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WOMEN AND MIGRATION:  
INCORPORATING GENDER INTO  
INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION THEORY

by  
Elizabeth M. Grieco  
and Monica Boyd

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**FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

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by

Elizabeth M. Grieco and Monica Boyd  
Florida State University

**ABSTRACT:** Much of the recent literature on women and migration has emphasized the fundamental differences between the migration experiences of women and men. However, migration research remains predominantly gender insensitive. This can partially be explained by international migration theory, which has traditionally attributed the generation and continuation of migration flows to macro-structural processes that lack gender specificity. In this paper, we argue that while the broader structural causes of migration appear gender neutral, the results of these forces are not. This is because the subordinate status of women vis-a-vis men in the familial, societal and cultural structures of both the sending and receiving communities acts as a "filter", gendering structural forces and influencing the migration and settlement experiences of women and men differently. In order to incorporate women's issues into migration theory, we develop a multi-level theoretical framework better suited for studying the migration and settlement experiences of both women and men.

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## **Women and Migration: Incorporating Gender into International Migration Theory**

### **INTRODUCTION**

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, male migrants outnumbered female migrants in international migration streams (Seller, 1994). This demographic scenario no longer exists. Today, women make up about 45% of international migrants (Tyree and Donato, 1986; UN, 1995). In a few countries, including the United States and Canada, female migrants actually outnumber male migrants (Boyd, 1992; Simon and Brettell, 1986; Zlotnik, 1995).

Despite the increasing presence of women in international migration flows, until recently, little research has focused on female migrants or acknowledged that their migration experience may be fundamentally different from that of men. During the 1980s and early 1990s, this relative inattentiveness was extensively criticized (Bhabha, King and Shutter, 1985; Boyd, 1986, 1992, 1995; Fincher, Foster and Wilmot, 1994; Lim, 1995; Morokvasic, 1984; Pedraza, 1991; Seller, 1994; Simon and Brettell, 1986; Tienda and Booth, 1991; UN, 1995). Informed by the emphasis placed on gender inequality by the women's movement, by growing female labor force participation and by disciplinary-specific works on feminist methodologies and theories, researchers in Europe and North America levied a number of charges. Initially, concern was voiced over neglect and stereotypical treatment. Neglect was inherent in equating "men=general" and female=specific." Such equation was evident in the use of the word "migrant" to mean "male migrant" and in the omission of the term "male" or "men" when examining male migration, while, in contrast, studies about migrant women included the term "female" or "women" in their titles (Boyd, 1976, 1992; Morokvasic, 1983; UN, 1995). Neglect did not always mean benign

omission. Even when visible, female migrants were frequently treated as "problematic deviants from the male migrant 'norm'" (Fincher, Foster and Wilmot, 1994: 4) and usually stereotyped as dependents, with emphasis placed on their roles as wives and mothers (Boyd, 1975; Morokvasic, 1984).

For the most part, North American and European research response to this neglect and stereotypical treatment has been empirical. Special journal issues (*International Migration*, 1981; *International Migration Review*, 1986), edited volumes (Gabaccia, 1992; Simon and Brettell, 1986), numerous book chapters and refereed publications now exist. These all contain information about the presence of women in international migration streams, their diversities and their integration experiences. However, increased research on migrant women has reinforced another criticism. Besides neglecting and stereotyping migrant women, migration research often uses conceptual models that are gender insensitive and thus fail to fully explain or emphasize the interactions between gender and migration. Gender insensitivity occurs when researchers merely add sex as a variable or sub-population in analyses without either reassessing the latent conceptual framework or developing new models to explicate gender differences (Boyd, 1989b).

The objective of this paper is to develop a gender sensitive approach to the study of international migration. We begin with an overview of recent developments in international migration theory. We find that contemporary theories and frameworks give little attention to gender, and at best are "female-aware" rather than "gender-aware" (Chant and Radcliffe, 1992). In contrast, current feminist approaches in women's studies and in sociology emphasize that, as a social construction, gender is deeply implicated in processes that appear gender neutral. We argue that a gender sensitive approach requires asking how gender is involved in the seemingly

gender-neutral migratory process. Specifically, we argue that while the broader structural causes of migration appear gender neutral, the results of these forces are not. This is because the subordinate status of women vis-a-vis men in the familial, societal and cultural structures of both the sending and receiving societies act as a "filter", gendering structural forces and influencing the migration and settlement experiences of women and men differently. Using a three stage model of the migration process, we show how gender relations, roles and hierarchies influence the migratory probabilities of women and men during each stage of the migration process and produce differential migration outcomes.

### **INCORPORATING GENDER INTO INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION THEORIES**

The charge of gender insensitivity comes from assessing the historical development of migration theory, especially during the last twenty-five years. During the pre-1970s "classical period" (Heisler, 1992), "push-pull" and neo-classical human capital approaches dominated. Both approaches can be criticized for regarding migrants as a homogenous group, ignoring how attributes such as ethnicity, gender and class stratify migrant laborers in both migration flows and labor markets (Lee, 1996). In some neoclassical models, gender-differentiating factors, such as the availability of marriage partners, are added in order to explain the "extra" influence acting on female migrant populations (Chant and Radcliffe, 1992). Usually, however, women are seen as either less likely to participate in migration because of their lack of qualifications for the labor market, or as wives and dependents of male migrants (Lee, 1996). In this way, neoclassical models treat women as a "special" group, "whose participation in migration flows needs to be explained, whereas male migration is seen as relatively unproblematic and reducible to wage rate differentials" (Chant and Radcliffe, 1992: 20). Thus, neo-classical theory has proven it can be

"female-aware" but fails to be "gender-aware" (Chant and Radcliffe, 1992).

