Engendering Migration Studies

The Case of New Immigrants in the United States

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This review highlights contributions made by scholars who have treated gender as a central organizing principle in migration and suggests some promising lines for future inquiry. Many significant topics emerge when gender is brought to the foreground, such as how and why women and men experience migration differently and how this contrast affects settlement, return, and transmigration. A gendered perspective demands a scholarly reengagement with those institutions and ideologies immigrants create and encounter in order to determine how patriarchy organizes family life, work, law, public policy, and so on. It encourages an examination of the ways that migration simultaneously reinforces and challenges patriarchy in its multiple forms. Several migration scholars have replaced early feminist frameworks in which gender hierarchy was privileged with more comprehensive and flexible models. These map the simultaneity of gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, class, and legal status on the lives of immigrant and native-born men and women.

This review highlights contributions made by scholars who have treated gender as a central organizing principle in migration, and it suggests some promising lines for future inquiry. When gender is brought to the foreground in migration studies, a host of significant topics emerge. These include how and why women and men experience migration differently and how this contrast affects such processes as settlement, return, and transmigration. A gendered perspective demands a scholarly reengagement with those institutions and ideologies immigrants create and encounter in the "home" and "host" countries in order to determine how patriarchy organizes family life, work, community associations, law and public policy, and so on. It also encourages an examination of the multiple ways in which migration simultaneously reinforces and challenges patriarchy in its multiple forms.[1]

New immigration research is developing a more sophisticated understanding of gender and patriarchy. It avoids the common fallacy of equating gender only with women, and it acknowledges the "transgressive" fact that non-White

immigrant males may be stripped of patriarchal status and privilege by White men and women (Espiritu, 1997). Consequently, a new wave of migration scholarship challenges feminists who insist on the primacy of gender, thereby marginalizing racism and other structures of oppression. In place of theories that treat structures such as gender and race as mutually exclusive, this recent work urges us to develop theories and design research that captures the simultaneity of gender, class, race, and ethnic exploitation. The payoff is explanatory models that account for outcomes that have largely eluded those who employ more unitary frameworks. For example, by acknowledging and theorizing the interpenetrating class, racial, legal, and gender oppressions characterizing immigrant women's lives, we are best prepared to interpret their modest challenges to patriarchal privilege and exploitative family practices, despite the fact that migration tends to narrow the material and social foundations for gender inequities.

THE MIGRANT AS MALE

More than a decade ago I wrote,

> Until recently the term "migrant" suffered from the same gender stereotyping found in the riddles about the big indian and the little indian, the surgeon and the son. In each case the term carried a masculine connotation, unless otherwise specified. While this perception makes for amusing riddles, the assumption that the "true" migrant is male has limited the possibility for generalization from empirical research and produced misleading theoretical premises. (Pessar, 1986, p. 273)

To appreciate why women were largely absent from empirical research and writings produced in the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s, it is useful to consider the theoretical assumptions guiding much of the migration scholarship of that period. Most scholars were influenced by neoclassical theory, and according to one popular variant, those individuals with the ability to project themselves into the role of "Western man" headed off to the cities where the benefits of modern life could be attained (Lewis, 1959; Redfield, 1955). And it was males, indeed, who they alleged were more apt to be risk takers and achievers, whereas women were portrayed as guardians of community tradition and stability. Hence, in Everett Lee's (1966) seminal "push-pull" theory of migration, we learn that "children are carried along by their parents, willy-nilly, and wives accompany their husbands though it tears them away from the environment they love" (p. 51).

Migration research of this period also suffered from the more general tendency to disregard women's contributions to economic, political, and social life. As June Nash (1986) writes, "Whether investigators were influenced by neoclassical, Marxist, dependency or developmentalist paradigms, they tended to stop short of an analysis of women's condition in any but the most stereotyped roles in the family and biological reproduction" (p. 3). The same ideological

template operated as labor-importing nations, such as France, chose to enumerate immigrant women alongside children as dependents rather than workers in official immigration statistics (Morokvasic, 1984).

Not surprisingly, researchers of the day designed studies of immigrant populations that included only male subjects. Thus, in the introduction to their 1975 book on migrant workers in Europe, John Berger and Jean Mohr write,

> Among the migrant workers in Europe there are probably two million women. Some work in factories, many work in domestic service. To write of their experience adequately would require a book itself. We hope this will be done. Ours is limited to the experience of the male migrant worker. (p. 8)

And in 1985, we find Alejandro Portes explaining that the surveys he conducted over the course of the 1970s with Mexicans and Cubans in the United States had to be restricted to male family heads because they

> felt at the time that an exploratory study, directed at comparison of two immigrant groups over time, would become excessively complex were it to encompass all categories of immigrants. In subsequent interviews, however, respondents were also used as informants about major characteristics of other family members, in particular, their wives. (Portes & Bach, 1985, p. 95)

A male bias also existed in the works of many immigration historians of the period who either assumed that only male immigrants' lives were worthy of official documentation and scrutiny (Handlin, 1951; Howe, 1976) or that the history of male migrants was gender neutral, thus making it unnecessary to treat women at all, except perhaps in a few pages on the family (Bodnar, Weber, & Simon, 1982).

