

Transnational Migration: Bringing Gender In

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This article aims to bring gender into an even tighter transnational migration focus by broadening and deepening our original framework of “gendered geographies of power,” linking it more directly to existing and emerging scholarship. We examine and highlight previously neglected areas such as the role of the state and the social imaginary in gendering transnational processes and experiences. We identify topics that remain under-appreciated, under-researched, and/or under-theorized. Finally, we initiate a discussion of how a gendered analysis of transnational migration can help bridge this particular research to other gendered transnational processes under study that do not privilege migration.

Gender is one of the oldest, if not the oldest, forces shaping human life and, accordingly, it influences migration and migrants’ lives. Nonetheless, gender has been regularly sidelined in scholarly research on international migration over the past 100 years. The same pattern holds, regrettably, for the more recent breakthroughs in migration studies led by early proponents of the transnational framework (Basch *et al.*, 1994; Glick Schiller *et al.*, 1992). Although a few scholars noted this omission early on (*e.g.*, Kearney, 1995; Sutton, 1992), we have been disturbed by the overall inattentiveness displayed over “bringing gender in” to this promising body of research. Our intervention began in 1996 and has culminated in a framework we call “gendered geographies of power,” as detailed below.

In this article, we aim to bring gender into an even tighter transnational focus by broadening and deepening our original framework (*see* Mahler and Pessar, 2001) and by linking it more directly to existing and emerging scholarship. We push beyond the current boundaries of our inquiry and understanding by examining and highlighting previously neglected areas such as the role of the state and the social imaginary in gendering transnational processes and experiences. We identify topics that remain under-appreciated, under-researched, and/or under-theorized. Finally, we initiate a discussion of

how a gendered analysis of transnational migration can help bridge this particular research to other gendered transnational processes under study that do not privilege migration. In short, our goal for this article is to take stock of what scholars have accomplished to date and assess what still needs to be done – for the work of bringing gender and migration to a transnational focus is far from finished.

BACKGROUND ON GENDER AND GENDER IN MIGRATION SCHOLARSHIP

Although a common practice in immigration research, we do not use “gender” synonymously with “sex.” Sex is best reserved as a simple dichotomous variable: male versus female. Gender is much more complex and involves the ways in which cultures imbue this biological difference with meaning such as demarcating between male and female domains in activities, tasks, spaces, time, dress and so on.¹ People are enculturated to view these distinctions as natural, inevitable and immutable, not as human constructs (*see* Ferree *et al.*, 1999; Glenn, 1999; Kandiyoti, 1988; Lorber, 1994). But conceptualizing gender also as a process, as one of several ways humans create and perpetuate social differences, helps to deconstruct this myth (*e.g.*, Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1999; Lorber, 1994; Ortner, 1996). People do “gender work”; through gendered practices and discourses they reproduce and/or contest hierarchies of power and privilege. Conceptualizing gender as a process yields a more praxis-oriented perspective wherein gender identities, relations and ideologies are fluid, not fixed.

However, gender should also be understood “simultaneously as a *structure*, that is, a latticework of institutionalized social relationships that, by creating and manipulating the categories of gender, organize and signify power at levels above the individual” (Ferree *et al.*, 1999:xix, emphasis in the original). Recognizing that gender becomes embedded in institutions lays the foundation as well for analyzing the structural factors that condition gender relations in addition to ideological factors. “[M]ajor areas of life – including sexuality, family, education, economy, and the state – are organized according to gender principles and shot through with conflicting interests and hierarchies of power and privilege” (Glenn, 1999:5).

¹There have been many advances in our understanding of gender that, given space limitations, we unfortunately cannot summarize here. Rather, our discussion is aimed at providing readers with a roadmap to our conceptualization of gender and, in particular, ensuring a distinction between sex and gender.

"The invisibility of women in international migration scholarship does not correspond to the reality of international migration. Women migrate across international boundaries at approximately the same rate as men" (DeLaet, 1999:13), yet this fact did not translate into commensurate research attention until around twenty years ago. The interface between gender and migration scholarship has been problematic for many years, even though over a century ago the pioneer theorist of international migration, E.G. Ravenstein, noted that "woman is a greater migrant than man" (Ravenstein, 1885:196). Despite Ravenstein's early observation, most twentieth century research up through the early 1970s focused almost exclusively on male migrants, while women were presumed to play passive roles as companions (a position critiqued by Pessar, 1986 and by Brettell and deBerjeois, 1992). Some scholars acknowledged their bias, justifying it in the name of greater simplicity (Berger and Mohr, 1975), while for others the exclusion was never addressed (Handlin, 1951). Though there were exceptions to this rule (*e.g.*, Warner and Srole, 1945), the research bias continued well into the 1980s (*e.g.*, Portes and Bach, 1985). In the 1970s and 1980s, however, scholarship with a more feminist angle produced multiple publications that documented the predominance of women in migratory flows (*e.g.*, Donato, 1992; Morokvasic, 1984; Ong, 1991; Pedraza, 1991), making the exclusion of women in research on migration untenable.

The initial corrective, however, simply redressed the male bias by adding women; in other words, by treating gender largely as the variable sex. There is now a sizeable body of empirical studies aimed at redressing this tradition of male bias (*inter alia* Buijs, 1993; Morokvasic, 1984; Phizacklea, 1983; Simon and Brettell, 1986). Indeed, the pendulum shifted so far in the opposite direction that the male migrant as study subject disappeared almost to the same degree as the female migrant had previously. Both omissions are objectionable, and both missed the more important theoretical innovation of treating gender less as a variable and more as a central concept for studying migration. Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo argued the latter succinctly when in 1994 she wrote:

Gender is not simply a variable to be measured, but a set of social relations that organize immigration patterns. The task, then, is not simply to document or highlight the presence of undocumented women who have settled in the United States, or to ask the same questions of immigrant women that are asked of immigrant men, but to begin with an examination of how gender relations [which are exercised in relational and dynamic ways] facilitate or constrain both women's *and* men's immigration and settlement (p. 3, emphasis in the original).

Hondagneu-Sotelo was among the first to apply the advancements in gender theory to the study of migration, and this fortuitous convergence occurred around the time that the transnational migration paradigm was forming. Consequently, a few years later we authors became disturbed to find the historical tendency to marginalize gender repeated in much of the research and theorizing on transnational migration. In 1996, we began our involvement by organizing a panel on gender and transnational migration at the American Ethnological Association meetings, and this was followed by several workshops, additional panels, and a call for papers that culminated in the publication of a special volume of the journal, *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* (Mahler and Pessar, 2001). The goal of this volume was to encourage scholars to interrogate how gender relations are negotiated across national borders among migrant women and men and how gender articulates transnationally with other modes of identity as well. We found this task to be daunting, for most research – including our own – addresses these profound processes at best impartially. Moreover, the literature was so scarce that by necessity we could not limit the volume's papers to examples of transnational migration in a strict sense. Rather, we included several researchers' work involving transnational contexts of which migration was a feature but not necessarily a definitive force behind the negotiation of gender relations across borders. Nonetheless, the papers and the process we went through to encourage and facilitate their writing assisted us in developing a theoretical framework we call "Gendered Geographies of Power" that we feel facilitates a more nuanced transnational examination of how gender articulates with migration. We now turn to a description of this framework, followed by several sections devoted to its expansion and deepening.