Since the 1970s, migration theory has been characterized by the emergence of two major schools of thought and by the development of an interdisciplinary synthetic framework. Despite their utility in explicating the causes and consequences of international migration, these three developments continued the earlier legacy of being gender unaware. The first development was the growing ascendancy of the structural perspective as an alternative to pre-existing "push-pull" and neo-classical migration theories. This perspective, which includes world systems (Wallerstein, 1974) and dual labor market theory (Piore, 1979), among others, is explicitly political-economic and emphasizes understanding the origins of labor migration (Boyd, 1989a; Heisler, 1992). Rather than explaining the causes of international migration in terms of the decisions made by individual migrants, the structuralist perspective locates international migration within the evolving world economic and political order. According to the structuralist perspective, "the observed patterns of migration are not seen to be merely the result of the aggregation of individual decisions and actions but the product of objective social and spatial structures which produce the necessary conditions for labor migration" (Gos and Lindquist, 1995: 324).

However, critics charge that the structuralist perspective is gender insensitive, in part because the focus on the relations of production ignores two areas that differentially structure the activities and potential migratory behaviors of women and men: the household-work nexus and childbearing and childrearing responsibilities (Chant, 1992; Ellis, Conway and Bailey, 1996). Also, the classic structural argument treats migration as a sex undifferentiated response to capitalist transformation, even though "there is plenty of reason -- empirical and theoretical -- to

believe that capitalism differentially incorporates men and women into wage labor, and that migration of men and particularly women occurs for reasons not directly linked to the search for waged employment" (Ellis, Conway and Bailey, 1996, p. 36). Both the structuralist and neo-classical approaches have been criticized for incorporating gender by adding a female variable to an existing framework, rather than giving gender relations a central explanatory role (Ellis, Conway and Bailey, 1996; Pedraza, 1991; Stacey and Thorne, 1985).

The second major development in international migration theory during the last twenty-five years has been the development of the "integrative approach" (Gos and Lindquist, 1995). With the micro-orientation of the traditional human capital and "push-pull" approaches and the macro-orientation of the structuralist perspectives, international migration theory clearly failed to incorporate the social context in which migration decision-making actually occurs (Ellis, Conway and Bailey, 1996). The integrative approach attempts to link different levels and units of analysis, simultaneously analyze the origins and destinations of migration flows and to consider both the historical and contemporary processes that influence the establishment and continuation of migration streams (Gos and Lindquist, 1995). Integrative approaches include the "new economics of migration" (Stark and Levhari, 1982), network theory (Boyd, 1989a; Gurak and Caces, 1992; Massey et al., 1987; Massey, 1990a), cumulative causation theory (Massey, 1990b), migration systems theory (Fawcett, 1989; Zlotnik, 1992) and institutional theory (Massey, 1993), among others. Unlike earlier theories, integrative approaches give social context greater theoretical importance and a major role in explaining the establishment and continuation of migration flows. These approaches also make an explicit attempt to overcome the micro/macro and agency/structure dualisms present in earlier migration theory. However, their success in this

matter has been questioned (Gos and Lindquist, 1995).

A key characteristic of the integrative approaches is "the identification of the connections between the macro levels and the micro levels and specifications of an intermediate object of analysis," (Gos and Lindquist, 1995: 326) such as the family, household, or migrant network. Yet, integrative approaches, and other mid-level strategies (see: Chant, 1992; Chant and Radcliffe, 1992) that focus on the household as the unit of analysis, have been criticized for effectively substituting the rational, calculating individual with a rational, calculating household (Folbre, 1986; Gos and Lindquist, 1995). Critics note that family/household decisions and actions do not represent unified and equally beneficial outcomes for all members (Boyd, 1989a; Ellis, Conway and Bailey, 1996; Gos and Lindquist, 1996; Pedraza, 1991). This is because households, as units where production and redistribution take place, represent centers of struggle where people with different activities and interests can come into conflict with one another (Hartmann, 1981). When situated within the ongoing power relations that operate in families and households (Curtis, 1986; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1992), such diverse interests and activities strongly imply that the interests of male and female members do not always coincide and may not always create equally beneficial outcomes.

Similar criticisms can be made against those integrative approaches that use social networks as their unit of analysis. Networks are not coherent, single-interest decision-making social units (Gos and Lindquist, 1996: 345) which facilitate the equal allocation of resources to all its members. Instead, networks are enmeshed in patriarchal and capitalist social relations. Migration decision-making capabilities and the ability to access migratory resources -- either household or network-based -- are often determined by an individual's gender (Lim, 1995; Tienda

and Booth, 1991). Viewing the family, household or network as a "unified strategic actor" without explicit recognition of familial and societal patriarchal authority structures means that the integrative approaches inadvertently encourage research to focus on the "dominant actors" within those organizations -- who are usually men -- at the expense of the "subordinate" ones -- who are usually women. This leads to the assumption that male-dominated migration flows are the "norm." Embedded in this assumption is the view that migration results from the collective and collaborative decision-making efforts of all the members of a given social organization in response to external opportunities and constraints, rather than resulting from patriarchal social relations that favor men's access to resources and authority and limit women's ability to migrate.

In addition to the structuralist and integrationist schools of thought, the most recent theoretical development is the synthetic approach to understanding international migration (Ellis, Conway and Bailey, 1996) produced by Massey and his colleagues (1993, 1994). More accurately described as a framework rather than a theory, this approach integrates the most successful components of contemporary migration theories found in various disciplines to form a single comprehensive theory of international migration for industrialized countries. Integration is accomplished in two steps. First, international migration is defined as consisting of two stages: initiation, or what causes migration to occur; and continuation, or why transnational population flows persist across time and space. Second on the basis of this "initiation-continuation" framework, theories are incorporated that differ with respect to theoretical levels (macro versus micro) and/or analytical units (individuals, family/household, nation). By constructing an analytical framework that can incorporate numerous theories, Massey and associates (1993, 1994) were able to construct a comprehensive, multi-level theory of international migration.