SCHOLARSHIP ON IMMIGRANT WOMEN

Once feminist scholarship gained a foothold in migration studies, it progressed through a series of stages common to the broader engagement between feminism and the social sciences. In the 1970s and 1980s, researchers attempted to fill in the gaps that resulted from decades of research based predominantly on male immigrants. In their rush to fill this void, the more empirically minded migration scholars tended to treat gender as a mere variable rather than as a central theoretical concept. For example, in Douglas Gurak and Mary Kritz's (1982) writings on Dominican and Colombian immigrants in New York City, we learn of high rates of female labor force participation—far exceeding rates prior to emigration. Yet, these empirical findings are never contextualized in a larger discussion of gender segmentation within the sending and receiving labor markets (see Gabaccia, 1994; Sassen-Koob, 1984) nor extended through an examination

of the impact women's wage labor has had on gender relations within these immigrant families and the wider communities (see Pessar, 1986, 1988).

Although there is now a sizeable body of empirical studies on women immigrants, which is aimed at redressing a tradition of male bias, we are only beginning to take the next step in reformulating migration theory in light of the anomalous and unexpected findings revealed in this body of work. The remainder of this essay reviews the key components needed to more fully engender migration studies. I note where advances have been made and suggest where future theorizing and research should proceed.

ENGENDERING MIGRATION THEORY
AND RESEARCH

Researchers have only recently begun to explore how changing politico-economic conditions in labor-exporting and labor-importing societies differentially affect men and women and how this, in turn, may provide them with contrasting incentives and constraints on movement and foreign settlement.[2] Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994), for example, notes that the bracero program provided opportunities for male laborers and that these individuals went on to create informal social networks that recruited additional men. It was not until the 1970s that equally effective women-to-women networks consolidated (Kossoudji & Ranney, 1984). In contrast, Irish migration in the 19th and early 20th centuries was female dominated. As Hasia Diner (1983) and Pauline Jackson (1984) explain, the larger continent-wide transition from an agrarian, feudal mode to an industrial, capitalist one was exacerbated in Ireland by the local norms of single inheritance and single dowry. These changes affected women more heavily than men, leading increasing numbers of women to conclude that their best chances for employment (overwhelmingly in domestic service) and eventual marriage could be found by emigrating to the United States. It was women who created and maintained the migration chains that linked female kin and friends and that produced a pattern of migration that was basically a female mass movement.[3]

Researchers argue that export-led production in Third World countries carries different implications for female and male workers, although in both instances it is migration-inducing (Fernández-Kelly, 1983; Sassen-Koob, 1984). Off-shore production promotes displacement and international migration by creating goods that compete with local commodities, by feminizing the workforce without providing equivalent factory-based employment for the large stock of under- and unemployed males, and by socializing women for industrial work and modern consumption without providing needed job stability over the course of the women's working lives.

For several decades, the United States has attracted proportionally more female migrants than other labor-importing countries have, and women constitute the majority among U.S. immigrants from Asia, Central and South

America, the Caribbean, and Europe (Donato, 1992). This dominance reflects economic restructuring in the United States and the subsequent growth of female-intensive industries, particularly in service, health care, microelectronics, and apparel manufacturing. According to Yen Le Espiritu (1997), immigrant women, as feminized and racialized labor, are more employable in these labor-intensive industries than their male counterparts are due to "the patriarchal and racist assumptions that women can afford to work for less, do not mind dead-end jobs, and are more suited physiologically to certain kinds of detailed and routine work" (p. 74). She illustrates with a quote from a White male production manager and hiring supervisor in a California Silicon Valley assembly shop:

> Just three things I look for in hiring [entry-level, high-tech manufacturing operatives]: small, foreign, and female. You find those three things and you're pretty much automatically guaranteed the right kind of workforce. These little foreign gals are grateful to be hired—very, very grateful—no matter what. (Hossfeld, 1994, p. 65, as cited in Espiritu, 1997)

Revisionist scholarship on immigrant enclaves provides a further example of the power of engendered inquiry. The earliest writing on the Cuban enclave in Miami praised it as a mode of economic incorporation that, unlike the secondary sector, provided immigrants with significant returns to education and previous job experience as well as opportunities for training and comparatively higher wages (Portes & Bach, 1985). More recent research on the Cuban enclave (Portes & Jensen, 1989) and the Chinese enclave in New York City (Zhou, 1992; Zhou & Logen, 1991), which control for gender, reveal a far different pattern, however, with women receiving few, if any, of the advantages their male counterparts enjoy. In the case of the New York City enclave, Min Zhou (1992) writes, "Better-paying jobs in the enclave economy tend to be reserved for men because male supremacy that dominates the Chinese culture (and the Western culture) reinforces gender discrimination in the enclave labor market" (p. 182). Greta Gilbertson (1995), too, concludes in her study of Dominican and Colombian immigrants employed in Hispanic firms in New York that rather than conferring benefits to women, enclave employment is highly exploitative. Indeed, she claims that some of the success of immigrant small-business owners and their male workers comes at the expense of subordinated immigrant women.

Finally, in a sobering piece on U.S. immigrants' "progress" over the decade of the 1980s, Roger Waldinger and Greta Gilbertson (1994) find that although male immigrants from select countries (e.g., India, Iran, Japan) were able to convert their education into higher occupational status rankings than were native-born Whites of native parentage, none of their female counterparts were able to do the same. For example, relatively few females were able to convert high levels of education into prestigious jobs as managers, professionals, or business owners. If the social erasure of immigrant women caused assimilationists to

dwell on and celebrate the progress of immigrant men alone, Waldinger and Gilbertson's research shows that "making it" in America may sadly, yet, be a story about men despite the inclusion of women (p. 440).