GENDERED GEOGRAPHIES OF POWER: A FRAMEWORK FOR EXAMINING GENDER ACROSS TRANSNATIONAL SPACES

Our conceptual framework is composed of three fundamental elements, each of which we will discuss in turn: "geographic scales," "social locations" and "power geometries." The first building block we identify by the spatial term "geographies" to capture our understanding that gender operates simultaneously on multiple spatial and social scales (*e.g.*, the body, the family, the state) across transnational terrains. It is both within the context of particular scales as well as between and among them that gender ideologies and relations are reaffirmed, reconfigured or both. This piece of our model we refer to as "geographic scales."

The analytical construct of “social location” is the second component of our model. By social location, we refer to persons’ positions within interconnected power hierarchies created through historical, political, economic, geographic, kinship-based and other socially stratifying factors. For the most part, people are born into a social location that confers on them certain advantages and disadvantages. For example, a typical child born in Great Britain enjoys a birthright quite distinct from a baby born in Somalia. But hierarchies are not built just at the national or supra-national level. Rather, hierarchies of class, race, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality and, of course, gender operate at various levels that affect an individual or group’s social location. In other words, multiple dimensions of identity also shape, discipline, and position people and the ways they think and act. We imagine a social location continuum from most disadvantaged to most privileged and locate people in different sites along it, roughly identifying the places and predicaments from which they may take action. Social locations must be viewed as fluid, not fixed, for people’s social locations can and usually do shift over time. In sum, our model takes as its foundation the obvious but not always stated fact that people – irrespective of their own efforts – are situated within power hierarchies that they have not constructed.

The third building block in our conceptual framework directs attention to the types and degrees of agency people exert given their social locations – hence our focus on gendered geographies of power. For this we turn to the helpful concept of “power geometry” introduced by Doreen Massey (1994:149). Similar to the observations we have made above, Massey argues that the particular conditions of modernity that have produced time-space compression place people in very distinct locations regarding access to and power over flows and interconnections between places. She then takes this observation a step further by foregrounding agency. That is, people exert power over these forces and processes as well as being affected by them. Some individuals, Massey tells us:

initiate flows and movement, others don’t; some are more on the receiving-end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it. [There are] groups who are really in a sense in charge of time-space compression, who can really use it and turn it to advantage, whose power and influence it very definitely increases [such as media moguls and the business elite]...but there are also groups who are also doing a lot of physical moving, but who are not ‘in charge’ of the process in the same way at all. The refugees from El Salvador or Guatemala [for instance] (p. 149).

There are also those who do not move at all yet feel the effects of time-space

compression, and there are others who both contribute to this condition and are imprisoned by it. Denise Brennan's (2001) recent study of Dominican sex workers, for example, nicely illustrates how these women contribute to a German, and indeed international, sexual aesthetic, yet almost never get the opportunity to see Germany themselves. This despite their aspirations of using the sex trade as a means to snare a husband and a much coveted visa to Europe.

Massey helps us, then, to see not only how people's social locations affect their access to resources and mobility across transnational spaces, but also their agency as initiators, refiners and transformers of these locations. The analytical construct of a "power geometry" demands that we examine not only what actually flows into and across transnational spaces but also who controls the production, content and directionality of these flows. An example is remittances. Hundreds of billions of dollars are remitted annually around the world, but we know little of their effects on the lives of everyday people. Our framework requires not only that studies of remittances chart the magnitude of the flows and the ways they are invested, as most work on remittances to date focuses on (for a review, *see* Russell, 1986), but also the social relations negotiated between remitters and recipients, relations which tend to be gendered though this is rarely acknowledge or studied. Who sends remittances and what stipulations, if any, are placed on their use? Who receives them and what power do they have, if any, over the amount and frequency sent? What effect does this seemingly economic relationship have on gender relations, on gendered divisions of labor, etc.? There are clues in the literature published to date (*e.g.*, Boyd, 1989; Glick Schiller and Fouron, 2001; Kyle, 1995; Mahler, 2001; Peleikis, 2000; Richman, forthcoming; Schafer, 2000; van Santen and Schaafsma, 2000), but no systematic answers to these profound questions.

To Massey's "power geometry" and our "social location" and "geographic scales" we add two final dimensions to complete our framework. First, we view agency as affected not only by extra-personal factors but also by quintessentially individual characteristics such as initiative. Thus, two people may hail from equally (dis)advantageous social locations but one – owing to her own resourcefulness – will exert more influence than the other. And second, we argue that the social agency we are interested in must include the role of cognitive processes, such as the imagination, as well as substantive agency. Much of what people actually do transnationally is foregrounded by imaging, planning and strategizing (Appadurai, 1990); these must be valued and factored into people's agency. Despite the many advances in the transnational migration framework to date, the contributions of the social imaginary or "mindwork" are still largely ignored. This oversight is likely a consequence of the difficulties inherent in

measuring cognitive agency. However, there are cases where people may not take any transnational actions that can be objectively measured (the latter exemplified by, for example, remitting funds, writing letters or joining transnational organizations), yet live their lives in a transnational cognitive space that does have measurable effects. A concrete example would be youth who envision themselves as becoming migrants to such a degree that they stop attending school, seeing very little utility in education if they become workers overseas (Hendricks, 1974). Perhaps they do migrate at a later date, translating their imagination into reality, but even if they never realize their dreams the fact that they leave school cannot be fully understood without reference to their imagined lives as migrants. To get at these issues we need different sources of data than those we traditionally gather in transnational research; we need, for example, letters, e-mails and phone conversations, and we need to ask agents in transnational contexts about their thoughts, visions and fantasies.

To summarize, “gendered geographies of power” is a framework for analyzing people’s gendered social agency – corporal and cognitive – given their own initiative as well as their positioning within multiple hierarchies of power operative within and across many terrains. Though this framework is not only applicable to transnational contexts, we feel it is especially useful for analyzing these contexts in light of their complexities. Thus, we can utilize a gendered geography of power framework to map the historically particularistic circumstances that a given group of people experience and be able to analyze them on multiple levels. However, we can also contemplate a more comparative approach wherein different groups are located vis-à-vis macro-level processes, such as the proliferation of off-shore production or the global dissemination of human rights discourses and institutions, a task we return to at the end of this article. The gendered geographies of power framework is intended to aid case and comparative study research and analysis of gender (and its articulation with other socially constructed identities) across transnational spaces. Since the original publication of our framework in 2001, we have scoured the literature and engaged in spirited analysis and dialogue with the objective of improving its formulation. We turn to these advancements now, though, at the outset, we acknowledge our work as still incomplete.