However, this framework retains many of the shortcomings regarding the incorporation of women found in the traditional structuralist and integrative perspectives. First, neo-classical paradigms are heavily emphasized, perhaps reflecting the theoretical dominance of this approach in migration research, and explaining economically-based migration is a major focus. Because women are less likely than men to report their moves as motivated primarily for economic reasons (Zlotnick, 1995), these emphases implicitly pay greater attention to the migratory behavior of men. Second, despite attempts to integrate migration theories characterized by different theoretical and analytical levels, the framework remains predominantly macro in orientation. This is partially the result of viewing migration as an aggregate, dichotomous process -- that is, asking how migration flows are initiated and why they continue -- rather than as the movement of individuals. Such macro-level emphasis tends to attribute more agency to institutions (i.e. nations, economies, markets) and views migration as a product of economic stimuli. While not necessarily inaccurate, this emphasis is incomplete. It again focuses attention on labor migration, de-emphasizing other migration types (i.e. family reunification, refugee movements) in which it is more common for women to participate (Boyd, 1994, 1995). It also places emphasis on gender-neutral macro-structural causes of migration, thus incorporating the implicit assumption that both female and male migrants are essentially equivalent and have the same opportunities to migrate and settle overseas.

Overall, our review indicates that there has been little concerted effort in the last twenty-five years to incorporate gender into theories of international migration. In fact, migration theory to date has not had much to say on the issue of gender (Chant, 1992). To be sure, the charge of gender insensitivity is not unique to migration research. In many fields during the

1980s, filling in knowledge gaps often occurred within preexisting models and paradigms, leaving entrenched epistemologies and methodologies intact (Harding, 1987). Phrases such as "add women, mix and stir" or "gender is more than a dummy" (Figart, 1997) attest to the awareness of researchers that their analyses did usefully call attention to women but remained locked within orthodox theoretical frameworks developed in earlier times.

How then are gender sensitive theories and frameworks to be developed? In an analytical strategy reminiscent of those employed by Massey et. al. (1993, 1994) and Gos and Lindquist (1995), we suggest the answer lies in applying ideas and initiatives found outside of traditional disciplinary boundaries and orthodox approaches. Specifically, we suggest that the gender focus of this task requires the incorporation of ideas and initiatives discussed in both women's studies and feminist research in sociology.

By definition, feminist theorizing moves beyond the stage of filling in the interstices within the confines of established frameworks. Earlier efforts in the 1970s and 1980s centered on the development of new frameworks to better understand gender inequality and women's roles and statuses. More recently, emphasis has shifted to studying the way in which gender is a core organizing principle of social relations and opportunities. The term "gender" rather than "sex" is deliberate. "Gender" explicitly rejects biological explanations for hierarchies of inequality and power that privilege men and disadvantage women. Rather than being a fixed trait, invariant over time and space, gender denotes the social construction of identities, behavior and power relationships (Scott, 1986). Social and cultural ideals, practices and displays of masculinity and femininity construct the meaning of gender and its embodiment in gender roles, relations and hierarchies (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994:1)

Emphasis on the social construction of gender directs attention to questions that ask how gender is involved in the processes and structures that previously have been conceived as having nothing to do with gender. Rather than treating a subject domain, such as the family, organizational structures, earnings or migration, as gender neutral, the task is to show how integral and embedded gender is in these areas of concern. In most areas of inquiry that are informed by feminist perspectives, this task requires asking how gender defines, perpetuates and recreates positions of power and privilege of men over, and vis-a-vis, women (Acker, 1989, 1990; Pringle, 1995). However, in some areas, such as international migration, the central questions are not those dealing with gender oppression. Although inequalities between groups are issues discussed under the integration rubric, the core questions are those of numbers, causes and control of flows, entry and settlement. Here, an emphasis on the social construction of gender reframes orthodox questions to include asking how gender is implicated in the processes of migration. The task becomes one of showing how a seemingly gender-neutral process of movement is in fact highly gender specific, resulting in differential outcomes for men and women.

In the field of migration, asking how gender is involved in processes and structures has considerable appeal for two reasons. First, the question illuminates how seemingly gender neutral approaches are in fact gender insensitive. For example, international migration theory often attributes the generation and continuation of migration flows to macro structural processes, such as the labor requirements of capitalist economies. Because these structural forces appear gender neutral, theories that use them to explain why international migration occurs also lack gender specificity. However, while the broader structural causes of migration appear gender neutral, the

results of these forces are not. There are fundamental differences in the migration of men and women (Boyd, 1986, 1995; Lim, 1995; Simon and Brettell, 1986; Tienda and Booth, 1991; UN, 1995), and the entire migration process is gendered and sex-selective (Fincher, Foster and Wilmot, 1994; Morokvasic, 1983). Gender differences arise from the subordinate status of women vis-a-vis men in the familial, societal and cultural structures of both the sending and receiving communities. Women's status acts as a "filter", gendering structural forces and influencing the migratory and settlement experiences of men and women differently. Because international migration theory has traditionally placed greater emphasis on explaining the causes of international migration -- as opposed to the results -- it often fails to address the gender specific migration experiences of women and men. Thus, research based on migration theory that focuses on these gender neutral causes will inevitably de-emphasize the gendered nature of migration.

