del purgatorio: Iglesia, migración a los Estados Unidos y cambio sociocultural en un pueblo de los Altos de Jalisco." *Estudios Sociológicos* 50: 375-418.
- Gendreau, Mónica y Gilberto Giménez. 2002. "La migración internacional desde una perspectiva sociocultural: estudio en comunidades tradicionales del centro de México." *Migraciones Internacionales* 1, 2: 147-178.
- Giddens, Anthony. 1990. *The Consequences of Modernity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Hall, David. ed. 1997. *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Levitt, Peggy. 2003. "You Know, Abraham Was Really the First Immigrant: Religion and Transnational Migration." *International Immigration Review* 37: 847-873.
- Lorentzen, Lois. 2005. "El milagro está en casa: Gender and Private/Public Empowerment in a Migrant Pentecostal Church." *Latin American Perspectives* 32, 1: 57-71.
- Mahler, Sarah J. 1995. *American Dreaming: Immigrant Life on the Margins*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Marquardt, Marie. 2005. "From Shame to Confidence: Gender, Religious Conversion,

- and Civic Engagement of Mexicans in the U.S. South.” *Latin American Perspectives* 32,1: 27-56.
- Menjívar, Cecilia. 2000. *Fragmented Ties: Salvadoran Immigrant Networks in America*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Murrow, Edward R. 1960. *Harvest of Shame*. New York: Ambrose Video, CBS Broadcast International.
- Orsi, Robert. 1997. “Everyday Miracles: The Study of Lived Religion.” In *Lived Religion in America*, ed. David Hall. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- _____. 1999. “Introduction: Crossing the City Line.” In *Gods of the City: Religion and the American Urban Landscape*, ed. Robert Orsi. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- _____. 2002. *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Halem, 1880-1950* (2nd Edition). New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Payne, Brian. 2000. “Taking Back the Reins of Identity Formation: The Evolution of a Grassroots Organization in a South Florida Migrant Farm Working Community.” M.A. thesis, University of Florida.
- Portes, Alejandro and Rubén Rumbaut. 2001. *Legacies: The Story of the Immigrant Second Generation*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Putnam, Robert. 2000. *Bowling Alone*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Roka, Fritz and Robert Emerson. 2000. “Demographic, Income and Choices of Seasonal Farmworkers in Southwest Florida.” Paper presented at the Latin American Studies Association (LASA) Conference 2000, Miami, FL, March 16-18.
- Rothenberg, Daniel. 1998. *With These Hands. The Hidden World of Migrant Farmworkers Today*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Schildkraut, Deborah. 2004. “Identity, Perceptions of Discrimination, and Political Engagement: The Causes and Consequences of Reactive Ethnicity Among Latinos.” Paper presented at the 2004 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago, Illinois.
- Smith, Jonathan Z. 1978. *Map is Not Territory: Studies in the History of Religion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- _____. 1987. *To Take Place: Toward a Theory in Ritual*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Soja, Edward. 2000. *Postmetropolis: Critical Studies of Cities and Regions*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Tanner, Kathryn et al. 2001. *Converging on Culture: Theologians in Dialogue with Cultural Analysis and Criticism*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Tomlinson, John. 1999. *Globalization and Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Tweed, Thomas. 1997. *Our Lady of the Exile: Diasporic Religion at a Cuban Catholic Shrine in Miami*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Vásquez, Manuel A. and Marie Friedmann Marquardt
2003 *Globalizing the Sacred: Religion Across the Americas*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Verba, Sidney, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry E. Brady. 1995. *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- Vigil, James. 1988. *Barrio Gangs: Street Life and Identity in Southern California*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Warner, R. Stephen. 1998. "Immigration and Religious Communities in the United States." In *Gatherings in Diaspora: Religious Communities and the New Immigration*, eds. Stephen Warner and Judith Wittner. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Warner, R. Stephen and Judith G. Wittner, eds. 1998. *Gatherings in Diaspora : Religious Communities and the New Immigration*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Williams, Raymond B. 1988. *Religions of Immigrants from India and Pakistan: New Threads in the American Tapestry*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

¹ The term underlines the fact that "livelihood practices quite commonly engage people in extensive movements at local, regional, national and transnational levels" (Olwig 2003, 795).

² Collier County, together with Charlotte, Glades, Hendry, and Lee counties, make up the southwest region of Florida that plays a vital role in the state's agricultural production. Southwest Florida accounts for more than 25% of the state's citrus production and more than 30% of its tomato production (Roka and Emerson, 2000).