IMPROVING THE FRAMEWORK: GENDERED GEOGRAPHIC SCALES AND THE STATE

Gender is imagined and lived across multiple social and spatial scales. The disciplining force and seeming immutability of any given gender regime is

reinforced through repetitions in the ways in which gender is embedded and reenacted between and among these scales. Important questions emerge when geographic scales are distributed across transnational space. Does this multiplication and dispersal produce even greater opportunities for the reinforcement of prevailing gender ideologies and norms? Conversely, does transnational migration provide openings for men and women to question hegemonic notions of gender and to entertain competing understandings of gendered lives? If the latter proves, at least sometimes, to be the case, we should inquire whether the changes observed were emergent prior to migration, or if they would not have occurred in the absence of migration.

To assess this we must first be mindful that when addressing issues of power and matters of when, where, and by whom hegemonic gender regimes are reinforced or challenged, not all the geographical scales in which gender is imagined and practiced carry equal weight. The research currently available reveals that the state assumes a key role both in the gendered lives of immigrant² and refugee (hereafter only “immigrant”) men and women and in the production of cultural genres that emulate or challenge their everyday lives. This observation challenges conventional treatments of women/gender and migration that tend to focus on the household and the workplace, while remaining largely silent on the workings of the state. By contrast, the state has been privileged as a unit of analysis in studies of transnational migration while gender has largely been sidelined (Basch *et al.*, 1994; Kearney, 1991). A gendered geography of power framework calls upon us to bring gender and the state fully into our analysis of transnational migration.

Luin Goldring’s (2001) research on gender in Mexican-U.S. transnational spaces is one of the few examples in which gender and the state are studied simultaneously. She finds that the activities of immigrant hometown associations are frequently mediated by the Mexican state. Its representatives hold the hegemonic notion that citizenship is predominately a male domain (*see also* Ong, 1993). Put bluntly, the state favors men. Migrant women play essential roles in the fundraising necessary to execute development projects in their hometowns. However, they typically are deprived access to the increased power and social capital that accrue to male hometown association participants because decisionmaking and project implementation are perceived as male prerogatives, both by the men in the associations and, more importantly, by the state that co-sponsors and shepherds the projects to fruition. This

² Following Rouse (1995), we find the terms “immigrant” and “emigrant” one-directional and therefore problematic for use in association with transnational migration contexts.

transnational exclusion has multiple, gendered consequences. According to Goldring, their exclusion reinforces some women's resolve to pursue political rights and entitlements within institutions in the United States, viewing them as more receptive to women's needs and struggles. This, in turn, has important consequences for men's and women's views about long-term or permanent settlement in the United States. Women favor staying in the United States while men prefer returning to Mexico where their status – as negotiated via transnational projects often in collusion with different levels of the Mexican state – is usually higher than it can be in the United States. Such outcomes cannot be adequately understood without a framework that considers gendered scales distributed across multiple geographical spaces (in this case, households, migrant hometown associations, social service agencies, neighborhood coalitions, and the state). Yet these outcomes could easily be overlooked and reduced to the simple, empirical observation that women merely show up in greater numbers or in greater leadership capacities in U.S.-based organizations than in hometown associations.

Like Goldring, Patricia Pessar's (2001) study of Guatemalan refugees and returnees operates simultaneously on multiple gendered geographic scales. She explores how contexts as diverse as bodies, states and refugee camps became strategic sites for struggles over women's and men's human rights and citizenship. Although she is careful to map how power was distributed within and contested among multiple scales, her findings reveal the dominance of state actors and institutions. Pessar observes that after having earlier had their bodies and homes violated in Guatemala by agents of the state, many women in refugee camps were particularly receptive to the global discourse proffered by international agencies working in the camps that women's rights are human rights and that the personal is political. The women refugees began to reflect critically on the strict boundaries drawn between male/public and female/private spheres in their homeland and in refugee lives, and they began to question the state's "official truth." Women queried, "If they say we are mothers who should be respected, and yet treat us and our daughters with rape and torture, who are these men who sexualize us, soil us, and degrade us?" (Schirmer, 1993:63). Empowered by the symbols of an alternative, globalized gender ideology and by support from powerful members of international organizations (*e.g.*, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) and from feminist and solidarity groups, many Guatemalan refugee women returned home triumphant in the early 1990s. They were confident that they could successfully repatriate new ideas and practices regarding gender parity. What the women and their international

supporters failed to anticipate and prepare for were the countervailing pressures exerted by a highly patriarchal Guatemalan state. State officials proved adept at courting male refugee leaders, many of whom proved only too eager to renege on previous agreements at power sharing. With the state's blessing and internationals' apparent acquiescence, many males reassumed their undisputed status as official community leaders and sole owners of family and community properties. Despite their setbacks in the public domain of gendered rights and ideologies, women are still striving for their ideals in their homes. In the gendered geographies of returnee households, traces of gender equity informed by human rights and feminist ideologies appear to have taken hold. Perhaps the task of refashioning the "public sphere" along more equitable lines will fall, in part, to the children currently being socialized in these homes.

The strategic intersection between gendered bodies and the state leads, in other case studies, not only to raising victims' awareness of human rights violations, but also to struggling with authorities over official recognition. Jacqueline Bhabha (1996), for example, traces alternative ways in which Iranian female asylum seekers' "intimate" behaviors and violations to their bodies are constituted and contested within that discursive and legal domain pitting universal rights against cultural relativism and state sovereignty. As her discussion of the changing fates of these women makes clear, this is a universe in which women's claims based on violations of sexual and reproductive rights are regulated by restrictionist immigration pressures and partisan foreign policy agendas. Her work reminds us of Joan Fitzpatrick's (1997:44) observation that, "In an ironic coincidence, just as the theoretical legitimacy of gender-based persecution claims is being accepted, reception states are erecting onerous barriers to access to their systems for asylum adjudication."

Scholars who employ a transnational paradigm are well positioned to explore how states' policies, in tandem or in opposition to international human rights and feminist discourses and organizations, help shape immigrants' and refugees' experiences both in the host country and the country of origin. In one of the few studies to address such matters, Rachel Silvey (1999) notes that her female Indonesian informants' narratives of their sexual victimization improved the likelihood they would win their cases. Men, on the other hand, found their testimonials of sexual victimization dismissed and were consequently forced to rely on "more generic" human rights claims. This unevenhandedness by the state has driven a wedge between these women and men, negatively impacting the women's ability to rally their male counter-

parts to convince activists back in Indonesia to include women's rights and sexual abuse within the nation's human rights platform. Most human rights activists in Indonesia counter that the female asylees have been "tainted" by American gender norms wholly inappropriate to Indonesian society.