Migration studies has not only benefited from an appreciation of the ways in which gender operates within the processes of economic displacement and the demand for immigrant labor. A gendered optic is also essential to appreciate the role played by mediating institutions, such as households and social networks, in international migration.

RETHINKING HOUSEHOLDS
AND SOCIAL NETWORKS

There is general agreement that the inclusion of the household and social networks has helped elucidate the factors that precipitate and sustain migration as well as condition its effects. Simultaneously, however, there have been calls to refine the ways in which these analytical constructs have been conceptualized and operationalized.

Criticism has been primarily directed at formulations of the household. Inspired by feminist scholarship, critics have objected to the notion that migrant households are organized solely on principles of reciprocity, consensus, and altruism. They have countered that although household members' orientations and actions may sometimes be guided by norms of solidarity, they may equally be informed by hierarchies of power along gender and generational lines; thus, the tension, dissention, and coalition building these hierarchies produce within the migration process also must be examined (Grasmuck & Pessar, 1991). A particularly graphic example of a lack of consensus among household members is provided by Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994) who describes a young Mexican wife whose fear of abandonment by her migrant husband leads her to pray that he will be apprehended by the border patrol and sent back home to her and her young children (p. 43). In the sociologist's words, "Once we actually listen to the voices of Mexican immigrants . . . the notion that migration is driven by collective calculations or household-wide strategies becomes increasingly difficult to sustain" (p. 55).

There is also a problem with the new economists' relatively narrow view of the nature of migrant households' cost-benefit analyses (Stark, 1991). It fails to acknowledge that the calculations involve not only a consideration of the market economy, but the household political economy as well. For example, when unmarried Dominican women urge their parents to allow them to emigrate alone, parents weigh the threat to the family's reputation posed by the daughter's sexual freedom and possible promiscuity against the very real economic benefits her emigration will bring. Similarly, in assessing the benefits of return migration, many Dominican immigrant women assess the personal gains that settlement and blue-collar employment in the United States have brought them

against the expectation of "forced retirement" back on the island (Pessar, 1995b).

Scholars who adopt what may be called a moral economy perspective tend to view households as essentially passive units whose members are collectively victimized by the larger market economy. We see this vision in the pioneering work of Claude Meillassoux (1981) on African migrant households and domestic communities. He recognized that the domestic and productive activities of the migrant wives who remained in rural communities were essential for the social reproduction of male migrant labor on a seasonal and generational basis. Although Meillassoux acknowledged that women who engage in noncapitalist activities within the household and migrant community are in a contradictory and exploited relationship vis-à-vis the capitalist economy, this observation did not lead him to analyze the equally exploitative social and economic relations within migrant households. With such a model of passive and unitary households, we are totally unprepared to account for such "transgressive" practices as the decisions of many Kikuyu women to migrate alone to a nearby city rather than accept the onerous burden of maintaining homes and lands over the duration of their migrant husbands' and fathers' prolonged absences. Nici Nelson (1978) describes these exploited women as "voting with their feet" (p. 89).

Now, more than 15 years after the publication of Meillassoux's (1981) work, we continue to compile additional case studies documenting the social reproduction of migrant labor by labor-exporting households (Dandler & Medeiros, 1988; Griffith, 1985; Soto, 1987). What is in far shorter supply, however, are treatments of the strains and limitations on the perpetuation of a labor reserve. For example, we need comparative research on whether and how the "enforced" immobility of migrant wives and sisters is contested by women responding to the increased demand for female labor both in export-oriented industries at home and in immigrant-dominated sectors abroad (Grasmuck & Pessar, 1991). Along these lines, we require more research on how images, meanings, and values associated with gender, consumption, modernity, and the family circulate within the global cultural economy (Appadurai, 1990) and how these "ideoscapes" and "mediascapes" are interpreted and appropriated in varied sites by different household members in ways that either promote or constrain mobility (Mills, 1997). Finally, there is also a paucity of literature on the limits to grandmothers' and other kin's willingness and capacities to care for the children left behind and to "resocialize" rebellious youth sent "home" by their distraught migrant parents (Basch, Glick Schiller, & Szanton-Blanc, 1994; Guarnizo, 1997).

The common claim that the immigrant family in the United States is an adaptive social form requires rethinking. This proposition assumes an immigrant household already firmly in place (Pérez, 1986). It diverts our attention from the important task of analyzing legislation and government policies that effectively block or limit the formation, unification, and material well-being of immigrant families (Espiritu, 1997; Garrison & Weiss, 1979; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1995;

Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997; Mohanti, 1991). We also need to turn a critical gaze on the accompanying rhetoric that makes these initiatives thinkable and credible. For example, work on the Chinese Exclusion Act points to its racist and sexist precepts; beginning with the 1875 Page Law, all would-be Chinese immigrant women were suspected of being prostitutes who would bring in "especially virulent strains of venereal diseases, introduce opium addiction, and entice young white boys to a life of sin" (Chan, 1991, p. 138).

Finally, households have assumed an important place within transnational migration theory as well. Researchers stress that household members often develop economic strategies that transcend national labor markets and pursue social reproduction strategies that may similarly stretch across national divides as, for example, when immigrant women work abroad as nanny/housekeepers while their children remain in their countries of origin (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997). Recent work on the related phenomena of "transnational mothering" and "the new employable mothers," (Chang, 1994) has raised important questions about the meanings, variations, and inequities of motherhood in the late 20th century.

