

## **Geographies of Diaspora: A Review**

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## INTRODUCTION

*The term 'diaspora' is inherently geographical, implying a scattering of people over space and transnational connections between people and places. Geography clearly lies at the heart of diaspora both as a concept and as lived experience, encompassing the contested interplay of place, home, culture and identity through migration and resettlement. (Blunt 2003: 282)*

In the above quote by Alison Blunt, the term 'diaspora' is defined through the words "scattering," "transnational," "migration" and "resettlement". Within the field of geography, these terms are used, alternately, to describe very specifically, but also generally, the various circumstances of migrating people. However, this muddle of language also points to a different phenomenon – the practice of geographers to describe patterns of human migration as well as the social identities and political constructions that are created by diaspora populations around the places they call 'home'.

In the following, the literature in geography is reviewed. The purpose is to describe how geographers have employed the term 'diaspora' and to discuss primary themes emerging from this work. In this introductory section, major terms—diaspora, transnationalism, and migration—are defined given that these terms are used frequently and often interchangeably. In the second section, major themes of this body of work are discussed, followed by a third section that identifies areas for further research. In the conclusion, several questions are raised that lend a geographical perspective to future studies of diaspora.

### **Diaspora**

The term 'diaspora' comes from the Greek translation of the bible meaning "to scatter about, disperse," from dia- "about, across", and, speirein "to scatter" (originally in Deut. xxviii.25). Safran (2005) points out that the term has its Western beginnings in the Jewish diaspora communities, extending to groups "such as the Armenian, Chinese, Greek, Indian, Kurdish, Palestinian, Parsi, and Sikh, whose experiences of expatriation, institution building, cultural continuity, and refusal to relinquish their collective identities have demarcated them from mere immigrants" (p. 36). The term has come to mean a group of people that were expelled or migrated from their historic homeland out into different parts of the world. Further, it implies that they established new political communities in those

places, making contact with the people of the receiving lands for various purposes, but generally remaining closely together as communities of religion, culture and/or welfare.

Descriptively, diasporas have been presented as a set of social spheres (Safran, 1991), a mode of categorization and typology (Cohen, 1997), and a distinct social form, type of consciousness, and mode of cultural production (Vertovec, 1999). Figure 1 provides a comparative framework in how diasporas have been classified as a descriptive tool among the main contributors to the topic outside of geography. Yet, diasporas have also been defined as a condition or process (Hall, 1993; Gilroy, 1993; Clifford, 1994; Brah, 1996; Anthias, 1998) and, alternatively, as a methodological approach. Butler (2001), for example, argues that “rather than being viewed as an ethnicity, diaspora may be alternatively considered as a framework for the study of a specific process of community formation” (p. 194). However, for the purpose of this literature review, the focus is on theoretical and empirical contributions within the discipline of geography.

Figure 1: Classifications of diaspora populations (portions adapted from Kalra, Kaur, & Hutnyk, 2005)

Safran, 1991	Safran, 1991	Cohen, 1997	Vortovec, 1999	Butler, 2001
1. dispersal to two or more locations 2. collective mythology of homeland 3. alienation from hostland 4. idealization of return to homeland 5. ongoing relationship with homeland	Triadic relationship (social spheres) 1. the dispersed group who have some form of collective identity or process of identification. 2. The contexts and nation-states in which these various groups reside 3. The nation-states to which an affiliation is maintained, through a series of social, economic, and cultural ties	Diaspora as a mode of categorization 1. dispersal and scattering 2. collective trauma 3. cultural flowering 4. a troubled relationship with the majority 5. a sense of community transcending national frontiers 6. promoting a return movement Different forms of diaspora 1. victim 2. labour 3. trade 4. imperial 5. cultural	Three meanings of diaspora 1. diaspora as social form 2. diaspora as a type of consciousness 3. diaspora as a mode of cultural production	1. After dispersal, a minimum of two destinations 2. There must be some relationship to an actual or imagined homeland 3. Self-awareness of group identity 4. Existence over at least two generations

