WOMEN AND MIGRATION: The Social Consequences of Gender

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Abstract

This paper reviews the literature on the neglected role of women in migration. It argues that focusing on gender and the family can provide the necessary linkage of micro and macro levels of analyses. Striving to contribute to a gendered understanding of the social process of migration, the review organizes the literature along these major issues: How is gender related to the decision to migrate—i.e. what are the causes and consequences of female or male-dominated flows of migration? What are the patterns of labor market incorporation of women immigrants—i.e. what accounts for their participation in the labor force and their occupational concentration? What is the relationship of the public and the private—i.e. what is the impact of work roles on family roles and of the experience of migration on the immigrants themselves? Throughout, the necessity to understand how ethnicity, class, and gender interact in the process of migration and settlement is stressed.

INTRODUCTION

Despite the overwhelming presence of women in migration flows, until recently the role of women in migration had been totally neglected. As Houstoun et al (1984:908) have pointed out, the pervasive assumption that the international migrant is a young, economically motivated male has over-

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shadowed the reality of migration streams that were dominated by women: "Ironically, few immigration researchers (and even fewer policy makers) are aware that legal immigration to the United States—still very much the largest of all international flows—has been dominated by females for the last half-century." For the United States a crossover in sex differentials in migration occurred in 1930, after which women annually outnumbered men (Houstoun et al 1984: Table 1). As demographers, Houstoun et al highlighted this glaring neglect as it appears in the discipline of sociology. For the field of history, Maxine Seller (1975:197) emphasized it when she pointed out that while much had been written about the achievements of the men who came to the United States from Southern and Eastern Europe at the turn of the century, much less appeared about the experiences of the immigrant women of this period. She attributed this neglect to the persistence of negative stereotypes which made it appear that women did little worth writing about. After these various calls, more attention was paid to women and migration (cf Simon & Brettell 1986). Now, the topic has mushroomed. Yet, while we know a great deal about the impact of women's position on other social outcomes such as fertility (cf Mason 1987), we have yet to develop a truly gendered understanding of the causes, processes, and consequences of migration. Paying attention to the relationship between women's social position and migration will help fill the void regarding our knowledge of women as immigrants and contribute to a greater understanding of the lives of women. It will also elucidate those aspects of the process of migration that were neglected by the exclusive focus on men.

The study of immigration is by its very nature interdisciplinary. A natural division of labor has arisen whereby sociologists attend most to contemporary immigration flows (the Latin American and Asian), historians are concerned with past flows (the Southern and Eastern European), and anthropologists relate to the impact of emigration and return on the sending communities in underdeveloped nations. Without seeking to be exhaustive, this review draws upon research from these various disciplines and attempts to organize the literature to show how ethnicity, class, and gender interact in the process of migration and settlement.

As we try to bring women into the study of migration, it is worth considering Judith Stacey & Barrie Thorne's (1985) assessment of how different disciplines have incorporated gender. They stress that anthropology, history, and literature have all been more profoundly transformed than sociology, while psychology, economics, and political science have all resisted transformation. Bringing women into the humanities and the social sciences takes place in stages: first, by filling in the gaps in knowledge resulting from their absence; second, by transforming the conceptual and theoretical frameworks of their disciplines (see also Louise Tilly 1989).
Traditionally, history chronicled the world of men in public places—in work, organizations, church, politics. In this history, women were included only when they left home and entered the labor force, took part in strikes, joined labor unions, or worked for suffrage, since only then did their activities become public and accessible to traditional research methodology (cf Weinberg, in press). As Stacey & Thorne emphasized, feminist historians shifted the focus of research by placing women at the center and writing the history of the private sphere and of the relationship between the public and the private. Likewise, literature was transformed by the inclusion of women and ethnic writers, changing the canon that defined the field. Anthropology has been the most deeply transformed by feminist contributions because the analysis of kinship and the sexual division of labor has always been its very core (cf Yanagisako & Collier 1987). Thus, feminist thinking matured and went from woman-centered analyses to providing what Stacey & Thorne (1985:305–6) call a “gendered” understanding of all aspects of human culture—one that traces “the significance of gender organization and relations in all institutions and in shaping men’s as well as women’s lives.”

Within sociology, by contrast, much research on women has filled in gaps and yielded new insights and directions, but the field itself has undergone little transformation, as a truly gendered understanding of most topics has not been achieved. Traditionally, sociology was neither totally male-defined, as history or literature, nor basically gender-sensitive, as anthropology. Thus, Stacey & Thorne judged that the feminist contributions to sociology were contained by the delimiting capacity of functionalism to explain male-female differences; of empiricism to treat gender as a variable, rather than as a central theoretical concept; of Marxist sociology to ghettoize it; and by the underdevelopment of feminist theory itself.

Striving to contribute to a gendered understanding of the social process of migration, I have organized the various strands of this literature according to the following major issues: How is gender related to the decision to migrate—i.e. what are the causes and consequences of female or male-dominated flows of migration? What are the patterns of labor market incorporation of women immigrants—i.e. what accounts for their participation in the labor force and their occupational concentration? What is the the relationship of the public and the private—i.e. what is the impact of work roles on family roles and of the experience of migration on the immigrants themselves?