When gender is envisioned and practiced within and across different scales and transnational spaces, we often find examples of inconsistencies and contradictions. A wonderful example of how patriarchy is both challenged and buttressed by transnational migrants' actions across geographic space and scales of agency is found in an article by Georges Fournon and Nina Glick Schiller (2001). They document how Haitian immigrant women often gain power and prestige among nonmigrant family members and friends through the remittances they send home. These same remittances, however, are a major source of Haiti's foreign exchange, disproportionately financing the Haitian elites' ability to retain power. These elites, in turn, sustain the patriarchal structures embedded within their nation-building project: structures that systematically limit women's access to political power and secure employment. These institutional structures, in turn, are criticized and challenged by feminist organizations founded by returnee women. At times these organizations have been embraced by the Haitian state, as when President Aristide created the Ministry of the Feminine Condition in 1991, and at times they have been thwarted.

IMPROVING THE FRAMEWORK: SOCIAL LOCATIONS AND THEIR EFFECTS ON AGENCY

As noted earlier, when we speak of social locations we refer to how people are positioned within power hierarchies created through historical, political, economic, geographic, kinship-based and other socially stratifying factors. In other words, the playing field is not level for all participants, and this is particularly true for international migrants whose desire for and actual border crossings initiate them into new power hierarchies.

One hundred years ago, the prevailing pattern of international migration was the lone, rugged male who left his family behind in the homeland as he ventured across seas to seek his fortune, hoping to return to them after achieving success. Though the sex ratio of international migrants shifted over time and indeed women slightly outnumber men in most migrations since the mid-twentieth century (Ong, 1991; Pedraza, 1991; Phizacklea, 1983), the lone male stereotype has endured. Our intervention is not to slay the stereotype but to underscore a subtle corollary, *viz.*, that not everyone enjoys the same ability to migrate or legal status after migration.

In early scholarship on transnational migrants, as Mahler (1998) has already identified, corporal mobility across borders was presumed to be the defining characteristic of the transnational migrant. We are uncomfortable with this assumption because it disregards the fact that people who live in transnational social fields do not enjoy equal access to migration; people's ability to physically migrate is constrained by their social location. In other words, gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, class, sexuality and so on shape and discipline people's ability to move and how they think about and act toward migration. Thus, we are not satisfied by merely counting the movers and the stayers; we want to understand how gender controls options available to individuals and to groups, determining who stays and who moves – how often, when, where and why.

Moreover, we need to address whether or not gender factors into people's post-migration lives. There is ample evidence to suggest that it does; for example, existing gendered patterns of undocumented migration became codified into gendered patterns of legal migration during the legalization program of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 in the United States. In certain cases, such as Mexicans and Salvadorans, legalization favored men because they were more qualified to apply owing to their earlier arrival. As they acquired legal status, these men's opportunities improved while their undocumented wives' opportunities stagnated as they waited for their husbands to petition for their visas. In other cases, where women dominated the undocumented flows, these chains of dependency were reversed, but in neither case are we aware of their consequences.

Our notion of social location does not stop when we have addressed issues of mobility; on the contrary, we take this as a beginning point. People whose webs of kin and friends stretch across vast distances and international borders continue to negotiate gender across these divides. Research to date largely ignores this gender work and the agencies involved; as a consequence, our understanding of these efforts is still very incomplete. We have and continue to entreat scholars to investigate these matters. In the meantime, we have reviewed the existing limited literature – not merely that which is expressly written on transnational migration and gender – to draw inferences. We have identified four recurring themes that are addressed in turn: 1) communicating across borders particularly between spouses; 2) organizing work tasks when laborers are distant; 3) negotiating whether to stay abroad or return home; and 4) what happens when migrants do return home. We caution against premature generalizations regarding the impact of gender on

transnational migration (and return), however. A larger corpus of research, one reaching far beyond the Latin American and Caribbean cases that predominate in the transnational literature today, is needed before making definitive statements. Moreover, we need to conduct studies that follow these processes longitudinally.

Documentation and analysis of the ways gender affects how people – those who migrate and those who do not – conduct their relationships across borders is a subject explored extensively in an earlier paper by Mahler (2001). She studied the wives of Salvadoran migrants who reside in a rural, remote zone of northeastern El Salvador. She chronicles how the gendered processes of war and displacement and, later, the unintended consequences of U.S. immigration legislation (*i.e.*, the state) are the prime factors that have disproportionately benefited male Salvadorans because they predominate in this migration. Women, though many wish to emigrate, are much more physically tethered to El Salvador, where they have become emotionally, economically and materially dependent upon their mobile husbands. Their dependency and their unequal social location is never more apparent than when they try to call their husbands abroad, usually waiting in line for hours to gain access to the few available phones in the isolated study area. The phone company only permits collect calls to the United States. Thus, if the women are fortunate enough to reach their partners, they have to beseech whomever answers to accept their collect phone calls. Their husbands know how expensive these calls are, and they are interested in keeping them as short as possible; meanwhile, the women need to keep them on the line to plead for increased levels of remittance support. It is an emotional drama that underscores how these women's unequal positioning vis-à-vis men along the continuum of social locations – in this case determined largely by migration status and economic standing – shapes their agency.

While the women in Mahler's study use telephone wires stretched across transnational spaces in their bids to better negotiate the physical and social distances between them and their more privileged migrant husbands, the male and female subjects of Karen Richman's (forthcoming) research rely on transnational courier services and recorded cassettes. In rural Haiti, these cassettes are unavoidably played publicly to migrants' family members and neighbors who interact with each other, and the taped voice is as if the speaker were present. This form of transnational communication and the public performances it generates prove to be powerful tools for disciplining nonmigrant wives. In one such case, a recorded denunciation leveled against an

allegedly unfaithful, pregnant wife led to her expulsion from the migrant husband's family compound and a reduction in her already inadequate remittance payments. Yet Richman's study makes the important point that non-migrant wives' disadvantaged social location does not always subject them to increased abuse and disappointment. Indeed, when the same irate husband used a cassette recording to level additional accusations and threats against his wife, this time she was redeemed by one of her husband's aunts. The latter, drawing on locally accepted cultural categories, pronounced the wife's pregnancy to be an example of "arrested" pregnancy. She explained, employing this culturally accepted category, that the baby was her nephew's but that the stresses of his departure and his failure to send adequate remittances to support his family had stopped fetal development. Her intervention shifted blame from wife to husband; in so doing, she also managed to reaffirm men's exclusive rights over their wives' sexuality/fertility and rescue her own nephew from the humiliation of being the "duped" husband and cuckold. At the same time, through her act of "situational feminism," she also rejected the passive victimization of all nonmigrant women. That is, she vindicated the accused by implicitly acknowledging that prostitution was an unfortunate survival strategy necessitated, in this case, by a deadbeat, transnational husband. This account alerts us to the fact that while transnational communication may serve as a tool to discipline nonmigrant wives and to maintain male privilege, it can also occasion situational feminism directed against male migrants who have reneged on the terms of the patriarchal bargain.