### Transnationalism

The most common term associated with diaspora in the literature is transnationalism. Often described as border crossing “from below,” use of the term originates largely from political-economic studies of migration back and

forth across sovereign borders (Basch, Glick Schiller, & Szanton Blanc, 1994; Smith and Guarnizo, 1998). According to Nagel (2001)

If the international signifies relationships between states or actors representing different states, then the transnational refers to linkages forged by social groups who exist seemingly in spite of the nation-state and who, through their transnational activities, undermine state sovereignty and the hegemony of national borders and ideologies. (p. 248)

The language of 'behaviors' or 'practices' is also common in transnational discourse, indicating a spectrum of transnational types among diasporic communities. For many authors, the term is tied up with ideas about the agency of migrating people, often described as hybrid, transgressive, or translocal. Some authors take issue with what they see as an idealization of a type, and call for grounding notions of transnationalism in the actual experiences of migrating people (Mitchell, 1997a). This is exemplified by research which found that "the search on 'transnationalism' produced several very interesting academic papers...but no sites by or for immigrants; apparently, 'transnational' is a word that academics use, but that immigrants and service providers do not" (Staeheli, et al., 2002).

### **Migration**

"Migration," on its own, is a much more general term: the movement of human groups across territory, whether for cultural, seasonal (as in the case of nomadic groups) or political reasons. Although it is not nearly as contested a term as diaspora and transnationalism, it is worth mentioning here because it is a prominent category in the literature, particularly around population geography, refugees, and the rural-to-urban shift (Lawson, 2000). Noting that migration focuses on *groups* is also indicative of the scale at which diasporic experiences are often studied by migration scholars and population geographers alike. This is not to say that individual experiences are unimportant, but that the entire set of experiences under the term diaspora is fundamentally related to group identity. Related, a growing field of mobilities research "includes detailed studies of embodied, material and politicized mobilities, often through the development of innovative and mobile methodologies" (Blunt, 2007, pp. 684-685). Although it is relatively new, the notion that different kinds of movement, both within and across borders, can constitute an epistemic whole might be useful in the ways diasporas are theorized.

### **MAJOR THEMES OF DIASPORA**

Beginning in the early 1990s, there has been increasing attention drawn to the topic of diaspora. In addition to individual books devoted to the topic (Brah, 1996; Kalra et al., 2005), there are several academic journals, such as *Mobilities* and *Diasporas: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, where the study of diasporas

are a core focus. Drawing on these and other sources, geographers have begun to contribute to this literature, especially with regard to a critical engagement with the ideas of space, home, territory, and identity. Much of this work has come from several areas within the discipline: feminist perspectives on the concept of 'home'; population geographers that focus on migration patterns; political geographers interested in territoriality and the state, and cultural geographers focusing on the real and imagined identities produced through diasporic processes and spatial practices. Regardless, there has been a convergence between many of these areas given the increasing acknowledgement that diasporic processes and practices need to be historically, politically, and culturally situated (NiLaoire, 2003). To date, there have been several comprehensive reviews related to the topic of diaphora (Blunt, 2007; Dahlman, 2004). Common themes include diaphora's relationship to migration and transnationality, the role of real and imagined landscapes in producing identities and attachments, deterritorialization and reterritorialization, and related, a geopolitics of diaphora 'from below'. Below, the following themes in the geographical literature on diaphoras is discussed: *home and homeland, territory and territoriality, diaphoras of empire, spaces of citizenship, transnationalism and hybridity, and difference(s) within diaphora.*

### **Home and homeland**

One of the central aspects of diaphora is a culture of longing for homeland, while a more specific site for place making is the actual home, dwelling, or geographical community. Avtar Brah (1996) calls attention to a "homing" tendency where, "The concept of diaphora places the discourse of 'home' and 'dispersion' in creative tension, inscribing a homing desire while simultaneously critiquing discourses of fixed origins" (pp. 192-193). Blunt and Dowling (2006) offer a critical geography of home and suggest three areas of investigation: (1) home as simultaneously material and imagined, (2) how home is politicized vis-à-vis power and identity, and (3) an appreciation of the multi-scalar nature of home, that is, from the actual space of dwelling and nationhood to homelands that are produced by Empire (p. 22).