Research on migration and social networks has not received as concerted a critique and retooling as has the scholarship on migrant households. Back in 1989, Monica Boyd observed that much of the research on social networks remained indifferent to gender. Fortunately, since then there has been some progress in exploring the multiple ways in which gender configures and organizes immigrants' social networks. For example, Christine Ho (1993) maintains that kinship lies at the center of Caribbean social life both at home and transnationally, and it is women who give these networks shape and substance. Feminist scholarship has also challenged the popular assumption that immigrants' social networks are socially inclusive. As Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994) writes, "Immigrant social networks are highly contested social resources, and they are not always shared, even in the same family" (p. 189). In fact, she found that migrant networks were traditionally available to Mexican males; now that women have developed independent female networks, it is not uncommon for family and household members to use entirely different social networks (p. 95).

The new scholarship on the gendered dimensions of the supply and demand for immigrant labor and of the role of migrant households and social networks in the migration process has inspired a complementary line of research that explores the relationship between migration and women's emancipation.

MIGRATION AND EMANCIPATION

Many scholars have examined the impact immigrant women's regular wage work has on gendered relations. A review of this literature points to the fact that despite gender inequities in the labor market and workplace, immigrant women employed in the United States generally gain greater personal autonomy and

independence, whereas men lose ground (e.g., Grasmuck & Pessar, 1991; Guendelman & Pérez-Itriaga, 1987; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994; Kibria, 1993; Lamphere, 1987; Pedraza, 1991). For example, women's regular access to wages and their greater contribution to household sustenance frequently lead to more control over budgeting and other realms of domestic decision making. It also provides them with greater leverage in appeals for male assistance in daily household chores. There is some indication that the smaller the wage gap between partners' earnings, the greater the man's willingness to participate in domestic work (Espiritu, 1997; Lamphere, Zavella, & Gonzales, 1993; Pessar, 1995b). Immigrant women's spatial mobility and their access to valuable social and economic resources beyond the domestic sphere also expand (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994; Pessar, 1995b). We find further evidence that migration and settlement bring changes in traditional patriarchal arrangements in the words of immigrant men and women. In what Nazli Kibria (1993) describes as a tongue-in-cheek description of gender transformations, several Vietnamese immigrant men told her, "In Vietnam the man of the house is king. Below him the children, then the pets of the home, and then the women. Here, the woman is the king and the man holds a position below the pets" (p. 108). Conversely, a Mexican female returnee told her interviewers, "In California my husband was like a mariposa (meaning a sensitive, soft, responsive butterfly). Back here in Mexico he acts like a distant macho" (Gundelman & Pérez-Itriago, 1987, p. 268).

The pioneering work on women and migration tended to couch its concerns in stark, either-or terms: Was migration emancipatory or subjugating for women? Most soon concluded that immigrant women did not equally or consistently improve their status in the home, workplace, or community (Morokvasic, 1984). For individual immigrants, like many of my Dominican informants, gains have been most pronounced in one domain (e.g., the household), whereas gender subordination continues in other arenas such as the workplace and ethnic associations (Grasmuck & Pessar, 1991). For other immigrant women, "gains" within a specific sphere, like the household, are frequently accompanied by strains and contradictions. This fact is clearly manifested in Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila's (1997) research on transnational mothering. Although many Mexican and Central American immigrant nannies and housekeepers take pride in their paid reproductive work, especially in caring for other people's children, and in stretching the definition of motherhood to encompass breadwinning, there are substantial costs. According to the authors, in separating in space and time from their communities of origin, homes, children, and sometimes husbands, these women must "cope with stigma, guilt, and criticism from others" (p. 7). There are also signs of generational conflicts within immigrant households, which incline some women, such as the Vietnamese immigrants Kibria (1993) studied, to recommit themselves even more forcefully to patriarchal family systems "because of the power it [gives] them, as mothers, over [transgressive] children" (p. 143).[4] To account for these seeming inconsistencies and contradictions in immigrant women's lives, it is useful to recall Myra Ferree's

(1990) observation that many of our feminist models founder because they have sought consistency in working women's lives where no such consistency exists.

Although there is now broad consensus that immigrant women attain some limited, albeit uneven and sometimes contradictory, benefits from migration and settlement, we await the next wave of scholarship. This would consolidate and then deconstruct the available literature to determine those gendered domains in which the greatest and least gains for women have been made. And it would both isolate and interrelate those factors that condition these outcomes. These would include migrants' age, education, employment history (prior and subsequent to emigration), race, ethnicity, sexual preference, social class, and legal status as well as family structures and gender ideologies (prior to and subsequent to emigration). As we proceed in such a venture, it will be necessary to deconstruct excessively inclusive terms such as *racial-ethnic* women and *racialized subjects*. Promising work lies ahead as we explore how the evolving processes of racialization and social stratification within and between "Asian," "Latino," "Caribbean," and "European" populations (Omi & Winant, 1994) affect the gendered identities and experiences of specific immigrant populations. Finally, to assess those factors that facilitate or impede gender parity, it would be wise to systematically reengage those accounts that qualify or dispute the claim that migration improves women's status (Castro, 1986; Zhou, 1992). For example, we are likely to find less change among immigrant populations such as the rural Portuguese whose premigration gender ideologies already assign wives to essential duties in both the domestic and productive spheres (Lamphere, 1986).