THE DECISION TO MIGRATE

*Micro and Macro Linkages*

The underlying assumption in studies of migration has been the male pauper—a single or married male who looks forward to amassing capital with
tural-level variables. The link between migration and world patterns of unequal development increasingly became evident. North America remained the magnet that yesterday as well as today attracts the world’s poor. In Western Europe the periphery countries of Spain, Italy, Greece, and Turkey became suppliers of labor to the industrialized core countries of France, Germany, and Switzerland. Hence, a new set of structural, macro perspectives emerged. The structural perspective argued that a system of economic migration had developed from the flow of labor between developed and underdeveloped nations due to the functions that this system of labor migration performed. Arguing independently but in a similar vein, Manuel Castells (1975), Michael Burawoy (1976), and Alejandro Portes (1978) agreed that immigrant labor had structural causes and performed important functions for the developed capitalist nation that received it. While replacement labor—the migration of low-skilled labor—provided countries such as the United States or France with a dependable source of cheap labor, it also provided countries such as Mexico or Turkey with a “safety valve” as emigration became the solution to their inability to satisfy the needs of their poor and lower-middle classes. Silvia Pedraza-Bailey (1985) sought to extend the structuralist approach to explain refugee flows as involving political functions that can also generate a system of political migration between sending and receiving societies, such as Cuba and the United States. Maria Patricia Fernandez-Kelly (1983) demonstrated yet another linkage that migration provides between developed and underdeveloped capitalist nations with her in-depth study of the maquiladoras in the US-Mexican border region. The maquiladoras are manufacturing industries that resulted from the Mexican border industrialization program, whose expressed intent was to provide employment opportunities for Mexicans to help curtail undocumented migration. Fernandez-Kelly (1983:209) also emphasized that the most striking feature of this development was “its gender-specific nature. Although the majority of undocumented aliens working in the fields of the U.S. Southwest continue to be male, 85 percent of those working in the export-manufacturing plants along the Mexican border are female.” Saskia Sassen-Kooob (1984) sought to extend the structuralist approach to incorporate the migration of women by noting the intrinsic relationship between the recruitment of women into the new manufacturing and service jobs generated by export-led manufacturing in several Caribbean and Asian countries and the employment of immigrant women in highly industrialized countries, particularly in major cities which have undergone the shift to a service economy.

The recent macro approach was an important corrective to the traditional, micro approach which failed to take into account that since the advent of the Industrial Revolution all individual decisions to move have resulted in migration flows that moved in only one direction. The danger of the structural
which to return to his native country. Thus, the corollary assumption has been that it is males who typically make the decision to migrate and that females follow. As Everett Lee (1966:51) most fully expressed it in his seminal “push” and “pull” theory of migration, “Indeed not all persons who migrate reach that decision themselves. Children are carried along by their parents, willy-nilly, and wives accompany their husbands though it tears them away from environments they love.” Houstoun et al (1984:919) also stressed that, with the exception of domestics, women “generally migrate to create or reunite a family;” they saw female-dominated flows of migration as secondary movements generated by the original migration of economically motivated young males. While women do migrate to join men and to create families (cf Watts 1983, Tyree & Donato 1986), this hardly constitutes an explanation for the fact that “during the last half-century, the traditional working-age immigrant male has accounted for only a third of all immigration to the United States” (Houstoun et al 1984:913). Katharine Donato & Andrea Tyree (1986) analyzed the sex ratios of immigrants from over a hundred nations and examined the impact of American immigration law as well as the characteristics of migrants and their countries of origin. They concluded that, when viewed on the whole, family reunification accounted for the sex distribution of US immigration. In addition, the availability of jobs in the expanding health care industry also played a part. When viewed in the detail of national origins, however, a more complicated picture emerged with factors such as the presence of a US military base and the country’s socioeconomic conditions also playing a role.

Contrary to the manner in which the topic of women is usually treated in sociology, a truly gendered understanding of the social process of migration is provided by Sherri Grasmuck & Patricia Pessar’s Between Two Islands (in press). Their analysis of contemporary migration from the Dominican Republic to New York City (the two islands) entailed and benefitted from the collaboration of a sociologist and an anthropologist, respectively. By focusing on the household and the relations between its members as these affect the decision to migrate, Grasmuck & Pessar’s analysis also provided a much-needed link between the traditional micro explanations of migration and the recent macro explanations of it (cf Pedraza-Bailey 1990, Boyd 1989).

In sociology, the traditional, individual micro approach was best developed by Lee’s (1966:50) theory which focused on the individual migrant’s decision to migrate—the “push” and “pull” factors that “hold and attract or repel people,” as well as the intervening obstacles (distance, physical barriers, immigration laws, cost), the influence of personal traits (stage in the life cycle, contact with earlier migrants), and the effect of transitions (marriage or retirement).

The more recent approach to the study of immigration focused on struc-
emphasis, however, lies in its tendency to obliterate people, to lose sight of the individual migrants who do make decisions. The theoretical and empirical challenge now facing immigration research inhere in its capacity to capture both individuals as agents, and social structure as delimiting and enabling. We need to consider the plight of individuals, their propensity to move, and the nature of the decisions they make. We also need to consider the larger social structures within which that individual plight exists and those decisions are made. Such a link between micro and macro levels of analysis is provided by Massey et al (1987) in their analysis of Mexican migration to the United States. They showed that international migration originates historically in transformations of social and economic structures in sending and receiving societies, but that once begun migrants' social networks grow and develop. These networks support and channel migration on a continuously widening scale. Thus, the migration that was initially propelled by an external, structural dynamic and logic increasingly acquires an internal dynamic and logic of its own. In this way, migration comes to fuel itself. As families make migration part of their survival strategies and use it during stages of the life cycle when dependence is greatest, individual motivations, household strategies, and community structures are altered by migration, making further migration more likely.