A second recurring theme relevant to mapping people's social locations is potential and realized changes in the gendered division of work precipitated by migration. There is repeated evidence that "traditional" rules governing work weaken as nonmigrant women and girls assume the tasks usually performed by the now-emigrant men and boys. This appears to be particularly true in rural areas where females assume male tasks such as farming, gathering firewood, managing large purchases and corporal discipline, especially of older children (*e.g.*, Baca and Bryan, 1985; Ghorayshi, 1998; Hondagneu-Sotelo and Messner, 1994; Kyle, 1995, 2000; Peleikis, 2000; Schafer, 2000; van Santen and Schaafsma, 2000). Similar observations were made much earlier in the foundational work by Ester Boserup and others (Boserup, 1970; Chaney and Lewis, 1980; Tanner, 1974).

Cautionary notes to this now familiar refrain are struck by Mahler (1999a) and Kyle (2000). Mahler found that some stay-behind women reimpose traditional gendered work norms on their returnee husbands, even when

these husbands desire to show their wives that they are willing to share domestic tasks. The man who offers to wash dishes is rebuked. The fact that some men who migrate alone and stay abroad for years learn domestic tasks by necessity and are thus more willing to assist their spouses when reunited in the host country has also been observed by Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994). Conversely, however, when families migrate as units, the men expect their wives to preserve established gender divisions of labor, and women generally oblige even when they work outside the home (Goldring, 1996; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994; Ong, 1993). In his study of Ecuadoran transnational migration to New York City and Europe, Kyle (2000) documents how the overwhelmingly male migrants consciously restrict communication about their lives abroad to their wives left behind in Ecuador. This strict "code of silence" adhered to by men enhances their power over their nonmigrant wives. Thus, though the women take on their husbands' gendered tasks in Ecuador, their empowerment in one arena (work) is mitigated intentionally by their spouses in another arena (sex and fidelity). Aihwa Ong's (1993) depiction of transnational capitalism orchestrated by "Overseas Chinese" (mainly from Hong Kong) portrays yet another alternative for reproducing patriarchy transnationally. Overseas men, referred to as "astronauts," are constantly in orbit doing business while their wives, who refer to themselves as "widows," stay rooted in one place. The wives are expected to attend to their children's education and are forbidden from most income-generating activities that would take them away from their primary roles as wives and mothers.

There is no doubt that the existing literature on how gender affects migrants' and nonmigrants' negotiation of work is rich and suggestive, albeit far from conclusive. Still, we argue that at least one essential piece of the puzzle is still missing, *viz.*, the actual observation of how these relationships are negotiated. Without this, we are limited to a dissatisfying assessment of their effects. Most relevant data have been collected in retrospective interviews as opposed to immediate ethnographic observation. To improve our understanding of this complex transnational area, the next generation of research needs to employ both methods at a minimum.

A third approach to interrogating the importance of social location and of people's agency is found in the literature on gendered attitudes among migrants toward the possibility of returning to their homelands. Several authors (*e.g.*, Chavez, 1994; Goldring, 1998; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994; Kibria, 1993; Pessar, 1986) have written that migrant women are more likely to

develop personal and household strategies consistent with long-term or permanent resettlement abroad, while men pursue transnational strategies that link them more closely to their homelands and to an eventual permanent return there. These opposing orientations reflect the tendency for women to feel that their social status improves post migration, while men feel the opposite (Goldring, 1996; Hagan, 1994; Kibria, 1993; Rouse, 1992). Such contrasting evaluations of the migration experience often bring tension into marriages and, more generally, into gender relations. While synchronic studies strongly support the above-mentioned gendered pattern in migrants' orientation toward where to settle long-term, we want to complicate this notion by adding the elements of class, age and time to the equation. Although economically comfortable, married women may indeed strive to settle permanently with their husbands and children in the United States, their poorer peers who are single, divorced or widowed may not enjoy this same option. Rather, there are indications that as the latter group of women age, they find that their meager savings and pensions are inadequate to underwrite retirement in the United States. These funds can be stretched farther in the homeland or through a strategy of alternating residence between home and host countries (Singer and Gilbertson, 2000).

In contrast, an ethnographic case from southern Africa reveals how time and transnational obligations can mitigate men's ultimate return. According to Stephen Lubkemann (2000), before the prolonged Mozambican civil war (1975–1994) men had migrated temporarily to South Africa to help support their families and, sometimes, to accumulate the necessary funds to take a second wife. The latter enhanced the men's social status back in their home communities and was often applauded by the first (now senior) wife. However, as the war dragged on and economic opportunities worsened in Mozambique, migrant men came to transform the practice of polygyny to their benefit. Increasingly, they elected to maintain two or more households, one or more each in Mozambique and in South Africa. This new form of "transnational polygyny" appears to have transformed the very meaning and practice of marriage. It now allows men to reconfigure "their lives in ways premised on the idea that 'total social lives' in Machaze [Mozambique] and South Africa are not mutually exclusive options" (Lubkemann, 2000:50–51). While transnational polygyny has augmented men's options, it has severely reduced those of their wives residing in Mozambique. Husbands frequently refuse either to return to their families in Mozambique or to allow their wives to join them in South Africa. Indeed, the men are quite explicit in stating that

“they want to keep Machazian women insulated from urban life and anything that might lead them to question [the woman’s] role as subsistence producers” (Lubkemann, 2000:44). This speaks to the men’s desire to continue to appropriate their Machazian wives’ productive labors, thereby reducing the amount of remittances the migrants must dispatch abroad and deflect from their South African families.

Finally, what happens to gender relations when migrants actually do return to their homelands? The literature that addresses this problematic is limited but still points to a recurring theme, *viz.*, the reimposition or reinforcement of patriarchy (Bernal, 1997; Goldring, 1996; Guarnizo, 1997; Mahler, 1999b; Pessar, 2001). Bernal, for example, documents Sudanese Muslim men who migrate to Saudi Arabia and to other wealthy Muslim countries and return home with money and with symbols of modernity such as nice watches. They also bring back “new understandings of what it means to be Muslim” (1997:135). They market themselves as agents of change, recoding women as ignorant, traditional and unchanging fixtures of the local. Luis Guarnizo’s work (1997) among Dominican returnees also contributes to the overall theme. He found that Dominican migrant women are more likely to both desire to stay in the United States than their spouses and to cite family concerns as the principal reason behind their returns. Men preferred life in the Dominican Republic; their choice to return was more directed by personal preference than by familial concerns. When women did return, they both expected to leave the workplace (though they may have desired to work) and to attend to family matters, particularly in cases – and there are many – where children raised in the United States and grown problematic are returned to the Dominican Republic for a dose of more “traditional” life.

IMPROVING THE FRAMEWORK: THE GENDERED SOCIAL IMAGINARY

The third dimension of our model that merits further elaboration is the social imaginary. We ask how the ways in which men and women imagine the gendered lives of their peers located within transnational migrants’ social fields influence their agency, highlighting in particular their future acts of migration. As the scant body of literature on this topic attests, this enquiry leads us particularly into matters of fidelity, sexuality and alternative masculinities and femininities. We have already alluded to the fact that suspicions of infidelity may fire the imaginations of immigrants and their nonmigrant partners alike (*e.g.*, Peleikis, 2000; Schafer, 2000). These fears and actual denunciations

commonly serve to discipline the women left behind by migrant husbands, causing them to remain largely confined to female gendered spaces and activities (Georges, 1992). There are also instances when nonmigrant spouses hear of their partners' infidelity or fear they may be unfaithful, and this motivates them to migrate abroad or insist that the latter return home (Kyle, 2000; Mahler, 2001; Yeoh and Willis, 1999).