Second, asking how gender is involved in the migration process brings center-stage a question that is not often asked in migration research: how are we to explain the fundamental differences in the migration experiences of women and men? This is a more dramatic transformation of the research problematic than might be initially supposed. For example, in responding to this question, studies of labor migration would not only have to be attentive to gender differences in labor recruitment (men as construction workers to Kuwait; women as domestic workers) but also to the influences exerted by gender roles, gender relations and gender based rights in sending and receiving societies. In assessing humanitarian based admissions in settlement countries, studies would have to not only examine the sex composition of such admissions but would have to recognize and study the way in which gender hierarchies are

reconstituted in camps and permeate both processes of overseas selection and the reception policies of host countries (see: Boyd, 1994; Keely, 1992; Martin, 1992)

Situating gender within analytical frameworks requires more than simply adding a gender or female variable to an existing framework because the analysis remains within the traditional explanatory approach. Hondagneu-Sotelo's (1994) study of Mexican migrant women and the analysis of Puerto Rican female migration by Ellis, Conway and Bailey (1996) are admirable examples of research that moves beyond these "mix and stir" approaches. These studies illuminate how the social construction of gender both reflects structural factors and influences migration decisions and behaviors. Our paper adds to such research by developing a gender-sensitive framework for the analysis of female international migration to industrialized countries.

Because such a framework must account for gender differentials at all stages of the migration process, we examine the influence of gender at three major stages: 1) pre-migration, or the social, cultural and economic factors of the country of origin that encourage/discourage or enable/prevent an individual from migrating; 2) the act of migrating, or national/international laws that encourage/discourage or enable/prevent an individual from migrating; and 3) post-migration, or the social, cultural and economic factors of the country of destination that encourage/discourage or enable/prevent a migrant from integrating to the host society and settling permanently. This simple three-stage analytical framework is similar to one put forth by Lee (1966). However, it is different because Lee focuses on the "push" and "pull" factors associated with the areas of origin and destination and on the characteristics of individual migrants. The framework proposed in this paper focuses on the migration process as a change of

status. By defining the migration process as a change of status -- from resident of a sending society to migrant to resident of a receiving society -- this framework incorporates information about the migrants themselves without disengaging them from the macro/systemic changes that encourage the establishment of migration flows.

### **DEVELOPING A GENDER SENSITIVE APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION: THE THREE-STAGE ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK**

How is gender involved in the migration process? In this section, we use the three stage analytical framework discussed earlier to demonstrate how gender relations, roles and hierarchies influence the entire migration process and produce differential outcomes for men and women. Each of these stages is further divided into a number of areas where research in international migration has demonstrated gender to be an especially important influence on migratory behavior. While each stage generally focuses on the experience of both women and men, we use this framework to illuminate the migration experiences of women.

#### **Gender and the Pre-Migration Stage**

The pre-migration stage focuses on factors that occur within the country of origin that influence the propensities of women and men to migrate. These include both systemic/macro factors, such as the state of the national economy, and individual/micro factors, such as gender specific stages in the life-cycle. These factors are further divided into the following three areas: 1) gender relations; 2) status and roles; and 3) structural characteristics of the country of origin (Table 1).

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*The Influence of Gender Relations on the Desire and Ability of Women and Men to Migrate*

The likelihood that women rather than men will migrate is ultimately determined by two factors: first, by the gender-specific ability to make the decision to migrate; and, second, by the gender-specific ability to access the resources (both financial and information) necessary to migrate. These abilities are influenced -- and often circumscribed -- by the familial and socio-cultural contexts in which they are embedded. The family context is particularly significant for the study of female migration because it is usually within the family that women's subordination to male authority plays itself out (Lim, 1995). The family both defines and assigns the roles of women, which determine their relative motivation and incentive to migrate, and controls the distribution of resources and information that can support, discourage or prevent migration. "The family or household can be seen as the structural or functional context within which women's status is determined, migration motivations and values are shaped, human capital is accrued, information is received and decisions are put into operation" (Lim, 1995, p. 42). In this way, family context is significant because it both determines a woman's position relative to other family members and, when combined with patriarchal authority structures, influences her ability to make decisions autonomously, contribute to the total decision-making process and access familial-based resources.

The family context is also important for the study of female migration because it can influence the level of gender stratification found in the wider society. Curtis (1986) argues that the family is the primary unit generating gender inequality and that the roots of patriarchal authority are familial rather than sexual. He also argues that the authority exercised by men as

fathers or husbands over women as daughters or wives can extend to control over the non-familial roles that women play. In this way, patriarchy acts as an interface between familial structures, where non-economic exchanges grounded in a patriarchal system produce and maintain gender inequities, and market structures, where economic exchanges and distribution shape sex based hierarchies (Tienda and Booth, 1991). In this sense, the extension of patriarchal relations from the family to public arena may limit a woman's independent decision-making capabilities by curtailing the decisions to be made. Also, it may affect her ability to access non-familial, or public, resources (i.e. jobs, job training, income, education, information, etc.) that could facilitate migration. Conversely, patriarchal relations may facilitate male rather than female migration by enhancing male access to resources necessary to initiate migration.

***Gender Status and Roles in the Sending Society: Their Impact on the Sex Selectivity of Migration***

The status and gender roles of women and men within families and sending communities influence gender-specific propensities to migrate. This is particularly important for understanding the migration of women because female status and roles, together with stages in the life cycle, determine their social, economic and political positions in the wider society. Within a particular socio-cultural context, each of these positions, generated by the status-roles-life-cycle interaction, are associated with a "migratory probability". That is, the culture of the sending society determines the likelihood that women in various positions will migrate. In this sense, a woman's position in the sending community not only influences her ability to autonomously decide to migrate and to access the resources necessary to do so, but also the opportunity she has to migrate at the point when the decision is being made. As Lim (1995) notes, the status of women

can ultimately determine whether or not women migrate.

The literature on women and migration argues that the impact of women's status and roles on their propensity to migrate must be considered at three levels: the individual, familial and societal (Lim, 1995). Individual factors include age, birth order, race/ethnicity, urban/rural origins, marital status (single, married, divorced, widowed), reproductive status (children or no children), role in the family (wife, daughter, mother), position in family (authoritative or subordinate), educational status, occupational skills/training, labor force experience, and class position. Family factors include size, age/sex composition, life-cycle stage, structure (nuclear, extended, etc.), status (single parent, both parents, etc.) and class standing (Lim, 1995; Tienda and Booth, 1991; Simon and Brettell, 1986; UN, 1994). Societal factors include those community norms and cultural values that determine whether or not women can migrate and, if they can, how (i.e. labor or family reunification) and with whom (alone or with family) (Morokvasic, 1984; Simon and Brettell, 1986).