As Boyd pointed out, however, to date much of the recent research on networks has been indifferent to gender, to the fact that "the division of labor—the structured activities in a society—are gendered" (1989:656). Grasmuck & Pessar's analysis (in press) also focused on social networks and households as the link between micro and macro levels of analysis; they demonstrated that gender is central to household decision-making. Therefore, it is central to the decision to migrate, as a family strategy intended to meet the challenges that accompany underdevelopment and economic and political transformation in the Third World. As Grasmuck & Pessar emphasized, the household is the social unit that makes decisions as to whether migration will take place, who in the family will migrate, what resources will be allocated to the migration, what remittances or household members can be expected to return, and whether the migration will be temporary or permanent. All of these decisions are guided by normatively prescribed kinship and gender roles as well as by the hierarchy of power within the household (cf Hondagneu-Sotelo, in press).

Both the studies of Massey et al and of Grasmuck & Pessar have the further virtue of a solid interdisciplinary research design. They merge the methodology of sociology (a survey) with that of anthropology (ethnography) in their research, thereby creating an ethnosurvey that overcomes the shortcomings of each (cf Massey et al 1987:11–13). In addition, within the country from which the migration originated (Mexico, Dominican Republic), they chose to
study, through both methods, very different types of communities: a traditional rural town, a commercialized agricultural community, an industrial town, and a city. This diversity best allowed an assessment of the social, economic, and cultural forces that contributed to the migration through comparisons of migrant with nonmigrant households. In the area of destination (California, New York City), drawing a representative sample of all immigrants was not possible, but snowball sampling led to the inclusion of both documented and undocumented immigrants. It is worth highlighting the methodology of both these studies because, unfortunately, there is a real methodological problem in this area of research. A number of very interesting studies of women immigrants collected in-depth interviews but from too small or unrepresentative a sample, making their insightful conclusions less than precise and firm.

Focusing on the household as the unit of analysis, Grasmuck & Pessar analyzed the household political economy as well as the power relations among its members that resulted in migration as a household strategy issuing from structural necessity. In the Dominican Republic, the transition from subsistence farming (based mostly on household labor) to commercial farming (based on wage labor) disrupted the traditional family relations. Whereas earlier many sons had been an asset, they were now an obstacle, a problem that was solved by sponsoring a son's emigration. This change in the political economy of the area also held profound consequences for the women, since the more successful households with status aspirations were able to gain in status by freeing their women from agricultural work. However, the women then ceased to contribute economically to the family and also became totally dependent on their husbands. One way to solve the contradiction between local gender and class norms, on the one hand, and the goal of the migration strategy, on the other, was to sponsor the wife's emigration to the United States, where there was less resistance to women working outside the household for wages. For the women themselves, the act of emigrating also became a way of escaping total dependence on their husbands. Thus, both sons and wives undertook the decision to migrate because of the gains in personal autonomy they anticipated, reducing the patriarchal control of fathers and husbands. In her participant observation study of Mexican undocumented women, Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo (in press) also found that while the decision to migrate may constitute a joint family strategy, the actual process of decision-making and the staggered departures of family members betray enormous interpersonal conflict.

As Pessar (1986:276) pointed out, "In contrast to men, migration does not rupture the social sphere in which women are self-actualized," that of the household and family. Hence, not only was gender at the center of the decision to emigrate it was also at the center of the reluctance to return, as women struggled to maintain the gains that migration and employment had
brought them. Grasmuck & Pessar found that while men were eager to return, a desire expressed in their frugal, austere living to accumulate savings, women tended to postpone or avoid return because they realized it would entail their retirement from work and the loss of their new-found freedoms. As a result, a struggle developed over finances and return that revolved around the traditional definitions of gender roles and privileges which the migration itself had challenged and which many men sought to regain by returning home. Many women spent large amounts of money on expensive, durable goods, such as a home and home furnishings, serving to root the family securely in the United States and to deplete the funds necessary to relocate. Through their use of interdisciplinary methods and understandings, Grasmuck & Pessar reached a depth of analysis each method alone could not have sounded and produced a truly gendered understanding of the social process of migration.