Although I do not intend to minimize the importance of those factors that may mitigate challenges to patriarchal practices, I want to suggest that differences among researchers regarding the emancipatory nature of migration may originate, at least in part, in the actual research strategies pursued. In a formal research setting, such as one in which surveys or structured interviews are administered, an immigrant woman's decision to cloak her own and her family's experiences in a discourse of unity, female sacrifice, and the woman's subordination to the patriarch represents a safe, respectful, and respectable "text." As I look back on my own research, this is the female voice that usually emerged from my own attempts at survey research. By contrast, my ethnographic collection of discourses that reveal family tensions and struggles emerged far more frequently out of encounters when my presence was incidental, that is, not the defining purpose for the ensuing dialogue, or after many months of participant observation had substantially reduced the initial formality and suspicion (see Pessar, 1995a). In light of our increased appreciation for the dialogical nature of the research encounter, I am hardly surprised that the fieldworker who has presented some of the richest and most compelling case material on women's circumvention or contestation of patriarchal authority assumed the roles of both activist and researcher and was no doubt perceived by many of her informants as a transgressive female herself (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994, p. xiii). Neither am I surprised that the chronicler of by far the best histories of divergent migration

projects spent more than 2 years studying a limited number of immigrant families in both Mexico and Northern California and chose to feature in his writings only one family with whom he lived and socialized (Rouse, 1987, 1989).

SETTLEMENT, RETURN, AND
TRANSNATIONALITY

A gendered approach is essential to account for men's and women's orientations to settlement, return, and transmigration. Indeed, gender-free models of migrant settlement and return (e.g., Piore, 1979) are hard to defend in light of informants' statements such as the one cited above by the Mexican return migrant who saw her "butterfly" turn back into a distant macho and the joking remark of a Laotian refugee, "When we get on the plane back to Laos, the first thing we will do is beat up the women" (Donnelly, 1994, p. 74). Research shows consistently that gains in gender equity are central to women's desires to settle, more or less permanently, to protect their advances (Chavez, 1991; Georges, 1990; Goldring, 1992; Hagan, 1994; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994). In contrast, many men seek to return home rapidly to regain the status and privileges that migration itself has challenged. In my own work, I document how many Dominican women spend large amounts of money on expensive durable goods, such as major appliances and home furnishings, which serve to root the family more securely in the United States and deplete the funds necessary to orchestrate a successful reentry back into Dominican society and economy. Conversely, men often favor a far more frugal and austere pattern of consumption that is consistent with their claim that "five dollars spent today meant five more years of postponing the return to the Dominican Republic" (Pessar, 1986, p. 284).

Further strides in our understanding of how immigrant women consolidate settlement have been made by Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994), who observes that, as traditional family patriarchy weakens, immigrant women assume more active public and social roles—actions that at once reinforce their improved status in the household and ultimately advance their families' integration in the United States. She identifies three arenas in which this consolidation takes place: the labor market in which women seek permanent, nonseasonal employment; institutions for public and private assistance; and the immigrant/ethnic community. Hondagneu-Sotelo and others have shown that women are particularly adept at locating and using financial and social services available in the new society (Chavira, 1988; Kibria, 1993) and in using social-networking skills for community building (O'Connor, 1990).

As researchers continue to explore community building and community activism among new immigrants, they would be wise to take a leaf from immigration historians who have noted that women's sense of community often differs substantially from that of men who tend to gravitate to formal institutions, such as political parties and labor unions (Hyman, 1980; Weinberg, 1992).

Moreover, it should be borne in mind that women are positioned differently than men with regard to both the broader economy and the state. As women, they are socially assigned responsibility for the daily and generational sustenance of household members, even when, as is the case for many immigrants, family wages are wholly insufficient. Research is badly needed to determine whether and how immigrant women manage to overcome very real concerns over legal vulnerability to confront the state over family and community welfare issues (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1995; Sacks, 1989; Susser, 1982; Torruellas, Benmayor, & Juarbe, 1997; Zavella, 1987).

Recent work on migrants' transnational identities, practices, and institutions alert us that permanent settlement or permanent return are merely two of the possible outcomes; lives constructed across national boundaries is another. As several scholars have noted, gender remains marginalized within transnational migration theory and research (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997; Kearney, 1995; Mahler, n.d.). Based on the few studies that do consider gender, we are left with the impression that men are the major players in transnational social fields (Graham, 1997; Ong, 1993). Sarah Mahler (n.d.) astutely questions the implicit message that women are more passive and argues that when the research focus is shifted from public domains, such as international investment and hometown associations, to more private ones, such as the management of transnational migrant households, a different representation emerges (see also Ho, 1993; Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997; Soto, 1987). On this score, Sandhya Shukla (1997) observes that South Asian women have organized across the diaspora and subcontinent around the problem of domestic violence. She notes that through these transnational activities, "the South Asian woman" is being constituted as a political subject. As such, some of these women have come to contest the more mainstream, patriarchal narratives of ethnic identity and solidarity that are emerging in diverse diaspora communities. These mainstream narratives, she claims, are vigorously and romantically nationalist rather than embracing the women's pan-ethnic identity of South Asian. And they "are steeped in images of the traditional nuclear family with its specified gender roles as a metaphor for distinctly cultural values in the face of Western change" (p. 270). Shukla's work alerts us to an important dialectic that has received insufficient scholarly attention: the mutually constituting projects of racial and ethnic "othering" of immigrants and ethnics carried out by members of host countries and the creation of nationalist, often fundamentalist, counternarratives produced by these othered subjects. What are the roles of men and women in either supporting or challenging these projects? And in what ways are the symbols of nation, diaspora, and belonging imbued with notions of gender and sexuality? Surely, much more research is needed to determine how transnational migration identities, practices, and experiences are gendered and whether patriarchal ideologies and roles are reaffirmed, tempered, or both within transnational social spaces. We also need to situate gender within the current historical moment—one in which researchers note the contradiction between economic globalization and the