Because the ability of women to migrate is influenced by familial and societal gender relations and societal sex stratification, and because the position of women in the wider sending society can differentially determine their probability of migration, migration can be seen as a sex selective process (Boyd, 1995; Pedraza, 1991; UN, 1995). This process influences the predominance of men or women in a migration flow, in part by influencing the type of migration leaving a sending society. For example, social constraints may prevent women from emigrating, so labor emigration from a region may be male dominated. Conversely, men may be under strong social pressure to remain in the area, but women may still emigrate to work or marry overseas (Morokvasic, 1984; Pedraza, 1991). Societal sex stratification systems, filtered through existing

gender roles, also influence propensities to migrate. For example, woman may be more likely to migrate if their function in the local economy is not seen as essential. Social constraints can also encourage women to migrate. For example, lack of employment opportunities may encourage women to emigrate. Marginalized women may be forced to leave. Other may want to escape a subordinate position in the country of origin (Lim, 1995; Morokvasic, 1984).

***The Impact of Country of Origin Factors on the Desire and Ability of Women and Men to Migrate***

Macro/structural characteristics of the country of origin can also influence gender-specific migration propensities. Macro/structural characteristics alone will not necessarily discourage more women than men from migrating. However, these characteristics can interact with the gender relations and the position of women in the sending society. Such interactions affect men and women differentially and may increase the level of sex selectivity in migration flows. These characteristics include: the state of the economy (agrarian, industrial, level of development); the types of economies present within various communities (i.e. all developed, mixed agrarian/industrial, some subsistence horticulturalists); the level of displacement caused by economic changes and shifts in production technologies; land tenure laws; labor market conditions and conditions of work (wage levels, benefits); the ability of the economy to provide jobs and the type of jobs available (number of industries); the ability of the national government to provide related infrastructure (education, job training); the geographic location of the country and the language(s) of the sending society; the relation and integration of the national economy into the world economy; the supply and demand conditions for the factors of production in sending and related receiving communities; and the presence or absence of established migration

systems with other areas (Boyd, 1992; Lim, 1995; UN, 1994).

### **Gender and the Act of Migrating**

The act of migrating represents an intermediate stage between leaving a country of origin and entering a country a destination. Through their policies, nation states are major actors in the international migration process. An individual wishing to become an international migrant must deal with the conditions for departure from the sending society and the conditions for entry and stay imposed by potential countries of destination (UN, 1995). In this sense, the policies of both countries of origin and destination, as well as the stereotypical images of men and women and the traditional sex roles in both societies, determine the characteristics of migration flows (Boyd, 1995; Lim, 1995) (Table 2).

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During the 20th century, many nation states have removed overtly sex-based discriminatory criteria from their immigration laws and regulations (Boyd, 1995). However, while verbally neutral, value judgements are embedded in administrative practices that can lead to differential outcomes for men and women (Boyd, 1989b, 1995; Fincher, Foster and Wilmot, 1994). Early studies of migrant women were quick to note that sex selective outcomes result from norms regarding acceptable gender roles as well as from stereotypical images about the place of women in society (Boyd, 1975; Morokvasic, 1983). More recently, a United Nations (1995) report links women's subordinate status as migrants to persisting conceptualizations of traditional family structures and women's positions within families.

#### ***The Policy of the Country of Origin***

National policies of the countries of origin can influence migration through prohibitive,

selective, permissive, promotional or expulsive rules of exit that may affect male and female migrants differently (Lim, 1995). These policies are frequently conditioned by implicit or explicit assumptions about the status and roles of men and women both within the family and in society. For example, some labor exporting countries have implemented "conditions" in their policies to protect women from exploitation that effectively prevent them from engaging in labor migration. However, these same women may be permitted to migrate at the end of their childbearing years, presumably because the stigma of migrating alone is not as great (UN, 1995).

### *The Policy of the Country of Destination*

Immigration laws and regulations of the country of destination also influence the migration of women and men. These policies can influence the ability of women and men to migrate in four ways. First, the migration policies of many receiving countries implicitly assume a "dependent" status for women and an "independent" migrant status for men. Women are often classified by their relation to men (i.e., wife, daughter) with whom they migrate regardless of their own, independent status (Boyd, 1976, 1986; Fincher, Foster and Wilmot, 1994).

Administrative practices that automatically assign the role of head of household to men increase the likelihood that women are designated as spouses, both by visa officers and the immigrant family (Boyd, 1995). By placing "de facto" distinctions between the entry status of male and female migrants, migrant women admitted as "dependents" may be placed in a legally dependent -- and potentially disadvantaged -- position in relation to men (Boyd, 1989b, 1995; Lim, 1995).

Second, by implicitly defining immigrant women as "dependent" and men as "independent," immigration policies of receiving societies place women into a "family role" rather than a "market role" (Boyd, 1975, 1976; Fincher, Foster and Wilmot, 1994). This can

reinforce some of the factors responsible for the social vulnerability of migrant women (Boyd, 1989b; UN, 1995). This is especially true in labor importing countries that separate the right to work from the right to reside. This has two consequences for immigrant women. First, it causes de facto economic dependence on other family members until a working permit, if attainable, has been secured. Second, women who choose to work illegally become dependent on their employers. This can make them more vulnerable to exploitation, influence their eventual application for a work permit and perpetuate low wages and poor working conditions (Boyd, 1995, 1997b). Even in traditional countries of immigration, the assumed dependence of migrant women on others often makes them ineligible for government assistance during some period following migration. This may lead to their de facto dependence on others (Boyd, 1989b, 1995; UN, 1995).