³ According to Rothenberg (1998), in the eastern United States, Latino farmworkers are a relatively recent phenomenon, and particularly concentrated in Florida. By the 1980s the majority of farmworkers were Latino, and by the 1990s approximately 80% of farmworkers on the east coast were Latino.

⁴ The term refers to the "stresses and ambiguities" generated by social, economic, and cultural factors at the group, family, and individual levels, that lead to multiple forms of exclusion (Vigil 1988, 11).

⁵ Bourdieu and Waquant (1992,119) define social capital as "the sum of resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition."

⁶ As Menjívar's (2000, 234) study of Salvadoran immigrants in San Francisco demonstrates, "social capital cannot be generated automatically when immigrants do not have access to desirable resources, because reciprocal obligations are undermined under these conditions."

⁷ An exception is the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, a farmworker organization that has achieved national and even international notoriety for its advocacy on behalf of migrant farmworkers. See Payne (2000).

⁸ Between January and March of 2004, we conducted survey research in both Immokalee and Jupiter to test hypotheses arising from our qualitative research and to gain further insights into the themes of transnationalism, religion, social capital, and collective action. In Immokalee, census data indicated 108 census blocks with high concentrations of Hispanic/Latino residents (73% and above). We eliminated those blocks with less than 20 residents and were left with 86 blocks with 12,803 residents. We randomly selected 14 census blocks with a total of 3,037 residents. Because of the anticipated high refusal rate, we chose to visit each address in these blocks instead of a selected sample of residences. In total, we completed surveys at 148 residences. Interviewers were instructed to interview only persons born in Mexico or Guatemala and to interview only one member of each household willing to participate in the survey. In Jupiter, census tract data from the 2000 census demonstrated a relatively contained geographic area in which an estimated 90 percent of the Hispanic population resides. This information corresponded with descriptions of high residential concentrations of immigrants by local Guatemalan leaders during our qualitative interviews. The target area for our sample contained a total of 27 streets and two large apartment complexes. Approximately 800 addresses were calculated on these streets using a commercial address/phone number software product. Because of the uncertainty of the number of eligible respondents, and an anticipated high refusal rate, we chose to visit each address on these streets instead of a selected sample of residences. In total, 771 residences were visited. We completed surveys at 155 (72%) of the eligible residences, while 19 (9%) respondents refused and 42 (19%) were incomplete or asked that we return at a later date. The Jupiter sample was 66.5% Guatemalan and 33.5% Mexican while the

Immokalee sample was only 12.2% Guatemalan and 88.8% Mexican. The Immokalee sample was 64% male and 36% female. In Jupiter, the sample was 70% male and 30% female.

⁹ A key finding across the samples was the high number of individuals who reported that they had no friends in their current location (36.1% in Immokalee and 25.3% in Jupiter).

¹⁰ The survey only asked respondents for their perceptions of discrimination against oneself not against one's group. A few scholars point to the importance of considering perceptions of both group-level and individual-level discrimination. For example, see Schildkraut (2004).

¹¹ The mean score for such participation was also significantly higher in Jupiter (means test is One-Way ANOVA).

¹² Significance test is Kendall's tau b (correlation coefficient = .240 with a .000 significance).

¹³ We identified forty churches in town.

¹⁴ The Scalabrini order was founded in Italy in the early 1900s with the objective of accompanying Italian Catholics that emigrated to the Americas. Since its founding, the Scalabrini order has dedicated its efforts to ministering and evangelizing immigrants around the world.

¹⁵ Several scholars of Pentecostalism in Latin American have observed this phenomenon. For example, see Brusco (1995), Burdick (1993), and Chestnut (1997).

¹⁶ Putnam (2000) refers to this as "bonding" social capital.

¹⁷ The other side of coercion and social control is protection, stability, and a strong sense of belonging for those who find refuge from life's afflictions within the protective walls of the church.

¹⁸ Chamácuaro is located in the municipal district of Acámbaro. The town has a population of approximately 5,500 inhabitants. Residents have been migrating to the United States since the early 1900's and significant communities can be found in Illinois, northern California, and Georgia.

¹⁹ See Brettell (2003) for a similar discussion of how Portuguese immigrants in France convert their economic success abroad into social prestige back home.

²⁰ According to Portes and Rumbaut (2001: 284), "reactive ethnicity is the product of confrontation with an adverse native mainstream and the rise of defensive identities and solidarities to counter it."

²¹ Literally, "unmother." Mexican slang for something that is a mess, screwed up.