renationalizing of politics (Harris, 1995; Sassen, 1996). One extremely unfortu-
nate byproduct of this contradiction is the recent tendency for U.S. policy mak-
ers to characterize immigrant women and children as dangerous others whose
rapacious demands on the public coffers thwart the state's ability to fulfill its
social contract with the "authentic" and truly "deserving" members of the nation
(Chavez, 1996; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1995; Naples, 1997).

A REENCOUNTER WITH FEMINIST STUDIES

In my earliest work on Dominican migration, I was quite adamant about the
gains I believed Dominican immigrant women had made (Pessar, 1986). My
enthusiasm originated from several sources: a flush of early feminist optimism
(see Pessar, 1995a), my observations based on fieldwork in both the Dominican
Republic and the United States of changes in gender practices (Grasmuck &
Pessar, 1991), and a desire to communicate my female informants' pleasure at
what they viewed as far more equitable gender relations. Yet, as I have come to
both follow the lives of several of these women over the years and critically
engage the comparative literature on immigration and patriarchy, I have tem-
pered my enthusiasm. I now conclude that, in general, immigrant women's gains
have been modest. In retrospect, I believe many of us anticipated a far greater
degree of emancipation for immigrant women because our theoretical guide-
posts were firmly planted in early feminist theory. To understand why most
immigrant women have only nibbled at the margins of patriarchy, we must aban-
don the notion that gender hierarchy is the most determinative structure in their
lives. This leaves us with the far more daunting task of examining how women's
and men's lives are affected by multiple and interrelated forms of oppression
linked to gender, class, race, ethnicity, and foreign status.

Many U.S. feminists were encouraged by economic trends in the 1970s and
1980s. There was a marked increase in the proportion of dual-wage-earning
families, and escalating rates of male unemployment served to underscore the
centrality of women's contributions to household budgets. Predictions of pro-
found changes in U.S. gender relations and family structures followed. Heidi
Hartmann (1987), for example, disputed the claim that the recent increase in
female-headed households was by definition deleterious for women and their
families. She wrote, "To the extent that there is a family crisis, it is by and large a
healthy one, particularly for women" (p. 49). This was the case, she maintained,
because increased economic opportunities for women had, in her words,
allowed women "to choose" to head their own households rather than to live
with men. Along similar lines, Alice Kessler-Harris and Karen Brodkin Sacks
(1987) observed that women's improved access to wages allowed them either to
resist gender and generational subordination within the family or "avoid family
situations altogether" (p. 70).

A review of the literature on immigrant families unearths scant evidence of a radical revamping of gender ideology and lines of authority nor an emancipatory abandonment of conjugal units, despite rates of employment for immigrant women that rival those of native-born Americans. We learn of Vietnamese immigrant women who defend their own "traditional" family forms against what they perceive to be individualistic and unregulated American family practices (Kibria, 1993), and of Latina nannies who endorse motherhood as a full-time vocation when financial resources permit (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997). We encounter a Dominican woman who describes her divorce as "one of the saddest days in my life. Not only did I lose the respect I once had as a married woman, but my children and I lost the material support [my husband] was able to provide" (Pessar, 1995a, p. 41). Many researchers report that immigrant women view their employment as an extension of their obligations as wives and mothers (Pedraza, 1991; Segura, 1994). With the caveat that they are merely "helping their husbands"—a refrain that immigrant women frequently repeat to researchers (Chavira, 1988; Pessar, 1995a)—these women manage to keep the fires of patriarchy burning by minimizing long hours in the workplace and substantial contributions to the household budget. Why have these immigrant women been less inclined than their White, North American counterparts to level assaults on patriarchal, domestic ideologies and practices?

IMMIGRANT FAMILIES AS
BASTIONS OF RESISTANCE

There are multiple external forces that buffet immigrant families. Legislation informed by racist and sexist discourse have in the past and present severely challenged the survival and well-being of immigrant families (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1995; Mohanty, 1991). Immigrant men are increasingly frustrated and scapegoated; they expect, and are expected, to be the breadwinners. Yet they face structural impediments that block the fulfillment of this role. As Patricia Fernández-Kelly and Ana García (1990) remind us, "For poor men and women the issue is not so much the presence of the sexual division of labor or the persistence of patriarchal ideologies but the difficulties of upholding either" (p. 148). Owing to an all too common tendency to conflate male dominance with patriarchy, many social scientists have been slow, or reluctant, to appreciate their informants' unwillingness to lose the benefits derived from some patriarchal marital unions (Nash, 1988).[5] Whether through choice or necessity, large numbers of immigrant women have also assumed wage-earning responsibilities. Their pursuit of employment is far more often the result of severe economic need and an expression of vulnerability than an indication of their strength within the home and marketplace (Fernández-Kelly & García, 1990). As noted above, it is often because they are "small, foreign, female" and non-White that they enjoy the dubious advantage of being the preferred category of labor for the lowest paid