Gowans (2003) theorizes home as "based around an organizing principle of inclusions and exclusions" (p. 428), for populations that have not entirely settled in one place. Related, another aspect is the transnational entanglements of home which examines the specifics of people's relationships with kin in their countries of origin. This includes the study of hometown associations, remittances, and the relationships that cause people from a certain 'home' region to gravitate to a certain place 'away.' Mohan (2004) refers to this as "the politics of obligation," in which citizens of a particular town are still tied to notions of pride in giving to that place as a part of identity building in the host country. Various, these notions of home are also tied to the intimate scale of belonging. Explorations both of sending remittances, and cultural expressions

such as eating particular food or decorating a dwelling in a particular way point to the ways in which diaspora is played out in material terms.

Because of a geographical existence away from home, coupled with an idealized longing for return, diasporas are frequently characterized as having an 'imagined' or 'mythical' home (Anderson, 1983; Blunt, 2003; George, 2003; Golan, 2002; Gowans, 2003; Veronis, 2007; Yeh, 2005). Emily Yeh (2005) offers a striking example in her work on Tibetans abroad. In it, she describes "the frictions of encounter between three groups of Tibetans who arrived in the USA around the same time, but who differ in their relationships to the homeland" due to the different moments in which they or their families left Tibet. Due to the existence of an entire generation of Tibetans who have never seen or experienced the 'homeland', "one reaction has been the emergence of an alternative imagined geography of homeland" in which Dharamsala, the political capital of Tibetans in exile and the seat of the Dalai Lama, has supplanted Lhasa, the historic geographical capital inside of Tibet as "the center of Tibetan diasporic geography" (p. 662).

Related to the imaginations of homeland, there has been an emphasis on place and place making. Creating place is integral to understanding populations who long, as a group, for a distant homeland and projecting that longing onto a physical site where diaspora groups inhabit. For some scholars (Blunt 2005; Dodman, 2007; Marden, 1997; Pascual-de-Sans, 2004) there is a general sentiment that sense of place and sense of self are intimately bound together. Marden (1997) boldly asserts that "a new geography may be emerging: one that is about the reconstitution of identity and place; one that is more relevant to the interaction between what is global and what is local" (p. 39). Similarly, Àngels Pascual-de-Sans (2004) rejects a totalizing view of globalization; she states, "In a world that some would like to consider globalized, the presence of place in people's lives persists unyieldingly" (p. 349). Pascual-de-Sans uses this conceptualization of place to ground geographical mobility of populations in historically contingent times and locations. In migration, this is played out not as a discrete movement from 'here' to 'there,' but as "social events taking place in time" (p. 350).

### **Territory and territoriality**

An apparent starting point for geographers in the study of diaspora is the innate tie of diaspora to territory. While the literature of transnationalism often speaks of *detrterritorialized* citizens, Burrell (2003) points out that "the concept of an implicitly national territory has an important influence on both the construction and maintenance of diasporic national identity and migrant transnational consciousness" (p. 323). The most commonly understood aspects of territory are the basic descriptive qualities of sending and receiving regions, and

geographical phenomenon associated with deterritorialization and reterritorialization.

Related to territorialization processes associated with diasporic processes and practices is the concept of *territoriality*. One of the first contributors to the discourse of territoriality is Richard Sack, who defined territoriality as an “attempt to affect, influence, or control actions and interactions (of people, things, and relationships) by asserting and attempting to enforce control over a geographic area” (1983, p. 55). Sack argues that territoriality can be applied at any scale, and is not an object but a relationship (p. 56). Within the diaspora literature, a number of studies explore the political nature of territoriality, especially having to do with political borders (Carter, 2005; Dikeç, 2005; Hyndman, 1997; Mitchell, 1997b). These scholars remind us that migration still occurs across sovereign boundaries, and that human flows are still, in great part, up to the discretion of nation states. Sean Carter, writing on *the geopolitics of diaspora* (2004) states:

There is a tendency within diaspora studies...to utilize...spatial metaphors, whilst simultaneously denying the significance of geography. In many of these accounts, borders are traversed, boundaries are dissolved and space is something that is overcome. Space is invoked, but often left un-interrogated. In particular, the diaspora literature tends to discount the re-territorializing elements of diasporic practices, a shortcoming that I argue is largely due to the lack of interconnectedness between the theoretical literature on diaspora and empirical research on 'actual' diasporas and their specific geographies. (p. 55)

By this account, geographers have a significant amount to contribute to the topic of diaspora, especially as discussed in other disciplines and fields such as sociology, anthropology, cultural studies, and international migration.

### **Diasporas of Empire**

Territorialization is also a process to describe how nation-states produce geographies of power. A great source of contemporary migration has been the colonial and post-colonial experience. Returning to the Jewish diaspora, it is important to note that this group's experience was the result of conquest in empire, first Babylonian and then Roman, leading to expulsion in the year 70 AD. As a result, Jews settled largely (though not exclusively) within other parts of the Roman empire. This points to a political situation in which the Roman empire was not so much interested in destroying the individual Jewish people as undermining their national unity and political strength inasmuch as it was tied to a unified territory.

Historically, the experience of colonization has tied nation-states together across the globe long after independence was gained through language, law (as in

the case of the English commonwealth nations) and, for some segments of the population, potent mythmaking that displaced home onto the 'motherland.' Postcolonial studies, therefore, offers insight into understanding these migrations through the populations it seeks to empirically study and through analyzing discourses of power. In theorizing how space is tied to group power, a number of scholars address diasporas in colonial and postcolonial geographies (Bailey, 2001; Basu, 2005; Blunt, 2003; Carney & Voeks, 2003; Connell, 2003; George, 2003; Golan; 2002; Gowans, 2003; Hyndman, 1997; Jackson, 1992; Jazeel, 2006; Lin, 2002; Samers, 1997).

The discussion of migration between countries related through colonization and postcolonial encounters easily brings up the question that other themes mentioned here do not: what causes people to migrate? Samers (1997) suggests that, "there is presently far too much focus on analyzing immigrants as *immigrants* and not *emigrants*" (p. 33). Put differently, the systems and circumstances that cause people to leave their homelands is underspecified. Samers points this out in order to emphasize that the "push" and "pull" factors of migration are a unitary phenomenon "produced and regulated by the uneven dialectics of international capitalism, colonialism, and 'neocolonialism'" (p. 34).

Although writing from the humanities, Rosemary George (2003) shows how cultural products – arts and literature in this case – are emblematic of, as well as mobilized to articulate, the specific place qualities of the imaginary homeland. She offers insight on the construction of nations and nationality in an era of recently gained independence, stating that "national subject/citizens who are in the process of formulating or reformulating a new national identity for themselves and for fellow citizens culturally create and recreate home as vigorously as do diasporic peoples" (p. 561). Like Samers' unification of 'push' and 'pull' forces that drive migration, George utilizes a postcolonial understanding of the singularity of the nation-building project to transcend the dichotomy of 'here' and 'there,' in which one is more culturally credible than the other, their places shifting over time.

Turning to the study of postcolonial diasporas, one focus is specificity in everyday practice, with an eye to the larger political, economic and racial circumstances that is forced upon populations. As Bailey (2001) notes, postcolonial approaches which privilege the empirical knowledge of how people have actually functioned under the circumstances of dispersion "can shed light on how identity, hybridity and transnational communities are influenced by transnational relations across space" (p. 423).