The Demographic Composition of the Migration Flow

Emigration is a process experienced differently by women and men; hence, it can be sex-selective. As Joy Parr (1987:530) underlined, "emigration can be the product of sex imbalances; it also forms them, both in the old country and the new." Examining international migration patterns, we can see that not only have women comprised at least half of recent immigrants to the United States, they have also predominated among immigrants to Argentina and Israel and now constitute an increasing share of migrants in areas such as West Africa and the Persian Gulf states (Tyree & Donato 1986). Examining internal migration patterns, we can see that whereas in Africa men predominate in migration to the cities and women remain in rural areas to farm the land, in Latin America, the Caribbean, and Philippines, most migrants to cities are women. In South Asia men outnumber women substantially in cities (see Fernandez-Kelly 1983, Reiff et al 1983, Gabaccia 1987, Khoo et al 1984, Lee 1989, Hojman 1989, Gugler 1989). These contrasts are largely due to the nature of the existing land tenure and agricultural production arrangements. Moreover, profound change can take place over time, as in sub-Saharan Africa where, in Joseph Gugler's (1989) analysis "Women stay on the farm no more." This change resulted from the increased opportunities in cities—in income and employment for women together with medical care and education for children—at the same time that agriculture became less profitable as a result of state pricing policy for cash crops. Moreover, government policy can create imbalanced migration flows by legally restricting the migration of males or females, as in Lesotho. Wilkinson (1983) showed the consequences for the women of Lesotho from neighboring South Africa's influx control laws that excluded women. As a result, a male-dominated flow of migrant labor to work in the mines crossed the international boundary of
Lesotho and also generated a female-dominated internal flow of migration to the cities of Lesotho where phenomenal sex imbalances occurred.

MALE EMIGRATION Flows of migration that are dominated by men require that we consider "the woman's side" when the women themselves are left behind in the communities. Caroline Brettell (1988) analyzed the impact of longstanding male emigration from Portugal to Brazil and Spain in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. She used the household data kept by the parish priest of Santa Eulalia de Lanhese in Portugal to assess the impact of the emigration on the matricentric characteristics of the way of life in this area, particularly the formation and structure of households. Households adjusted to the centuries of absence of men by becoming female-headed, often extended three-generation households, and, contrary to the Mediterranean pattern, patriuxorilocal, since grooms often moved in with the wife's family. Male migration also affected the lives of women by promoting a delayed age at marriage and high rates of spinsterhood as well as illegitimacy, both of which bound the women more firmly to their families of origin.

Barbara Engel (1986) also attended to "the woman's side" as she analyzed the impact, on the village, the family, and the women left behind, of the emigration of men from the villages of Kostroma province to the cities of Russia in the late nineteenth century. As peasants, the family was an economic unit of production, not just of consumption, and marriage to a village girl tied the young man who left more firmly to the family-economy as the wife continued to work in agriculture, in his place, and to live with her in-laws. Families thus placed greater constraints on women's migration than they did on men's; hence, few women emigrated. As a family strategy the out-migration of men that retained wives laboring in the village had many advantages. Marrying a man who worked elsewhere made women's lives more difficult in some ways as it tied them tighter to the soil and increased their burdens, but it also made women's lives easier in other ways as they endured childbirth less often and their children survived more often due to better health and nutrition. Moreover, the marriage relation itself may well have benefitted as women acquired more control over their lives and a measure of dignity while the marriage became more of a partnership.

FEMALE EMIGRATION Flows of migration that are dominated by women are often neglected, yet it is quite common for refugee flows to be initially dominated by women and children, as in the early years of both the Cuban and Indochinese exodus to the United States—an imbalance that altered over time (Pedraza-Bailly 1985, Rumbaut 1989). Refugees initially lack a motivation to settle elsewhere and only when they come to perceive the existing political situation as intolerable do they feel forced to leave, a choice they would rather
not have made (cf Stein 1981:322, Rose 1981:8). Thus, refugees often suffer from the mentality of those caught in a sinking ship—to reach safety, women and children first. Secondary migrations of men, who move to reunite families, are then generated.

Ultimately, the demographic composition of migration flows is important not only because its causes are various but also because of its consequences. In his comparative analysis of Italian and Jewish mobility in New York at the turn of the century, Thomas Kessner (1977) underscored that their patterns of social mobility and attainment depended on the varying composition of the migration flows. Newcomers that arrive as temporary migrants—as “birds of passage,” in Michael Piore’s (1979) phrase—work with the goal to return home, tolerating the most abysmal working conditions to accumulate capital for their investments back home. By contrast, permanent immigrants must make their future in the new land and cannot tolerate abysmal working conditions by thinking they are temporary. Thus, they seek to attain social mobility in the new society, taking greater risks and making more long-term investments, such as setting up family businesses (Piore 1979:55–68). The two types of migration are reflected in the demographic composition of the flows. Flows of temporary migrants, such as the Italian, are by and large nonfamily movements of males in the productive years who intend to make money and return home. By contrast, flows of permanent immigrants, such as the Jewish, are characterized by the migration of families who intend to remake their lives and homes (Kessner 1977).

Focusing on both the causes and consequences of a female-dominated flow of migration, Hsia Diner (1983) studied Irish immigrant women in the nineteenth century. The Irish migration was pushed by conditions that prevailed throughout much of Europe then—poverty, landlessness, and the social and economic dislocations that accompanied the transition from an agrarian feudal society to an industrial, capitalist society (cf Bodnar 1985). These conditions were exacerbated by the famine of the late 1840s. Coupled with the Irish system of single inheritance and single dowry, Ireland increasingly became the home of the unmarried and the late married. More than half of the Irish immigrants to the United States were women, and as the century wore on the migration became basically a female mass movement. As Diner (1983:4) demonstrated, the root cause was that social and economic conditions in Ireland were such that “Ireland became a country that held out fewer and fewer attractions to women.” Women had few realistic chances for marriage or employment; to attain either most had to turn their backs on the land of their birth. Hence, not just famine and poverty but what Jackson (1984:1007–8) called “the interlocking relationship of land-family-marriage” caused the preponderance of women in the migration. As a consequence of land scarcity, both arranged marriages and the practice of dowries spread, and celibacy and
late marriages rose. One escape from family and spinsterhood was for women to join a religious order; another was emigration.