and most insecure segment of the economy. In light of these multiple assaults, it would be patronizing to interpret immigrant women's struggles to maintain intact families as acquiescence to traditional patriarchy. Rather, in many cases, these struggles represent acts of resistance against those forces within the dominant society that threaten the existence of poor, minority families (see Collins, 1990; Zinn, Weber Cannon, Higginbotham, & Thonton Dill, 1986). This does not mean, as Evelyn Glenn (1986) reminds us, that immigrant women do not simultaneously experience the family as an instrument of gender subordination. Indeed, their attempts to use wages as leverage for greater gender parity in certain arenas of domestic life attest to this fact. The dilemma confronting many immigrant women, it would seem, is to defend and hold together the family while attempting to reform the norms and practices that subordinate them (Glenn, 1986, p. 193).

The importance of keeping multiple-wage-earning families in tact is underscored by statistics revealing far higher incidents of poverty among female-headed immigrant households than among similar conjugal units (Bean & Tienda, 1988; Pessar, 1995b; Rosenberg & Gilbertson, 1995). Maxine Zinn (1987) provides a more adequate depiction of these female-headed units than that proposed by Hartmann (1987):

> Conditions associated with female-headed families among racial-ethnics are different and should be interpreted differently. Because white families headed by women have much higher average incomes than minority families in the same situation, we must not confuse an overall improvement with what is in fact an improvement for women in certain social categories, while other women are left at the bottom in even worse conditions. (p. 167)

In spite of the many social and material disincentives militating against the disbanding of unions and the formation of female-headed households, there are, nonetheless, several immigrant populations, such as Dominicans, with extremely high rates of female headedness. Research is needed to account for the factors contributing to differing rates of marital instability and female headedness within and among immigrant populations in the United States (Bean, Berg, & Van Hook, 1996). We also require more in-depth investigations to document the survival strategies of poor immigrant families (Menjívar, 1995). Several researchers have pointed to the importance of household extension, that is, the incorporation of adults other than the husband and wife into the household. These coresident adults provide additional income to compensate for low earnings or sporadic unemployment and facilitate the labor force participation of married and single mothers (Angel & Tienda, 1982; Kibria, 1993; Rosenberg & Gilbertson, 1995).

Although poor immigrant families may experience difficulties in upholding a patriarchal division of labor and often suffer socially and materially as a consequence of men's unemployment, upwardly mobile couples may confront the

opposite challenge. They must confront the contradiction that dual wage earning poses for households that have achieved, by their standards, a middle-class standing. In certain Dominican and Cuban immigrant families, for example, women's "retirement" to the domestic sphere is a favored practice for marking the household's collective social advancement (Fernández-Kelly & García, 1990; Pessar, 1995a). Many of the Dominican women I knew who agreed to leave wage employment clearly viewed their alternatives as being improved social status for the entire family through female retirement, on one hand, versus improved gender relations for the wife through continued wage work, on the other. In leaving the workforce, many of the most conflicted women chose to place immigrant ideology, with its stress on social mobility, and traditional family domestic ideology, with its emphasis on both patriarchy and collective interests, before personal struggle and gains. Such actions, of course, contradict the feminist tenet that women's interests are best served by positioning themselves in both the household and workplace (Ferree, 1990). Yet, some of my informants saw themselves struggling on another front to challenge the distorted and denigrating cultural stereotypes about Latino immigrants held by many members of the majority culture. As the following quote from one of my female informants illustrates, Dominican women resisted these negative stereotypes by symbolizing the household's respectability and elevated social and economic status in a fashion common to the traditional Dominican middle class: they removed themselves from the visible productive sphere.

> When we had finally purchased our home and our business, Roque insisted that I stop working. He said it would be good for the children and good for all of us. At first I protested, because I never again wanted to be totally dependent upon a man. . . . But then I began to think about how much I have suffered in this country to make something for my family. And I thought, even though we own a home and a business, most Americans think the worst of us. They think we all sell drugs, have too many babies, take away their jobs, or are living off the government (i.e., receiving welfare). I decided, I'm going to show them that I am as good as they are, that my husband is so successful that I don't have to work at all.

This woman's words echo a broader claim advanced by Espiritu (1997) and others: in a hostile environment, "some women of color, in contrast to their white counterparts, view unpaid domestic work—having children and maintaining families—more as a form of resistance to racist oppression than as a form of exploitation by men" (p. 6).

Other Dominican women accounted for their departure from the workforce in terms similar to those of Cuban women interviewed by Fernández-Kelly and García (1990). They had envisioned their employment alongside their husbands as a temporary venture necessary until the family could achieve its goal of social advancement. Once this goal was attained, women's employment apparently contradicted a more enduring and apparently valued notion of the family and the

sexes that features the successful man as the sole breadwinner and the successful woman as the guardian of a unified household. These cases reveal that a unilinear and unproblematic progression from patriarchy to parity is by no means assured. They also point out the need for continuing research on class differences not only between immigrant and native-born women but among immigrant women as well.