Third, traditional sex roles and stereotypical images regarding the place of women in society can influence the type of work for which migrant female labor is recruited. Women admitted as workers are generally concentrated in "female" occupations, such as domestic service or nursing. When women enter on the basis of labor market skills, many are in service occupations. In countries that recruit migrant workers on a temporary basis, most women are admitted as domestic workers, which include those specializing in child care (Boyd, 1995). The occupational segregation of international female migrants tends to be most marked in labor-importing countries where foreign women can be admitted as workers only if they are employed in certain occupations (UN, 1995).

Fourth, assumptions about the status and roles of women both within the family and in society influence the immigration policy of the country of destination which can, in turn,

influence the sex composition of the migration flows overseas. In this way, by limiting the definition of appropriate female roles, immigration policy can limit women's ability to enter a potential receiving society. For example, women are less likely than men to enter on the basis of labor market criteria. However, they are more likely to enter on the basis of their familial ties to another person, usually male (Boyd, 1995). Also, recruitment policies of countries that have relied on foreign labor have often targeted men and placed restrictions on the admission of immediate relatives, limiting the opportunities women have to migrate legally to labor importing countries (UN, 1995). In countries favoring migration for permanent settlement, women are better represented, but the sex distribution of immigrants by category of admission indicates that women still dominate various family reunion categories (UN, 1995).

### ***The Role of Intermediary Organizations and Institutions***

The immigration policies and the regulations adopted to implement them largely determine the legal or illegal nature of a migration flow. Although not part of the policies of the countries of origin and destination, intermediary institutions and agencies, both legal and illegal, work to circumvent established policies and can increase the likelihood that women and men will migrate (Lim, 1995). The actions of intermediaries can increase the likelihood that women will migrate because they act as networks linking potential female migrants with demands for female labor in destination countries. There is some evidence that single women appear to have a more difficult time legally migrating (Simon and Brettell, 1986). In this sense, women may be accessing intermediaries in order to work around established policies that implicitly or explicitly discriminate against them. However, intermediaries operating illegally are prone to exploit the disadvantaged position of women (Lim, 1995), which may decrease their likelihood of migrating.

### **Gender and the Post-Migration Stage**

The post-migration stage focuses on factors that occur within the country of destination that influence the adaptation and integration of women and men into the receiving society. As in the pre-migration stage, these include both systemic/macro factors, such as the level of gender stratification in the labor market, and individual/micro factors, such as the change in status caused by migrating. These factors are further divided into the following three areas: 1) the impact of entry status on the ability to integrate and settle; 2) patterns of incorporation into the labor market; and 3) the impact of migration on the status of women and men (Table 3).

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 Table 3 here  
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#### ***The Impact of Entry Status on the Ability to Integrate and Settle***

Immigration policy can ultimately determine whether or not an individual successfully migrates to a country of origin. As discussed above, although a policy may appear gender neutral, it is implemented within a gender-charged context and can differentially affect the ability of men and women to migrate. Because immigration policy determines the entry status of migrants, it can also influence their ability to integrate into the host society. This is because entry status determines residency and employment rights and can be part of the eligibility criteria for social welfare programs (Boyd, 1995, 1997b). Entry status is more likely to handicap female migrants than male migrants because residency and employment rights and related entitlements often differ by gender. Also, because migrant women are often viewed by the state as "dependents", their rights may become legally dependent -- sometimes precariously so -- on the migration and residency status of other family members. This may affect the ability of migrant women to obtain

those rights and entitlements on their own (Boyd, 1995, 1997b; UN, 1995).

### *Patterns of Incorporation into the Labor Market*

Racial, birthplace and gender stereotypes exist in countries of destination and act as powerful allocative mechanisms in the labor market. They also help create and maintain racial, birthplace and gender concentrations in select occupations. In every society, the labor market allocates certain types of jobs to certain types of people, usually reserving the unskilled, unprotected, poorly paid jobs for women and people of color (Pedraza, 1991). Regardless of this labor market segregation, immigrant women are often represented in the work force at a higher percentage rate than native women (Morokvasic, 1984). Given their labor market participation rates and the impact of a potentially discriminatory environment, how does the immigrant status of women influence their incorporation into the labor market?

First, immigrant women are frequently segregated into traditional "female" occupations, such as domestic work or garment manufacturing (Morokvasic, 1984; Pedraza, 1991; UN, 1995). Immigrant men also experience occupational segregation, but immigrant women become concentrated along a much smaller spectrum of choices (Pedraza, 1991). They also tend to be concentrated in labor intensive industries that are dependent on cheap labor. The clustering of immigrant women in manufacturing industries undergoing restructuring (e.g. textiles and clothing manufacturing industries) may make them for vulnerable to unemployment (Boyd, 1996; Castles and Miller, 1993).

Second, sex roles and occupational stereotypes that segregate migrant women into certain occupations and industries also contribute to their low income level. There is some indication that, on average, migrant women are the group receiving the lowest salaries (Boyd, 1997a; U.N.,

1995). Generally, migrant women do not consider their role in wage employment to be their primary role. Neither do their employers. Their role, or role to be, of housewife and mother "justifies" their status as subsidiary workers, as opposed to primary breadwinners, and the level of their wages as complementary wages only (Morokvasic, 1984). It is this articulation of gender discrimination, racial discrimination of migrant workers and class exploitation as working class that makes the position of migrant women particularly vulnerable (Morokvasic, 1984).