Consequently, the Irish exodus to the United States was predominantly female and young, a migration stream mostly composed of single persons. The usual kin chain migration became a female migratory chain in which women brought over other women—sisters, mothers, nieces, aunts, friends. As will be seen later, the major consequence of the predominantly female and single nature of the migration was that Irish women were able overwhelmingly to enter domestic service.

THE INCORPORATION OF WOMEN

*Labor Force Participation*

That immigration has a decided impact on the labor force participation of women is a central fact of immigration research. It is also one of the major issues in studies of Cuban immigrants (Perez 1988). In contrast to the very low rates of labor force participation of women in Cuba prior to the revolution, and of Mexican and Puerto Rican women in the United States at present, Cuban women who emigrated to the United States have had a very high rate of labor force participation (Sullivan 1984). Yolanda Prieto (1987) interviewed a sample of Cuban-born women in New Jersey, a more working-class community than Miami, and concluded that the major determinant of the massive entrance of the women into the labor force was their original social class (cf. Garcia-Castro 1986). These women were middle-class either in their origin or, if working class, in their aspirations. Achieving the upward mobility of the Cuban family in the United States made women’s work necessary and broke with the traditional Cuban notion that a woman’s place is in the home, justifying the massive entrance of women into the labor force.

Indeed, Cuban women overwhelmingly saw work as the opportunity to help the family, rather than as an opportunity for self-actualization. Thus, Myra Max Ferree (1979:48) wrote that Cuban women were an example of employment without liberation. Cubans had apparently stretched the traditional view of women existing for the family to include employment as part of that role, while implying no necessary change in values. Ferree emphasized that the seeming ease with which this occurred ought to cast doubt on cultural explanations for the low labor force participation of Hispanic women (cf. Santana-Cooney & Ortiz 1983, Reimers 1985). However, Lisandro Perez (1988) underscored the need to look at generational differences. The first generation reared in the traditional culture may well view employment as instrumental, but the second generation, more American, might hold a different set of attitudes. Perez’s (1986) research also showed that whereas Cubans have a relatively high family income, they do not compare so favorably in
terms of individual income, pointing to the importance of the dual-income family in the formation of what has come to be known as the Cuban "success story."

Numerous research studies have also examined the labor market outcomes of immigrant women—the occupations and income they attained and the disadvantages reflected in different "payoffs" to their characteristics (e.g. Tienda et al 1984, Sullivan 1984, Boyd 1984, Evans 1984, Lichter 1983). Most of these studies rely on large data sets (such as the censuses or the National Longitudinal Survey), and quantitative analyses, rendering their results persuasive. But, by and large, they suffer from the problem Stacey & Thorne identified as the way sociology has incorporated women: they treat gender as a variable, rather than as a central theoretical principle. Moreover, many of these studies tend to make gross comparisons between all immigrants vs all native-born (e.g. Tienda et al 1984, Maxwell 1988, Morrison & Lichter 1988) that fail to take into account the substantial variation in the causes and consequences of the incorporation of different immigrant groups (e.g. Cubans vs Mexicans) and of the native-born (e.g. whites vs blacks).

**Occupational Concentration**

The concentration of certain immigrant or ethnic groups in particular types of occupations is a central fact that a theory of the incorporation of racial or ethnic groups needs to explain (cf Feagin 1978). Like men, immigrant women became occupationally concentrated but along a much smaller spectrum of choices. Although immigrant women can be found doing the hard labor of construction in some societies (see Lee 1989), most of them cluster in just a few occupations. They become domestic servants, work for the garment industry, donate their labor to family enterprises, or most recently, work in highly skilled service occupations, such as nursing.

**DOMESTIC SERVICE** As Mary Garcia-Castro (1986) emphasized, migration has different meanings for married women with or without children than for single women. Diner specified that the major consequence of the predominantly female and single nature of the Irish migration was that Irish women overwhelmingly entered domestic service, an occupation in which there was a "labor vacuum" because others did not want it. Native, Anglo-Saxon Protestant women considered that type of work demeaning. Other immigrant or poor women, most of whom were married, found that the expectation that they live in interfered with family life. While the work, indeed, lacked authority, Diner stressed the advantages it held for poor women. The work environment was healthier and safer than that of a factory; the job allowed women to be employed, unlike the men, at times of severe economic recession; the environment exposed the women faster to middle-
class standards and lifestyles, promoting their Americanization; and, above all, it allowed women to amass savings at an impressive rate. Those savings were used to bring other female relatives over; to send remittances back home that would help the family pay off their farm mortgages; to support the Catholic church and their favorite devotions; to secure the "nest egg" for an American marriage; and to finance their upward mobility by providing the foundation for a small business or an education that would lead them or their daughters into teaching, nursing, or stenography. Thus, Irish women experienced higher rates of social mobility than Irish men. As Donna Gabaccia (1989) noted in her recent review essay, Diner's in-depth study of the women of a particular immigrant group is the sort of research needed before going on to attempt synthetic comparisons of various groups of immigrant women over long spans of time (e.g. Weatherford 1986) that result in overly general statements about all who are "foreign and female." However, case studies that remain inconclusive regarding the uniqueness or similarity of that group to others (e.g. Lindstrom-Best 1988) are equally problematic. More in-depth case studies and controlled comparisons of a couple of groups are still needed to lay the foundations for future syntheses.