Relatively few studies address the question of whether migration promotes or hampers a feminist consciousness (Shukla, 1997). Most of these report, not surprisingly, that the majority of the immigrant women studied do not tend to identify as feminists or participate in feminist organizations (Foner, 1986; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1995; Pessar, 1984). Immigrant women, we are told, are more likely to base their dissatisfactions and complaints about life in the United States on injustices linked to class, race, ethnicity, and legal-status discrimination than to gender. For example, according to Nancy Foner (1986), her Jamaican female informants experienced racial and class inequalities more acutely than those based on gender, and this sense of injustice gave them a basis for unity with Jamaican men. Moreover, the many domestic workers in their ranks felt no sense of sisterhood with their upper-middle-class White employers, whose "liberation" these immigrant women facilitated by providing inexpensive child care so that their female employers could compete in the male occupational world (Foner, 1986). Nonetheless, Hondagneu-Sotelo's (1994) point is well taken when she concludes that although none of the Mexican immigrant women she interviewed

> identified "gender subordination" as a primary problem, rearrangements induced by migration do result in the diminution of familial patriarchy, and these transformations may enable immigrant women to better confront problems derived from class, racial/ethnic, and legal-status subordination. Their endeavors may prompt more receptiveness to feminist ideology and organizations in the future. (p. 197)

Clearly, more comparative research is needed on the local and global factors and processes leading both to the development of feminist consciousness and organization and to its suppression.[6]

The materials presented in this section highlight the inadequacy of studying gender removed from other interpenetrating structures of difference, such as race and social class. Another related body of scholarship that merits serious attention are works emerging out of cultural studies and ethnic studies. This scholarship addresses how representations of majority White American men and women and those of immigrants and ethnics of color are mutually constituting. This scholarship makes the important point that ideological representations of gender and sexuality are central in the exercise and perpetuation of patriarchal, racial, and class domination (Espiritu, 1997). For example, it has been claimed that the representation of Asian men as both hypersexual and asexual

and of Asian women as both superfeminine and masculine exists to define, maintain, and legitimate White male virility and supremacy (Espiritu, 1997; Kim, 1990).

CONCLUSION

Migration scholars have made great advances in moving beyond an earlier male bias in theory and research. And the days when gender was treated as merely one of several equally significant variables, such as education and marital status, are mostly behind us. We are now moving toward a more fully engendered understanding of the migration process. This article has noted several key advances and has signaled the way to future developments in theory and research. We are starting to accumulate case studies documenting how men and women experience migration differently, how they create and encounter patriarchal ideologies and institutions across transnational migration circuits, and how patriarchy is reaffirmed, reconfigured, or both as a consequence of migration. The time is ripe to build on and move beyond these rich individual case studies toward a more comparative framework of migration and patriarchy. In doing so, it will be necessary to discard the notion that gender oppression transcends all divisions among men and women. Rather, we must develop theories and analytical frameworks that allow us to capture and compare the simultaneity of the impact of gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, class, and legal status on the lives of immigrants and native-born men and women. Thus, we await the next wave of research that is at once committed to comparative studies among immigrants yet refuses to stop there. We should resist disciplinary precedents that tempt us to ghettoize the gendered study of immigrants within migration studies. We are all far better served by taking the next step to relate our investigations of the representations, identities, and social conditions of immigrant men and women to those prevailing among members of the majority White and minority "brown" segments of U.S. society as well.

NOTES

1. I restrict myself here to a discussion of research on transnational migration to and between the United States and its labor-exporting partners. Review essays and edited volumes on women and international migration include Phizacklea (1983), Morokvasic (1984), Simon and Brettell (1986), Pedraza (1991), Tienda and Booth (1991), Gabaccia (1992), and Buijs (1993).

2. Of the limited scholarship that does exist on the factors contributing to displacement, far more attention has been paid to what is conventionally thought of as labor immigration than refugee displacement. In my view, this imbalance needs redressing; recent scholarship that examines rape and genital mutilation as human rights violations generally targeted at women are steps in the right direction (El Saadwi, 1980; Hoskin, 1981). Another promising line of scholarship challenges the assumption that women, in particular, are subordinated and "silenced" in refugee camps (Billings, 1995).

3. For research on female-led Salvadoran migration to Washington, D.C., see Cohen (1977) and Repak (1995).

4. Although Kibria (1993) stresses Vietnamese immigrant mothers' use of patriarchal privilege to maintain authority over children who emulate elements of American youth culture, Vicki Ruiz (1992) describes Mexican immigrant mothers who find themselves not pitted between two worlds "but navigating multiple terrains at home, at work, and at play" (p. 151). Following on Ruiz's observations, I suspect that immigrant women may sometimes find themselves as captivated by transgressive elements of U.S. popular culture as are their children (though perhaps for differing motives) and may accordingly join forces with their progeny to challenge features of traditional family ideology and patriarchal practices. And at other times, women may find that their own attempts to nibble at patriarchal structures make it difficult for them to fully oppose their children's related challenges. For example, Dominican women's desires to anchor their families in the United States by expending income on expensive commodities likely compromises their opposition to their children's use of their own income to participate in commercial youth culture. More work needs to be done to identify and explore the subjectivities, social practices, and social sites around which immigrant mothers (and parents) enforce children's adherence to preemigration patterns and those around which new coalitions for change are emerging.

5. I thank June Nash for pointing this out to me.

6. A topic that merits further study is national and global initiatives taken by immigrant and refugee women to engender the universalist conception of human rights (see Afkhami, 1994; Smith, 1994).

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