Gender relations mitigated by migration are also negotiated between generations. In a study of the effects of male emigration on households in Zimbabwe, Rita Schafer (2000) has found that nonmigrant wives invest remittances in their daughters' education, expecting (*i.e.*, imagining) that this will pay off when the daughters care for their mothers in old age. Sons, in turn, traditionally leave the household and are not expected to give care, so remittances are funneled away from them.

Transnational migrants may also come to symbolize alternative models for living gendered lives in the social imaginary of nonmigrants. Peggy Levitt's (2001) research in Miraflores, Dominican Republic, reveals that the town's immigrant and returnee members are "good to think on," especially for young adults who desire more equitable and companionate marriages. Basing their beliefs on what they imagine gender relations to be like among their compatriots in the United States, many youthful residents of Miraflores have come to believe that women should generate their own incomes, have an equal say in household decisions, and have husbands who help with housework. According to Levitt, "They want to be like the couples they see returning [from the United States] who, as they see it, face life as equals and are happier as a result" (Levitt, 2001:104). Yet as Levitt cautions, "To some extent these individuals are all dressed up with no place to go. Women want to find outside employment, but there are few jobs for men in Miraflores, let alone for women" (p. 104). It is not only the lure of employment, but also the imagined trappings of more equitable gender relations that encourage young women and men to pursue the goal of emigration from the Dominican Republic and elsewhere (Grasmuck and Pessar, 1991; Hirsch, 1999).

Migration also contributes to transformations in the ways men and women think about each other as potential and suitable mates. For many young men today, emigration is not only a rite of passage into manhood (*e.g.*, Massey *et al.*, 1987), but also an affirmation of their masculinity and their increased value as prospective husbands. Here, again, Levitt's (2001) research is instructive. She reports that a number of women in Miraflores claimed that they would only achieve satisfaction by finding a man who had emi-

grated; in these women's estimations, single men who remain behind *no vale nada* (are not worth anything). If they existed solely in people's minds, it would be one thing, but these attitudes more often than not precipitate real agency that produces measurable effects. For example, one returnee had this to say when he visited home briefly and was flocked by admiring females: "This is the life. I am John Travolta now. Before, no one would look at me, and now everyone is paying attention" (Levitt, 2001).

On the other side of the transnational social field we find that immigrant families often seek to enhance their ethnic community's morality and social status through their daughters' sexuality (Espiritu, 2001, 2003; Orsi, 1985; Silvey, 1999; Wolf, 1997). For generations, immigrant daughters have been expected to remain virtuous and to behave in direct contrast to the "loose" sexuality immigrant parents imagine of "American" girls. The same discipline is not applied to sons. Immigrant families and ethnic groups thus work to burnish their image as morally superior to the permissiveness they perceive in U.S. society, actions premised on stereotypes toward a referent group. This research is additionally innovative in denoting how gender articulates with race, ethnicity and national identities (*see also, inter alia*, Anzaldúa, 1987; Espiritu, 1997; Glenn, 1999; Lowe, 1996); it serves to mark how immigrants negotiate their status in social hierarchies rather than merely accepting those identities prescribed by native groups. What we wish to underscore here, however, is how this articulation and its attendant status negotiation is 1) often built upon a gendered social imaginary and 2) not limited to local agency but is frequently the basis for transnational strategies such as the pursuit of suitably "chaste" brides by returning to immigrants' homelands (Orsi, 1985; Lydia Breckon, personal communication, 2000). It is important to underscore that the reverse (*i.e.*, women seeking chaste husbands in their homelands) is not evidenced in the literature.

Circulating ideoscapes of sexual liberation and "free love" may also contribute to contemplating and pursuing emigration. For example, one of the men Rachel Silvey (1999) interviewed reported double disappointment. The fantasies of "free love" he thought he would encounter in the United States failed to materialize. At the same time he was confronted by prejudicial American constructions of his "Asian" masculinity. He lamented that given his class position in Indonesia his opportunities for sexual conquest were far better there than in the United States. Silvey notes, "In the ethnicized gendering of the transnational field, then, this young man confronts discriminations that encourage him to return to Indonesia" (p. 28). In other words, the

social construction of his identity as a particular type of migrant – Asian and male and its attendant ethnic stereotype – not only disappointed him, but it also encouraged him to act transnationally.

Brennan (2001) provides a sobering example of gendered geographies of power where transnationalized desires are played out asymmetrically between men and women. The sex tourism industry of the northern coast of the Dominican Republic is her field site, a location where “through the alchemy of male desire and first-world privilege, [Dominican] women are refashioned into dusky beauties who are welcoming, sultry, and submissive” (Mahler and Pessar, 2001:450). The Dominican women, usually poor, single mothers, are drawn to this seaside city in hopes of escaping their fate. Their aim is not only to earn money but also to find a marriage partner, obtain a coveted immigrant visa to Europe, and leave the world of exploitation behind. The women often pursue their strategies by exaggerating their “hot” sensuality, knowing that German men stereotype German women as “cold” – another example of how the social and mutually constructed identities of race, sexuality, gender and nationality travel across borders – if only in the imagination – and inspire local acts. Unfortunately, the strategies the Dominican women deploy rarely translate into their fantasies of transnational wedded bliss. “Sexscapes” like this one are, not surprisingly, asymmetrical; they may promote fantasies across gendered, national and racial divides, but people’s ability to actually bridge these divisions, fulfill their fantasies, and, in some cases, sustain contacts over space and time very much favors first-world, white males.

IMPROVING THE FRAMEWORK: TASKS STILL AHEAD

While we have come far in the process of bringing gender into migration research, the work is far from finished. On the theoretical side, we know that we should link the transnational migration literature in general and the literature seeking to engender transnational migration in particular to broader literatures addressing transnational and global phenomena that are not expressly about migration. In terms of methodological advances, there is a need to: 1) examine and measure gender relations longitudinally; 2) extend this longitudinal analysis into second and subsequent generations; 3) also extend this analysis to children and not just to gender among adults; and 4) move beyond the more thoroughly researched arenas – such as Latin America, North America and the Caribbean – to the rest of the world.