Numerous other studies focus on immigrant women who overwhelmingly entered domestic service. Evelyn Nakano Glenn's (1986) study of three generations of Japanese Women in domestic service, *Issei, Nisei, War Bride*, depicts domestic service not as the occupational incorporation of single women resulting from both choice and circumstance, but as one of the few occupations open to women of color in American history. Glenn emphasized that the labor market allocates certain types of jobs to certain types of people—by gender, color, and class—reserving unskilled, unprotected, poorly paid jobs for women and people of color. She also examined the changes that did take place over three generations of Japanese women. The first generation immigrated between 1915 and 1924, one of the peak moments in the history of American racism, so they had few options other than agricultural work in the fields or domestic service. The second generation, their children, benefited from a more open society but suffered the vicissitudes and dislocations the internment produced. For some older nisei, the post-war period was one of frustration. Their horizons had expanded with the employment in the internment camp, only to see them shrink again as they were forced subsequently to return to domestic service. The war brides were a more socially heterogeneous cohort and one who, in comparison, suffered less.

**GARMENT INDUSTRY** Among yesterday's immigrants, as well as today's, women became concentrated in the garment industry. This industry relied on a traditional skill that throughout much of the world defined womanhood; and, moreover, it relied on homework and subcontracting, allowing women to
stay at home with their children. This advantage led women to accept low wages and exploitative conditions (Howe 1976). In his study of New York’s garment industry, Roger Waldinger (1986:50) pointed out that, starting in the late nineteenth century, a market for ready-made mass-produced women’s clothing was created by urbanization, the development of a national market, and increasing population. New York became the leading center of the garment industry, its growth spurred by the arrival of massive waves of immigrants, in particular Russian Jews and Italians. The Jews and Italians flowed into the city just at the time when the demand for ready-to-wear began to surge. Since many of the Russian Jews had previously developed skills in the needle trades, garments quickly became the Jewish trade. As Waldinger noted (1986:51), “among the Jews, the garment shop was an employer of both men and women. Men went into coats and suits, the staple items of the garment business up to 1910. Shirtwaists, undergarments, and children’s clothes, the lighter trades that developed after 1900, became the province of Jewish immigrant women.” Puerto Rican immigrant women also became concentrated in the garment industry (Sanchez-Korrol 1983). Immigrant women worked either in factories or as homeworkers. The availability of an immigrant labor force—poor, industrious, and lacking in other skills—made the development of a new system of production possible. Waldinger (1986:51) specified that the industry adapted itself to the newcomers by having them work for smaller subcontractors, who often housed their factories in the tenements where the immigrants lived. The subcontractors formed a convenient intermediary between the newly arrived working class and the established manufacturers, with the subcontractors specializing in recruiting and mobilizing labor. Thus “the tendency to divide functions between manufacturing and contracting has remained a distinctive feature of the industry up to this day.” This feature has always depended on the availability of women immigrants who preferred working in the home in order to care for and supervise their children. Women immigrants also played a critical role in the achievement of unionization in the industry (Howe 1976). Today, immigrant women newly arrived from Latin America and Asia continue to supply the labor for the garment industry (e.g. Pessar 1984, Safa 1984).

Maria Patricia Fernandez-Kelly & Anna Garcia (in press) compared the superficially similar work of Mexican and Cuban women in the Los Angeles and Miami garment industries to elucidate the contrasting interaction of ethnicity, class, and gender. At stake were two very different processes of labor market attachment of immigrant groups and power relations within the family. Mexican immigration to the United States is the sustained migration of unskilled and semiskilled replacement labor, while the Cuban migration to the United States is the migration of skilled Cuban political refugees that led to the creation of an ethnic enclave in Miami (Portes & Bach 1985). Thus,
Mexican women immigrants worked in the garment industry due to the long-term financial need generated by their husbands' inadequate earnings, or the total loss of male support due to illness, death, or abandonment that turned these women into heads of households. Hence, their work in the garment industry has been the imperative posed by survival. By contrast, Cuban women immigrants worked in the garment industry as a transitory experience aimed at recovering the family's lost middle-class level of living by helping their husbands become self-employed in business. Different types of male-female power relations in the family were also implicated. Fernandez-Kelly and Garcia emphasized that the disillusionment that Mexican women experienced with men could lead them to aspire to personal fulfillment and independence. However, those aspirations could only be thwarted by their poverty. In the case of Cuban women, once their family's aspirations for a middle-class level of living was achieved, men pressured their wives to stop working outside the home. Husbands had only allowed their wives to have a job out of necessity. While the study does not take into account that the experience of work perforce changes those traditional definitions of gender and family roles (cf. Pessar 1986), it does underline the necessity to apprehend how ethnicity, class, and gender interact.

Another comparative study of women immigrants in the garment industry is Louise Lamphere's (1987) historical comparison, *From Working Daughters to Working Mothers*. At the turn of the century, most employed women were young, unmarried, lived at home, and their wages helped support working-class families. In the Central Falls, Rhode Island, town on which she focused her research, the girls were from French Canadian, Irish, English, Scottish, and Polish backgrounds and worked in textile mills. In recent years, most employed women have been married with small children, and came from Portugal and Colombia. Thus, the decline of the female labor force from one composed of working daughters to one composed of working mothers was intertwined with the history of immigration as well as with the transformation of industrial manufacturing over time. Throughout, Lamphere gives equal attention to women's lives in the textile mill (productive labor) and at home (reproductive labor), and to their strategies of resistance, accommodation, and consent.