Finally, although many authors describe the imagined space of homeland, the map – that staple of geographical study – is often missing. In his work on Polynesia, however, Connell (2003) explores very thoroughly

how “processes of exploring, mapping, settling, administering and converting are implicated in a wider imperial politics of place” (p. 555) which gain a tremendous amount of cultural currency when coupled with notions of the exotic. And, as illustrated in his article, indigenous populations often internalize these qualities. Although this example does not specifically address the diaspora experience, when taken in the larger context of postcolonial studies, it stands as a reminder about the importance of studying those with institutional political power, as they provide the structural context for the political and everyday experiences of diaspora populations.

### **Spaces of citizenship**

Also having to do with the political, a related set of inquiries focus on issues of citizenship, governance, and the electoral politics in both sending and receiving regions (Blunt 2007; Dickinson & Bailey, 2007; Mavroudi, 2008; Mitchell, 1997b; Painter & Philo, 1995; Staeheli & Nagel, 2005). Some scholars have identified ‘cosmopolitan’ and ‘transnational’ forms of citizenship that transcend the boundaries of nation-states and dualities inherent in global/local discourses (Archibugi & Held, 1995; Beck & Sznaider, 2006; Held & Guibernau, 2001). One claim is that citizenship is a multi-layered process due to transnational migration and social movements that challenges state governments (Laguerre, 2005; Smith & Guarnizo, 1998; Smith, 2001; Yuval-Davis, 1999). However, countering the claims of borderless states and “globalization from below”, some geographers caution against the premature nature of such claims contending that tribalism can be a prime motivator for collective action vis-à-vis the state (Marden, 1997).

In other conceptualizations of diaspora vis-à-vis the nation-state, citizenship involves economic rights and mobility privileges, and locating the state on the bodies and assets of its citizens outside of territorial boundaries. For example, Staeheli and Nagel (2005) examine citizenship explicitly in substantive and legal terms and the “implications of (transnational) ties for a sense of hereness and citizenship in the receiving society” (p. 1600). Here, the authors tie together the political and legal constructions of citizenship with the personal realities of calling one or another site ‘home’. A related line of inquiry is Dickinson and Bailey’s (2007) work on the dual citizenship legislation in India in 2003, in which a more flexible notion of citizenship, handed down in this case by the nation-state, has maintained rather than corroded migrants’ ties to homeland.

Thinking about how geographers *ought* to think about citizenship is yet another debate within the discipline. Early contributors argued making a break between the political understanding of citizenship, i.e., *who* has the power to make decisions, and the political geography of citizenship which is sometimes reduced to “where lines have been and could be drawn on maps” (Painter &

Philo, 1995, p. 108). Painter and Philo call, instead, for a geography of citizenship “that examines how citizenship becomes inscribed in the intersections between political and social-cultural ‘spaces’” (p. 109). However, others have called into question the utility of citizenship claims, even when diaspora groups collectively identify with a particular political community, when such associations do not always translate into political mobilization and action (Mavroudi, 2008). Researchers acknowledge the ambivalent quality of political identity among many diaspora groups. For example, in research specific diaspora groups, Mavroudi readily admits that, “respondents often appear to feel both empowered and disillusioned by the diasporic political spaces they are involved in ...” (p. 70).

### **Transnationalism and hybridity**

Transnationalism, as stated in the introduction, is the ‘human-side’ response to the discourse on *internationalism*, which can be thought of as political dialogue between nation-states. Much of the transnationalism discourse aims to disrupt the ‘bipolar’ conception of emigration, in which one breaks with the home country and arrives at the host country (Bailey, 2001; Burrell, 2003; Dosi, Rushubirwa, & Myers, 2007; Staeheli and Nagel 2006). Drawing largely on ethnography (Christou, 2006; Veronis, 2007; Walsh, 2006) to support their theories, some geographers describe transnational ‘behaviors’ and ‘practices’ that challenge the attachment of a population’s relation to a single nationality that does not allow for the in-between-ness that many migrants experience.