We have long recognized in our own scholarship the difficulty inherent in measuring shifts in gender relations. If the point of comparison is “tradi-

tional” versus contemporary relations, how is “traditional” defined and how is this baseline established, especially when historical research is lacking or inadequate (as faced by Mahler, 1999b)? In some cases, recollection must be validated as an appropriate source of data and not forsaken as hopelessly subjective owing to the “warping” forces of social memory and nostalgia (*see, e.g.*, Pessar, 2001). This is so because matters of continuity and change come to be measured against such recollections of “the past.” Additionally, what are our criteria for measuring change? To an important extent, assessment lies in the eye of the beholder. Women and men will evaluate change by using measures that are most meaningful and germane to their realities, not necessarily adopting a universal gauge of gender parity. One possible form of appraisal is to measure how gender affects people’s access to resources. Pertinent questions would thus include: “Do girls and boys, women and men enjoy similar entrée to structures of power and to mediums of representation and communication?” and “Does gender assist in understanding the positions from which different sexes occupy and act?” Alternatively, the gauge can be set at parity and gender relations measured along a scale of proximity to and distance from parity. This method is also beset by problems, for how would parity be operationalized when there is such diversity in tasks performed by males and females? More importantly to us, setting parity as the barometer dooms measurement of gender to disappointment. We see in our own lives, as in the lives of women and men we have studied, relations that do not approximate parity yet mark real gains. As we observe people creatively taking advantage of the uneven opportunities available to them across transnational spaces to negotiate an improvement in status and families’ lives, we acknowledge that some steps are larger than others. Moreover, it is critical not to attribute to transnational processes any blanket narrative of liberation; nor do we want to fall into that false binarism which essentializes and privileges the West/first-world as the singular site for women’s emancipation (Mohanty, 1991).

One critical weakness of most transnational migration research to date is its synchronicity; we feel longitudinal studies are more appropriate to comprehending transnational processes though we readily admit that they are much more difficult. Among the few scholars who have extended their analysis over time is Robert C. Smith (2001). His work chronicles Mexican migrants from Ticuani to New York over a decade and a half. During this time, he has observed that their attitudes toward their homeland and their interaction with it has gone through different stages – a life cycle in his terms. He finds that 1.5 and second generation pre-teens usually eschew their her-

itage, particularly as in the Mexican case when it is negatively stereotyped. They become more interested and exercise greater transnational ties in adolescence as they explore their own identities. During young adulthood the demands of holding down jobs and families begin to weigh heavily on their ability to return "home" and sustain the ties forged during their adolescence. At this point, however, many of the first generation's own parents are retiring and take up – grandmothers in particular – the task of helping to raise the grandchildren transnationally. Immigrant parents get relatives back home to share the burden of child rearing, and in so doing these kin assist in inculcating a transnational identity in the 2.5 and third generation. In this way, Smith explains, transnational identities are not completely lost over time, as many have presupposed.

Smith's work implicitly takes a transnational identity as precarious; without a great deal of effort and, in the Mexican case, time spent in the home community, this vibrant Mexican identity would wither into a heritage. Aihwa Ong (1999), however, poses a different reading of transnational identity. For her, it should not be limited to its expression but include as well its potential for expression. People cultivate potential ties that can be mobilized upon need or desire. One avenue to see this potentiality is through studying migrants' acquisition of several citizenships or denizenships, and this takes time as well as effort. As holders of multiple passports or residence cards, such individuals can move easily between countries to take advantage of better opportunities or to flee insecurity, much as corporations can shift production from site to site as conditions fluctuate. How can we comprehend these strategies if not via diachronic research?

A third and related methodological concern is the need to examine gender relations transnationally not only among adults but also among children. Rob Smith's (2001) work advances this area, but he picks up childhood mid-way to adulthood.

Other authors' works already cited, particularly those addressing immigrant daughters' sexuality (Espiritu, 2001, 2003; Orsi, 1985; Silvey, 1999; Wolf, 1997), also make contributions in this vein but likewise focus on teenagers. As gender is not hard-wired at birth but children must learn it, we need to be more attentive to whether and how transnational migration inflects the enculturation of children to gender relations. Naturally, this research requires long-term field work.

A final methodological area meriting concern is the preponderance of case and comparative studies on transnational migration that address migration

within the Americas. Immigration to the United States is an extremely important case in point, and there is no one story to tell because immigrants from so many countries continue to arrive to its shores. Nonetheless, much depth and richness would be added to the process of bringing gender into transnational migration were more work published outside this context. In Europe and largely through the sponsorship of the Transnational Communities Programme at Oxford University (Vertovec, 1999), this work is well underway. A small corpus of work exists for Africa (*e.g.*, Dodson, 1998; Lubkemann, 2000; Ulicki and Crush, 2000; van Santen and Schaafsma, 2000) and Asia (*e.g.*, Lessinger, 1992; Ong, 1992, 1999; Willis and Yeoh, 2000; Yeoh and Willis, 1999, 2000) also, but we urge others to contribute to this much needed scholarship.

In addition to pushing methodological frontiers, we advocate that the transnational migration literature, in general, and the literature seeking to engender transnational migration, in particular, move ahead conceptually by reaching out to engage other kindred literatures more productively. In practice, this means not only focusing inward to improve the transnational migration paradigm, but also seeking kinship with related phenomena and their associated literatures. While there are many avenues for such cross-fertilization, *e.g.*, transnational organizing over human rights, workers' issues, the environment and so on (*see, e.g.*, Bickham-Mendez, 2002; Keck and Sikkink, 1998; Naples and Desai, 2002; Pessar, 2001), we consider here the examples of transnational cultural production and economic globalization.

Work on transnational migration and gender has much to gain by examining those genres of cultural production that contribute to the ways in which gender is represented, consumed and practiced transnationally. Moreover, as noted earlier, such an engagement with cultural matters marks a departure from the standard transnational migration scholarship that focuses solely on migrant social relations and institutions. The transnational study of the musical genre of *rai* by Joan Gross, David McMurray and Ted Swedenburg (1996) is an example of the cultural optic we endorse, though the authors do not frame their research explicitly as such.

Rai emerged in the 1920s as rural Algerian migrants settled into cities. It was later transported abroad as Algerians relocated to France and proceeded to move "back and forth across the Mediterranean and into the world music scene" (p. 121). *Rai* was transgressive from the start. Female artists were prominent, and it was unique among Algerian musical traditions owing to its association with dancing, often in mixed-gender settings. Definitely the voice of the subaltern, its musicians sang of social problems, the indepen-

dence struggle, and the more intimate struggles of the flesh (p. 122). Not surprisingly, after national independence in 1962 and the emergence of puritanical state policies, drastic restrictions were imposed on public performances by female *rai* singers. *Rai* was relegated to the fringes of society and to sex-segregated events like wedding parties. Although it was subject to an Islamic chill back home, *rai* continued to be embraced by Algerians in France. This musical genre not only became a proud marker of Maghrebi ethnic identity in a generally inhospitable and racist France, but it also contained an alternative discourse to the dominant, patriarchal meanings and practices found within Franco-Maghrebi households and ethnic communities. Songs and videos championed romantic love, dating before marriage, and choosing one's marriage partner without the interference of kin.