ETHNIC ENTERPRISE Immigrant women also make an invaluable contribution to the development of immigrant enterprises. Ethnic enterprise—the occupational concentration of certain immigrant groups in small-business—describes the historical immigrant experience, such as that of Jews and Chinese in the early part of the century. Today, Koreans are a clear case of the same process. Self-employment bears a relationship to the incidence of poverty: Groups that exhibited high rates of self-employment also exhibited
low rates of poverty, of which the Jewish-American experience is the prototype.

Ivan Light (1979, 1984) has underscored the immigrant nature of ethnic enterprise by suggesting that the disadvantages immigrants face in competing in the new labor market (due to their inability to speak the language, foreign credentials, or racial discrimination) may push them into self-employment. Yet, as Light (1984:198-99) himself acknowledged, disadvantage cannot be the whole explanation of this phenomenon, because the foreign-born have higher rates of self-employment than do most disadvantaged ethnic minorities, especially blacks. What accounted for this disparity, Light concluded, was that immigrants were not simply disadvantaged, but had shared the common experience of migration, which in turn produced a reactive group solidarity that did not exist prior to migration. Thus, immigrants who sought out self-employment in reaction to what Aldrich et al called "occupational closure" (1984) could draw on the resource of access to cheap family and ethnic labor. The unpaid family labor donated by women is what allows immigrants to amass profits and turn them into savings that are reinvested in the development and growth of family businesses. Thus, women's contribution is the key to the success of these enterprises and to the achievement of the petit bourgeois class position (Phizacklea 1983).

"BRAIN DRAIN" Despite the growing importance today of flows of skilled and highly educated immigrants that enter the primary labor market (cf Portes 1981), this area of immigration studies is underresearched. Thus, although women figure importantly as technicians, teachers, doctors, and nurses, most studies to date only chronicle the number of women exiting different countries (e.g. Mejia et al 1979). Eui Han Shin & Kyung-Sup Chang's (1988) study of how Korean immigrant physicians are articulated into the American medical profession found that women physicians were much more likely to immigrate to the United States than men. Moreover, while all immigrant physicians were more likely to enter the peripheral specialties of American medicine, gender contributed significantly to that peripheralization.

The Public and the Private

WORK AND FAMILY As a result of the recent incorporation of women into the field of history, a shift has taken place from writing histories that were only about the public sphere to histories that are also about the private sphere and the relationship between public and private. Research on immigrant women, therefore, needs to chronicle both the private world of immigrant women and their community, and the contribution immigrant women made to the private sphere for native middle-class women and their families. A good example of the former is Sydney Weinberg's (1988) The World of Our Mothers, so deliberately a corrective to Irving Howe's (1976) The World of
Our Fathers on the Jewish immigrant experience in New York city at the turn of the century. A good example of the latter is Matthews' (1987) analysis of Just a Housewife: The Rise and Fall of Domesticity in America.

The lives of Jewish immigrant women, centered on the domestic sphere, differed from the lives of men, defined by work and the synagogue. Weinberg took the oral histories of 46 of these women to portray their daily lives. Piety played an important part, with ritual and ceremony marking their daily actions as they kept an Orthodox home. Being a Talmudic scholar was not an option open to women, but women presided over the domestic religion. Education was also highly valued, and a good woman normatively made sacrifices to help her husband and sons become scholars. Indeed, contrary to other cultural traditions, it was not unusual for women to work outside the home as garment workers, or as landladies, or as helpers with the family business for their families' benefit. Moreover, immigrant women played a mediating role between the old world and the new. Immigration exposed daughters to the ways of a modern, secular world they were eager to accept. Although mothers themselves clung to traditional, Orthodox ways, within the family these women played the role of mediators between fathers and daughters. As Weinberg (1988:148) emphasized, we might not easily understand today the satisfactions of those who lived for and through others, but the services and sacrifices of these mothers left a deep impression on their daughters.

DOMESTICITY The labor that immigrant women supplied as servants contributed to the changing role of the housewife in America. Matthews (1987) pointed out that the cult of domesticity arose in the early to mid-nineteenth century among middle class women because the availability of domestic servants allowed time for the development of the arts of baking and needlework. Time became more abundant also because of changing attitudes about the allocation of tasks between mistress and maid. While, historically, women had relied on other women as "help," and worked side by side with them on domestic chores, from the 1820s on, "domestic servants" that required supervision replaced the "help"—a change that was facilitated by the increasing number of poor immigrant women coming to America. However, by the late nineteenth century a "servant problem" developed because by this time servants tended to be drawn from the ranks of the lowly and despised, especially the Irish. In the South, of course, servants were black. Matthews documents that the relationship between mistress and maid changed when ethnic and religious differences became so much more marked than was the case when migrant farm girls provided the domestic help.