In some of the transnationalism discourse in geography, these practices and the people that produce such practices are constituted by hybrid understandings and identities (Mavroudi, 2000). In fact, transnationalism and hybridity often seem to be a necessary pairing in this literature, particularly when it draws from the cultural studies literature such as Avtar Brah’s often-cited *Cartographies of Diaspora* (1996). This is not to suggest that there is no space for ‘space’. Jackson, Crang, and Dwyer (2005) posit that “Geographies of transnational space must clearly recognize the continuing power of nation-states in defining the framework and setting the terms within which transnational social relations take place” (p. 5). Indeed, critiques of these positions are many, citing a romanticized notion of hybrid people and spaces as somehow liberated in the literature, but under theorized on the ground (Bailey, 2001; Carter, 2005; Mitchell, 1997b; Peach, 2002; Samers, 1997; White 2003). “The fashion for postmodernism in human geography,” writes Peach (2002), “is that cultural geography, with its emphases on hybridity, in-betweenness and flexibility, has claimed the epithet of ‘new’ while social geography, with its engagement in the ‘real’ world, with numbers and census categories, seems to have become, by default, ‘the old’” (p. 252). Bailey (2001) echoes this sentiment, noting that in the rush to theorize the hybrid, “space-time relationships play no explicit role in, for example,

shaping identity or meaning, as space is assumed to be a neutral canvas upon which traits are embossed" (p. 222).

For some, it is the very uneven development of economies across political borders (Samers, 1997) that instigates the border-crossing that leads to the rise of hybridity; these cannot be dealt with as separate phenomena. Challenging what she calls "the hype of hybridity", Katherine Mitchell (1997b) tells us that, on the one hand:

Theories privileging the liminal and the hybrid have effectively destabilized many prior assumptions of purity, authenticity and local and fixed subjectivities. They have also raised important questions relating to the homogenizing and western-based provenance of both historical structural and neoclassical accounts of globalization processes. (p. 108)

On the other:

It is also imperative to maintain a knowledge of the structural principles undergirding a system that infects and is infected by every other system in an *unequal exchange*. Without this, the power relations evident in every facet of transnational contact – between states, institutions and people – become lost. (p. 109)

Carter (2005) goes further, arguing that not only does a privileged hybrid space ignore "the geographical specificities of particular diasporas," but further, that they often reproduce "essentialist modes of being... within diasporic discourse" (p. 54).

Further theorizing the relationships between transnationalism and diaspora will help to clarify analytical distinctions and contingencies, as well as invite novel cross-disciplinary investigations, tying together work from sociology, political science, anthropology, and cultural studies (see for example, Jackson et al., 2004). Ostensibly, geography stands to fill the 'spatial' gaps in both of these discourses, but more specificity with regard to theorizations and methods are needed.

### **Difference(s) within diaspora(s)**

An important, but often overlooked, focus in diaspora studies is "how the diaspora experience is embedded in the complexities of class, race, gender, generation and other social divisions" (Jazeel, 2006). That is, there is a tendency to essentialize diasporic identities, especially upon arrival in host countries. Indeed, it is this outwardly unified representation of identity that can establish and/or maintain a diaspora community's political power when interfacing with the majority local population. The problem inside of this turn, however, is the contestations over what is considered the 'pure' form of culture or language among a people that are often divided along class, ethnic or language lines in their country of origin(s). Within groups this may be expressed as a struggle for

'authenticity', while factors such as race and class distinctions are imposed from the outside by the majority culture (Blunt 2003; Ghosh & Wang, 2003; Jazeel, 2006; White, 2003; Yeh, 2005).

Paul White (2003) and Emily Yeh (2005) in their work on Japanese and Tibetan diasporas, respectively, delve into the nature of authenticity and "ideal types" imposed from within diasporic communities. In the Japanese case "the 'homeland' perspective on the nature of its diaspora populations had generated an idealised image of a 'true' Japanese overseas community" (2003, p. 319) while in the Tibetan case, conversely, those from families exiled in 1959 reinvented an authentic culture from outside, which they imposed upon later arrivals. Both of these 'authentic' modes involved a homogenized version of the national language, once replete with regional dialects. Another element is the claims of authenticity from different parts of the diaspora that have had markedly different experiences in host countries: Peru or Brazil in the Japanese case, and India or the United States in the Tibetan case. Particularly salient in the Japanese case is the problem of return, namely that the foreign-born *Nikkei* didn't live up to the standard of Japanese-ness that had been established in the homeland, leading to difficulties over reintegrating back into Japanese society.