Finally, "micro" traits associated with the migrants themselves can affect their participation in the labor force. Both migrant women and men may lack the language skills necessary for employment or, if they find employment, may be forced into low wage, low status, dead-end jobs. However, cross-sectional census data indicate that a higher proportion of migrant women do not know the host country language(s), suggesting the potential impact affects more migrant women (Boyd, 1992, 1997a; U.N., 1995). Also, migrant women may come from countries with less developed economies, so they may not have the appropriate education, training or experience, and what they have may not "translate" or be marketable in the receiving society. Again, while this also affects male migrants, women appear to be more at risk with respect to these disjunctures (see Boyd, 1991, 1992), thus relegating more immigrant women to an "unskilled" labor status. Women's roles within the family can also shape and constrain employment. When combined with paid employment, family responsibilities can result in a "double day" syndrome, limiting efforts to invest further in human capital such as host languages and occupational skills (Boyd, 1992).

Not all working immigrant women are unskilled laborers. Immigrant women are well represented in both the highly skilled and unskilled occupations (Boyd, 1976; Lim, 1995; U.N.,

1995). However, by conceiving labor markets as segmented and stressing the persistence of gender hierarchies in them, "researchers have emphasized the marginal situation of migrant female workers and highlighted the double, triple or fourfold discrimination that female migrants experience by virtue of their sex, birthplace, class and the general acceptance that their subordination is natural or inevitable" (Lim, 1995, p. 46). This has limited the job opportunities of migrant women and has relegated many, but not all, of them to low status occupations that are associated with low wages, little chance for advancement, little security, few benefits and poor or dangerous working conditions (Seller, 1994; Simon and Brettell, 1986; UN, 1995).

***The Impact of Migration on the Changing Status of Women and Men Who Migrant***

Migration can have a positive, negative or neutral impact on the status of male and female migrants. How does the act of migrating -- including the subsequent settlement and integration -- affect the status of migrant women? According to the literature on women and migration, the consensus is that it can have either a positive or negative impact, or no real impact at all (Lim, 1995; Morokvasic, 1984; Simon and Brettell, 1986; Tienda and Booth, 1991). While this may initially appear to indicate a lack of consensus, it may simply reflect the different analytical levels used in defining "status". That is, women's status can be defined based on micro (individual, familial) or macro (community, societal) characteristics. This is complicated further by the fact that the status of migrant women in the receiving society can be influenced by their relative position in the sending society, factors associated with the migration process (e.g., why, how, when and with whom they migrated) and their entry status as defined by immigration policy (Lim, 1995; Tienda and Booth, 1991). In this sense, migration can improve the status of migrant women in some areas while eroding it in others and, when the total impact is considered, leave it

essentially unaltered, even when the actual activities performed by women differ (Lim, 1995; Tienda and Booth, 1991).

The literature on female migration generally focuses on two broad aspects of status that can change as a result of the migration process. The first is the position of migrant women within their families. For some women, migration may mean an increase in social mobility, economic independence and relative autonomy (Morokvasic, 1984; Tienda and Booth, 1991). This is especially true if women's moves are accompanied by an increased participation in the labor market. This, of course, would have ramifications on all other aspects of their lives, especially their domestic roles. For some women, new economic and social responsibilities may cause changes in the distribution of power within the family, including greater authority and participation in household decision making and control over familial resources. They also may cause positive shifts in the relationship between immigrant women and their husbands and children (Simon and Brettell, 1986; Tienda and Booth, 1991), although a number of studies have failed to confirm these egalitarian trends (Morokvasic, 1984).

However, participation in the labor force does not automatically ensure lesser inner-familial equality (Tienda and Booth, 1991). For some migrant women, labor force participation may increase the burden that they must carry unless they find new solutions for old roles, particularly those of child care and housework (Simon and Brettell, 1986). Also, migration may simply transfer patriarchal authority from the origin to destination societies, leaving gender relations within a family essentially unaltered. This may mean that, even though they work, migrant women may not have control over their own earnings. Even if women exercise greater control over their income, because of segmented labor market assimilation, their income may be

inadequate to meet subsistence requirements, calling into question whether they are any better off in either absolute or relative terms (Tienda and Booth, 1991). For other migrant women, migration may undermine their position in their families. This may be especially true for non-working women who are isolated from an extended family network and who find themselves increasingly dependent on their spouses or children to deal with a non-domestic world where they may not know the language (Simon and Brettell, 1986)

The second aspect of status change discussed in the literature on women and migration focuses on the impact of moving from one form of gender stratification system to another (Lim, 1995). Generally speaking, this means moving from one form of patriarchy to another. Depending on the advantages and disadvantages of the gender stratification systems in both the sending and receiving communities, a woman's position relative to men's could improve, erode or remain unchanged (Lim, 1995; Tienda and Booth, 1991). In this sense, migrant women "can be viewed as embodying the interactions between the norms and attitudes determining female status in sending and receiving societies (Lim, 1995, p. 32). However, a number of authors argue against the simplistic view that migration involves moving from a "traditional" or "oppressive" gender hierarchy to a "modern" or "emancipated" one (Lim, 1995; Morokvasic, 1984; Tienda and Booth, 1991). Also, the literature on women and migration emphasizes the interaction between the societal and family contexts. Migration may lead to an improvement in the societal status of women without changing their relative position within the family. This would happen, for example, when the place of destination is characterized by flexible sex hierarchies that facilitate the labor force participation of migrant women whose position in the family may nevertheless remain subordinate (Lim, 1995).

## CONCLUSION

The objective of this paper was to develop a gender sensitive approach to the study of international migration. This was accomplished by using a three stage analytical framework to illustrate how gender is intricately involved in the entire migration process and to demonstrate how gender relations, roles and hierarchies differentially influence the migratory behavior and experiences of men and women. We believe this three stage approach overcomes many of the problems present in migration theory and is advantageous for two reasons. First, by focusing on stages of the entire migration process, this framework views migration as more than an economic response by individuals to macro-structural change. This extends analysis beyond the traditional pre-occupation with economic variables in explanations of international migration and the almost exclusive focus on labor migration. Also, by using the migration process as its structural base, the framework facilitates the analysis of additional migration types, such as family reunification or refugee migration, as well as the analysis of different migrant groups, such as female or labor migrants. In this way, from the beginning, the framework highlights the diversity of migrant groups present within migration flows, eliminating the implicit male bias frequently found in migration theory and research.