Rai's message of greater freedom and parity between the sexes, however, apparently has had little impact on women's everyday lives across the transnational social field. Instead, women continue to be stringently policed by parents and brothers who insist upon controlling young women's extradomestic activities, keeping them subservient to males within and outside the home, and trying to choose their marriage partners. With few exceptions, the Algerian state has continued to remain generally cautious and defensive about *rai*, its producers, and its youthful audience both at home and abroad. Moreover, as Islamic fundamentalists have gained political stature, they have articulated a decidedly anti-*rai* position.

Rai's progressive vision of Algeria and its challenges to patriarchal relations within the state, economy, community, and family are steps most Franco-Maghrebis, too, are as yet unwilling to put into practice. Rather, women in the diaspora are disciplined through patriarchal measures to maintain that boundary between Islam and the West and the Franco-Maghrebi ethnic community and mainstream French society. As discussed earlier, gender is again called upon to police the boundaries of binary opposition between the ethnic "we" and the mainstream "they." This is a pattern that all too frequently constrains women's choices and agency. For many, then, *rai's* transgressive messages about gender are confined to cultural production and the social imaginary. Nonetheless, these counter-hegemonic images retain the potential for inspiring future social action.

Students of gender and transnationalism have much to gain by turning their sights to matters of cultural production and consumption within and across transnational social fields. Drawing upon our gendered geography of power framework, we would pose a number of questions. These include: Who

gets to forge those hegemonic and more transgressive cultural constructs about gender? Where are the geographical sites in which this occurs? How broadly are these constructs produced and consumed? To address these questions we must explore the range of geographical scales (*e.g.*, the body, the family, the state, national and international markets) involved in the creation, dissemination, policing and appropriation of these cultural constructs. Finally, we might broaden our vision yet further to consider how research on transnational migrants might articulate with studies which explore how images, meanings and values associated with gender, consumption, modernity, rights and “the family” circulate within the global cultural economy (*e.g.*, Appadurai, 1990; Featherstone, 1990; Lipsitz, 1994). Our task would be to interrogate how these “ideoscapes” and “mediascapes” are interpreted and appropriated in varied sites by diverse categories of male and female actors in ways that either promote or constrain mobility (Mills, 1997).

We suggest that the same potential for cross-fertilization and reciprocal growth inherent in bringing studies of gender/migration into a closer relationship with research on transnational cultural production also holds for the scholarship on economic globalization. Much of this latter literature perpetuates the popular notion that major trends in capitalist development are gender-neutral. Among the earliest dissenters were those migration scholars who insisted upon the centrality of gender to past and current phases of global capitalism. This scholarship includes pioneering work on women and subsistence agriculture. It demonstrated how “stay-at-home” wives help to sustain the dependents of male migrants and stretch their grossly inadequate wages (Chaney and Lewis, 1980; Meillassoux, 1981). Later research on deindustrialization and the growth of the service industry in “developed” countries has traced the macro-economic processes leading to a decline in the employment of the male laborers in certain sectors. According to researchers, what has accompanied and abetted this decline is the increasing demand for female labor – often migrant or immigrant labor – in offshore production and in that segment of core economies which is de-skilled, subcontracted and frequently non-unionized. Furthermore, scholars have explored how sites of offshore production constitute new subjectivities, forms of laboring, and means to accumulate social capital. These may, in turn, prompt and facilitate the emigration to First World countries by female members of this new global proletariat (Fernández-Kelly, 1985; Ong, 1993; Sassen, 1988, 1996, 2000).

We have previously discussed one of these forms of laboring, sex work. Sex work is burgeoning in many developing countries where tourism is

embraced to capture much needed foreign exchange in the wake of the international debt crisis. In the context of national austerity programs, structural adjustment policies, and increased unemployment, many Third-World women (typically single mothers or dependent daughters) have been obligated (or forced) to enter into the sex trade to better ensure their households' survival. There is much work to be done in documenting how the global sex trade (including sexual trafficking) creates and reinforces transnational linkages and flows. More research is needed on the ways in which local and cross-border recruitment, discipline and management are handled by state agencies, transnational (and often immigrant and ethnic) entrepreneurs and criminal organizations. As Brennan's (2001) work illustrates, sex work emerges out of, and helps to sustain, the interweaving of local and transnational systems of gender hierarchy, production, circulation, cultural representation and fantasy. Her work also reminds us that despite the separation between scholarship on sex work and on migration, in practice the two phenomena are frequently linked and reinforcing. Sex workers are often lured into the trade through false promises of employment as migrant workers or by fantasies of gaining visas from clients who become future spouses. Moreover, some clients become transnational migrants, establishing homes, families, and/or businesses in the locale where they first journeyed in search of "exotic" sex (Brennan, 2001).

Although the new class subject of global capitalism tends to be female, a person of color, and a resident in the Third World, the institutionalized labor movement (operating both nationally and transnationally) continues to privilege the skilled, male, white labor force both in its systems of representation and in its campaigns for combating the contemporary erosion of labor rights. Basing her analysis largely on those transnational structures of representation characterizing new forms of cross-border solidarity and organizing, Alicia Schmidt Camacho (1999) laments the frequent use of neo-colonial and development discourses. These portray Third-World female and male workers in a unitary and peripheral fashion, as "surplus labor," the victims of development, and marginal players in a class struggle whose leaders remain predominantly white, male and First-World subjects. Transnational labor organizing is, we would argue, another important and insufficiently researched site in which to explore the processes and consequences of gender and transnational migration. For example, we ought to analyze the testimonials of immigrant workers, often counter-hegemonic discourses which challenge such pacts as those between patriarchy and the labor aristocracy, orga-

nized labor and nation-states, and First-World workers and global capitalists (Schmidt Camacho, 1999; Lowe, 1996). We also need transnationally-based fieldwork to determine the roles assumed by immigrants and the second generation in bringing to the workplace a new militancy, one that is sometimes born out of past or continuing class and gender struggles in countries of origin. This section, like previous ones, has argued that our lives are conducted within and across gendered geographies of power, in spaces that often cross national borders. The understanding we derive from the analysis of one of these landscapes – in our case transnational migration – should contribute to our comprehension of others for they, indeed, are interconnected.

CONCLUSION

Over the course of some five years and in collaboration with numerous others, we have been striving to add another chapter to the ongoing struggle of bringing gender into the study of migration, in this case specifically into transnational migration research and theorizing. To encourage this endeavor, we developed our framework of gendered geographies of power.

The literature we have cited in this essay and the concerns we have raised all underscore the multiple and multilayered interactions of transnational actions and processes with more localized social relations and institutions. It is our hope that the next generation of transnational researchers will be better prepared to seek out and analyze these dynamics. We are mindful that these actions and processes are not easy to identify, to map nor to see as inflecting one another, even when the focus is kept to one locale in a transnational social field let alone trying to trace them across borders. The challenges of leaving an essentially bi-local and comparative approach to transnational research for a more transnational social field approach (where multiple scales and sites are studied more or less simultaneously) are daunting, but we are heading in this direction. Our intention here has been to share some insights and directions for the further study of gender and transnational migration and in so doing to inspire other scholars to engage and refine these issues in their current and future work.

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