The discourse of difference within the diaspora literature tends to be anthropological in its approach, working from individual identity as it is experienced in everyday encounters. For example, Ghosh and Wang (2003) perform an exercise in transnational auto-ethnography, comparing their own biographies as foreign students in Toronto. In a seemingly simple exercise of self-reflexivity, they uncover similar tendencies in the ways that they perform their identities at home and abroad. At one point, Wang describes the situation of being at a party of international students where she was expected to come in 'traditional' ethnic dress, and when she couldn't decide what that meant, she stood in a room full of friends in costume and "began to feel incomplete as a Chinese" (p. 272). Conversely, Ghosh found herself in an airport bathroom in London, "just one of the many homebound women of Indian origin busy transforming from a *mem* to a *desi*" (p. 274). Although these two, as individual international students, don't constitute 'diaspora,' the dance of cultural negotiations in which they felt compelled to participate is illustrative of the desire to hold tightly to two contrasting, and sometimes conflicting, parts of identity housed in a single person's body.

All of the themes and theoretical constructs offered here, to some extent, take place where people actually *inhabit*. One example is Leonard's exploration of Irish identity as actually performed through music and dance in a community living in England (2005). "In this sense music and dance performance was a physical demonstration or embodiment of identity, operating as a public signal of identification as Irish. The body was being put to work in articulating a

connection with an imagined 'home'" (p. 519). As this analysis is specifically related to the body, it draws attention to an anthropological focus in the study of diaspora. The opening for geographers here is to trace how these practices shift and change over time-space (Massey, 1999), combining with or resisting local cultural influences. The studies mentioned point to the performativity of diasporic identities, especially when concerning issues of group acceptance, authenticity, and power. The experience of members of a diaspora community is multiple, responding to a host of signifiers from 'home' and abroad. These differences, which are reduced into performances of purity and authenticity that are influenced both from inside and outside of diasporic communities, leave a great deal of room for ethnographic exploration when considering space and time in the production of (different) identities.

While plenty of writers stress the contingency of different diasporic experiences in different moments, that is not the only aspect of how temporality affects diaspora. There is also the time span over which a group scatters, and the encounter between these 'waves' of migration across generations (Yeh, 2004; Yeh & Lama, 2006). Additionally, different moments in the "migration career" of an individual express different aspects of power and longing that are a part of the diaspora experience (Stodolska & Santos, 2006). Further, a topic which has not been addressed in this work until now, is the way that assimilation or resistance to assimilation among diaspora populations plays out over time and over several generations—a distinguishing characteristic of diasporas as compared to transnational practices. Boyle (2001) points out, there is also a teleology built into representations of diaspora communities upon arrival in 'host' countries and thereafter. He points to an "assimilation thesis" in which:

...an initial heightening of nationalism progressively gives way, first to socio-economic integration, second to cultural assimilation, and finally to spatial invisibility. Eventually, once absorbed into host societies, nationalism diminishes to only a trace, and then ultimately peters into extinction. (p. 439)

For Boyle, this thesis relies too much upon time and too little upon space, and calls for a reconceptualization of the diaspora as a place where a variety of stories are available *through* different spatial practices.

## **AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

Although geographers have analyzed many aspects of diaspora, there is much terrain to be covered—both in further theorizing the spatial in diaspora as well as substantive areas that warrant empirical investigation. One area includes studying patterns of settlement within diaspora including, but not limited to, spatial concentration, movement and dissolution over time, and spatial relationships between different diaspora communities. There is not a significant amount of empirical research in how particular diaspora group settle, or larger

patterns of migration across groups and across time (with the notable exception of Pascual-de-Sans, 2004). Given that diaspora studies are often tied to the discourse of transnationalism, space is under-theorized given the dominance of sociological and cultural studies perspectives. This is not to suggest that geographers do not address migration in spatial terms, but rather these contributions focus on macro scales of analysis, i.e. global and nation-state configurations at the expense of meso and micro geographies.