Second, because our framework views migration as an individual change of status, it incorporates a micro-orientation often lacking in migration theory. While this places less emphasis on the gender-neutral macro-systemic causes of migration, it does not deny the influence that these forces have on either the migration process or the individual migrant. Rather, it re-directs the migratory "stimulus and response" so that, instead of macro-structural forces causing individuals to join migration flows, individuals are responding to the opportunities and

constraints created within their social, cultural and economic contexts by macro-structural change. In this way, emphasis is placed on the individual and contextual analytical levels where migration decisions are actually made. Also, by highlighting the diversity that exists within migrant populations, the framework acknowledges the differential impact that macro-systemic causes of migration can have on these groups. Macro-structural forces are no longer seen as having a "neutral" or "unified" impact on homogenous groups of migrants.

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Table 1: Gender and the Pre-Migration Stage

<b>PRE-MIGRATION STAGE: FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH THE SENDING SOCIETY</b>		
<b>Issue Specific to Gender and Migration</b>	<b>General Summary/Explanation</b>	<b>Summary/Explanation Specific to Female Migrants</b>
Influence of Gender Relations on the Desire and Ability of Women and Men to Migrate	The likelihood that women and/or men will migrate is determined by their abilities to make the decision and to access resources to do so.	Systems of gender stratification in families and in the societies of origin can circumscribe women's ability to make autonomous decisions (e.g. because of patriarchal power relations) and access both familial-based and public resources (e.g. family, income, wages from a job, education, information).
Status and Roles in the Sending Society and Their Impact on the Sex Selectivity of Migration	A woman's or man's status, roles and stage in the life-cycle interact to determine their positions in the sending society and therefore determine their "migratory probability". This interaction influences the opportunity women and men have to migrate at the point when the decision is being made.	Combined with gender relations and sex stratification, it also causes migration to be a sex selective process, shaping the sex composition of the migration flow and the type of migration leaving a sending society. It can also influence the reasons why women and men migrate.
The Impact of Country of Origin Factors on the Desire and Ability of Women and Men to Migrate	Macro/structural characteristics of the country of origin (e.g. level of economy, state of technologies in industries, integration into world economy) influence the migratory decisions and behavior of both women and men.	Macro/structural characteristics of the country of origin combined with gender relations and the position of women in the sending society affect women and men differently, leading to an increase in the level of sex selectivity in migration flows.

Table 2: Gender and the Act of Migrating

<b>THE ACT OF MIGRATION: FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH THE INTERFACE BETWEEN SENDING AND RECEIVING SOCIETIES</b>		
<b>Issue Specific to Gender and Migration</b>	<b>General Summary/Explanation</b>	<b>Summary/Explanation Specific to Female Migrants</b>
The Policy of the Country of Origin	Policies of the country of origin can differentially condition women's and men's ability to exit and emigrate.	Policies can either implicitly or explicitly encourage or discourage women to emigrate. Policies are often influenced by assumptions about the status and roles of women in the family and society.
The Policy of the Country of Destination	Policies of the country of destination differentially condition: a) female and male abilities to emigrate and b) entry statuses of women and men.	Policies frequently define women as dependent family members, categorizing them into a "family role" rather than a "market role" and failing to view them as independent migrants. This can cause increased economic dependency and social vulnerability. Traditional sex roles and stereotypical images regarding the place of women in the labor force can determine occupational recruitment categories. This can, in turn, influence the sex composition of migration flows, curtailing women's ability to migrate.
The Role of Intermediary Organizations and Institutions	Both legal intermediaries that implement recruitment policies and illegal intermediaries that attempt to circumvent immigration policies increase the likelihood that women and men will migrate.	The likelihood that women will migrate can increase because intermediaries act as networks linking potential female migrants with demands for female labor from destination countries. However, intermediaries operating illegally can exploit the disadvantaged position of women, discouraging migration.

Table 3: Gender and the Post-Migration Stage

<b>Post-Migration Stage: Factors Associated with the Receiving Society</b>		
<b>Issue Specific to Gender and Migration</b>	<b>General Summary/Explanation</b>	<b>Summary/Explanation Specific to Female Migrants</b>
The Impact of Entry Status on the Ability to Integrate and Settle	Immigration policy defines the entry status of migrants. Because entry status determines residency and employment rights and can determine eligibility for social welfare programs, it can affect the ability of women and men to integrate and settle.	Entry status is more likely to handicap female migrants because residency and employment and related entitlements often differ by gender. Because migrant women are often viewed by the state as "dependents", their rights may become legally dependent on other family members, making it difficult for them to obtain these rights and entitlements on their own.
Patterns of Incorporation into the Labor Market	Racial, birthplace and gender stereotypes exist in countries of destination, acting as powerful allocative mechanisms in the labor market, and helping create and maintain racial, birthplace and gender concentrations in select occupations.	The sex roles and occupational stereotypes of the receiving society causes migrant women to be incorporated into traditional "female" occupations and industries. This contributes -- and justifies -- their low wages, low occupational status and poor and exploitative working conditions. Also, the human capital characteristics of women, which are influenced by their experience in their country of origin, influence their position in the labor force. The "double day" syndrome of work and housework can prevent migrant women from improving human capital skills.
The Impact of Migration on the Changing Status of Women and Men Who Migrate	Migration can have a positive, negative or neutral impact on the status of migrants.	The position of migrant women in their families can be positively or negatively influenced, especially by labor force participation which can alter inter-familial power differentials. The change in their position in the wider receiving society depends on the comparative advantages/disadvantages of the gender stratification systems of both the sending and receiving societies. The position of women in one area (e.g. societal) can improve through migration while the other (e.g. familial) remains essentially the same.