MARITAL SATISFACTION The seasonal migration that some women were involved in constantly exposed them to "double lives" in two societies and cultures. Sylvia Guendelman & Auristela Perez-Itriago (1987:250) found that
the impact of migration was experienced very differently by working and nonworking women since work had “particularly strong repercussions in aligning marital relationships.” For example, immigrant Mexican women who worked outside the home for wages tended to establish cooperative roles with their husbands, sharing power, decision-making, and activities, whereas women who did not work became increasingly dependent on their husbands to help them negotiate the host society. However, when the working women who had established cooperative relationships returned to Mexico, a shift took place from cooperative to separate roles as their husbands regained the dominant position in the family’s relationships with the outside world and became uninvolved in childrearing and domestic duties. Thus, the distance between spouses increased. By contrast, when the nonworking women who had grown increasingly dependent on their husbands in the United States returned to Mexico, they experienced improved psychological health and reported liberating feelings of release. Guendelman and Perez-Itriago astutely utilized seasonal migration as the underpinning of their research design to show the impact of work on both marital roles and satisfaction.

RELIGIOSITY The deeply felt needs of immigrant women also found expression in their popular religious tradition. In his analysis of the devotion Italian immigrants poured onto The Madonna of 115th Street, Robert Orsi (1985:204–5) underscored that while the Madonna came from Italy with the immigrants, and as such was a symbol to all Italian immigrants of nation, history, and tradition, above all she was a woman’s devotion—both because women were its main participants and because “it emerged out of and reflected the special role and position of women in Italian culture.” In Italian Harlem, the Madonna also became an expression of the lives of immigrant women as these women turned to the Madonna with petitions for help with the hardship and powerlessness of their lives—as women bound by a strong, patriarchal tradition, and as immigrants mired in poverty, toil, and trouble. That private relation became public at the annual festa, when both men and women participated as a community, that served to regenerate their culture as Italians and to console them for the physical and spiritual trials of immigration.

MENTAL HEALTH The rupture, separation, and loss that is part of any migration affects the mental health of all immigrants, but women experience it differently from men. As Rogler et al (1987) formulated it, migration induces deep and continuous strains that come from the difficulties encountered in entering a new economic system and culture, and changing one’s personal ties. To this, Vega et al (1987) and Rumbaut (1989) added the circumstances of leaving one’s country of origin and the trauma of the passage
itself. These strains are reflected in the immigrants' mental health—psychological distress or depression. Between the strains migration induces and the distress immigrants feel are life-event changes (e.g. coping styles, social support networks) that shape the immigrants’ adaptation. Mental health research tends to be quantitative with several standard scales in wide use (e.g. the CES-Depression Scale). In her study of Mexican immigrant women, V. Nelly Salgado de Snyder (1987) developed an Acculturative Stress scale that showed the much higher stress women experienced than men.

The first in-depth empirical study of the refugee experience is Rumbaut's (1989) study of 750 Indochinese refugees (Vietnamese, Khmer, Hmong, Chinese-Vietnamese, Laotian). Rumbaut focused on the different effects the refugee experience had on women and men (see also Kay 1988). For example, for men the death of close family members significantly predicted their depression, while for women it was separation from close family members, especially if these had been imprisoned. For women, having relatives living in the house decreased their depression, underscoring the buffering effects of family support, while for men it was being married and having close Indochinese friends. Moreover, women were found to play a pivotal role in the refugee family, influencing the economic and psychological adaptation of all its members.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

As we have shown, gender plays a central role in the decision to migrate and the composition of the migration flows, with the consequences that composition holds for the subsequent form of immigrant incorporation. The experience of immigration also profoundly impacts the public and private lives of women—their labor force participation, their occupational concentration, their religiosity, their marital roles and satisfaction, and their autonomy and self-esteem. Hence, we can see that the experience of immigration holds different benefits for women than for men (cf Kats 1982). Diner's portrayal of Irish women clearly leads to the conclusion that the experience of immigration was quite beneficial for these women, making us see the Irish migration as more "successful" than otherwise. More often than not, women realized their ambitions and aspirations and had better opportunities than the men. They became educated earlier and with more gusto, and by and large they "Americanized" more thoroughly and more enthusiastically. Nancy Foner's (1978) study of Jamaican women in London also noted that, difficult as the experience of immigration was, it was often far more positive for women than for men, as it allowed women to break with traditional roles and patterns of dependence and assert a new-found (if meager) freedom. Patricia Pessar's (1984) study of Dominican women immigrants suffers from too small a
sample size but is suggestive. Pessar notes that when women who had previously not worked in the Dominican Republic went for the first time to work outside the home in the United States, this change had other important effects. Patriarchal roles in the household were transformed, the women's self-esteem was heightened, their capacity to participate as equals in household decision-making was enhanced, and they secured more income with which to actualize their roles. However, the employment did not provide women with a new status as working women that challenged or subordinated their primary identities as wives and mothers. Rather, it often reinforced these very identities as it allowed women to redefine them in a more satisfying manner than prior to the migration.

Throughout this review I have highlighted the recurrent problem of, on the one hand, highly suggestive studies that rely on small, often unrepresentative samples, rendering interesting ideas and conclusions open to question, and, on the other hand, studies where the sample sizes are large and representative and their findings, therefore, persuasive, but which treat gender as a variable, rather than as a central organizing principle. This is a methodological problem that the social sciences need to confront head on. Perhaps immigration research, due to its intrinsically interdisciplinary nature, is the arena in which to do so.

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