Related, a second area in need of further research concerns migration within diaspora as well as between different regions and sites over time. This relates to the continued migration of whole diasporic groups, out-migration from the group, and factors related to expansion and contraction of group size caused by factors such as assimilation, changing political economies, etc. This part of the literature would contribute by providing historical and area studies that illustrate changing patterns of migration over time, and would further clarify the distinctions between diaspora and other concepts. Related, another line of inquiry could historically examine the moments when different populations of an ethnic diaspora have come into contact or combine. Yeh's (2004) work on Tibetan encounters across diaspora is a good starting point. Cartographies that trace movement of different groups within a single diaspora would be useful in understanding these patterns of mobility.

A third area warranting further study is the geography of return, or attempts at return. Although some authors here have discussed the challenges of re-settlement by individuals (Blunt, 2003; White, 2003), there is a need to examine attempts at group re-settlement. As the idea of return is a large part of the cultural imagination of diaspora, studies of diasporic populations returning to their home countries are warranted. With the exception of Anastasia Christou's (2006) study of Greek-Americans attempting to move back to their ancestral homeland, this work is notably absent from the literature. This experience may be well documented by anthropologists, but further use of ethnographic methods in geography could be fruitful in introducing this phenomenon. Because different groups leave their home countries for different reasons, and because those conditions change over time, this would be a venue for empirical studies of diasporic migration. Moreover, what sets these diasporic studies apart from the transnational variety is that diaspora communities are regarded as being 'away' for at least two generations (Butler, 2001).

## **CONCLUSION**

This review of diaspora in the geography literature began with clarifying specific characteristics inherent in diaspora, and it will end similarly. Through defining terms, and pulling out major themes, clusters in the literature, and theoretical constructs, different approaches to diaspora in the literature were examined.

Concepts that help to define the distinct contours of diaspora from a geographical perspective include such concepts as homeland, geographies of Empire and its effect on (post)colonial migration, the real and imagined territorializing of places and identities, new spaces of citizenship as an outgrowth of population migration, and how hybridity and difference are characteristics that define people and processes associated with diaspora. In highlighting these themes, the purpose was to tease out how each has been presented in geographical criticism and analysis. More significantly, it is evident that the literature in geography is deep in conversation with other disciplines.

Another aim of this review was to distinguish diaspora from related concepts such as migration and transnationalism. While this was the goal, it is obvious that such distinctions can suggest a false separation given the overlapping discourse between these analytical terms. Suffice is to say that diaspora is “often predicated on transnational social relations” but as Carl Dahlman (2004) clarifies, “transnationalism is not a sufficient condition for diasporas, which additionally imply a common sense of territorial identity among its members” (p. 486). More theoretical and empirical work is needed to further demarcate the distinctions between diaspora and transnationalism to temper the tendency to conflate these terms with each other. However, in delineating the characteristics of diaspora some important areas of inquiry are worth noting that could guide future geographical research. Analyzing spatial patterns of diaspora settlement, migration within diaspora communities as well as between different regions and sites over time, and mapping out geographies of return, or attempts at return, are some areas to consider. To do so would help tease out distinctive qualities of diaspora vis-à-vis space and time. For example, what can longitudinal studies of diaspora tell us about the temporal aspects of migration more broadly? Would these insights challenge the primacy of transnational social relations that are not sustained over time? Related, further research on real and imagined home(lands) and the attachments to specific territories and regions might help to better explain the multi-faceted nature of diasporic processes and practices. By contrast, how is space theorized in transnationalism discourse beyond the use of space in metaphorical terms or as something to overcome? Deterritorialization, reterritorialization, and other territorialization processes bring to the fore the geographical imperative in teasing out the answers to these and other questions.

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