

than are native women in all of those countries, and they are more likely to assume public roles in their host countries than they did in their countries of origin. The female migrant is an important research topic because immigration and women are highly marketable as well as intellectually challenging topics for study. Both issues have important and far-ranging public policy implications.

NOTES

1. Nancy Foner, "Sex Roles and Sensibilities: Jamaican Women in New York and London," in Simon and Brettell, *International Migration*, pp. 133–152, 133.
2. William Thomas and Florian Znaniecki, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, ed. Eli Zaretsky (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984).
3. Julian L. Simon, *The Economic Consequences of Immigration* (Cambridge, Mass.: Basil Blackwell, 1989).
4. Yolanda Prieto, "Cuban Women in New Jersey," in Simon and Brettell, *International Migration*, pp. 95–113, 110.
5. Sossie Andezian, "Women's Roles in Organizing Symbolic Life: Algerian Female Immigrants in France," in Simon and Brettell, *International Migration*, pp. 257–258, 265.
6. Parminder K. Bhachu, "Work, Dowry and Marriage among East African Sikh Women in the United Kingdom," in Simon and Brettell, *International Migration*, pp. 229–241, 231.
7. F. James Davis and Barbara S. Heyl, "Turkish Women and Guestworker Migration to West Germany," in Simon and Brettell, *International Migration*, pp. 178–197.
8. Foner, "Sex Roles and Sensibilities," pp. 145–146.
9. Rita J. Simon, "Refugee Women and Their Daughters: A Comparison of Soviet, Vietnamese, and Native-Born American Families," in Carolyn L. Williams and Joseph Westermeyer, eds., *Refugee Mental Health in Resettlement Countries* (Washington: Hemisphere Publishing, 1986), pp. 157–172.

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Anthropology and the Study of Immigrant Women

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In 1970, the meeting of the American Ethnological Society focused on the topic "Migration and Anthropology."¹ In his introduction to the volume of proceedings, Leonard Kasdan rightly observed that although migration had long been recognized as an important factor of change in a number of social science disciplines, anthropology had not defined it as a topic of research with high priority. However, changes in the world in the 1950s and 1960s brought migration onto the center stage of the discipline. In a range of areas where ethnographers had traditionally worked among native or peasant populations, for example, Africa, Latin America, and Asia, they began to document the process of outmigration from the villages of the rural countryside to the growing urban centers where new employment opportunities were expanding rapidly.² The interest in migrants and immigrants grew in conjunction with the development of both peasant studies and urban anthropology.

By 1975, two of the volumes that were published in the series that emerged from the Ninth International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences treated migration and its relationship to processes of urbanization, development, and ethnic group formation.³ Though the chapters in these volumes deal with a number of issues in a wide variety of migratory contexts, only passing references, if any, are made to the role of women in migration. Indeed, there is no entry in either index for "women" or "female." As numerous scholars have pointed out, the assumption was that women, if they left their home society at all, did so as passive followers rather than as active initiators. Furthermore, the modernization theories that were still

prevalent at the time stressed emigration or outmigration as matters of individual choice rather than as household strategies with which women were intimately involved.⁴

Stimulated, no doubt, by the publication in 1974 of Rosaldo and Lamphere's path-breaking *Women, Culture and Society*, a book that brought gender as an analytic concept into the mainstream of anthropology, the journal *Anthropological Quarterly* published a special issue, "Women and Migration," in January of 1976. In each of the papers in the volume, migrant and immigrant women are not only viewed as actors in the migration process but also are set into networks of exchange of people, goods, services, and information. The authors demonstrate that women are as influenced as men by the forces of colonialism, socialism, and capitalism.

Despite Leeds's claim in the closing essay of this special issue that women were being spuriously reified as a unit of analysis, from this point on a number of anthropologists chose to address the experiences of migrant and immigrant women in a range of receiving societies, including Europe and the United States.⁵ Using a variety of research methods (participant observation, the collection of life histories and case studies, in-depth interviews, etc.) to access how the women themselves understand their lives and the challenges posed by migration, they focused on how these experiences might differ from those of men and how geographical mobility, both within and across national boundaries, might alter not only culturally rooted understandings of what it means to be a woman, but also various other aspects of culture that individuals and families bring with them as they migrate or emigrate.

In this chapter, we will review the anthropological contribution to the study of immigrant women, addressing ourselves in particular to research on a range of immigrant populations in the United States.⁶ Taking our lead from some of the analytic models that have emerged in feminist anthropology, we first discuss the work roles of immigrant women, how these intersect with domestic and familial roles, and the implications of this intersection for changes in the status of women. From there we move to a consideration of the significance of kinship and other social relationships that are instrumental in the process of adaptation for immigrant women. We then deal with research that broadly treats the question of culture change. After a brief overview of the factors that continue to tie a given migrant population to its ethnic roots over generations, we turn our attention to the wealth of studies within medical anthropology that have contributed to our understanding of immigrant women in the United States. Finally, we address the impact of the state on the lives of immigrant women.

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE, PRODUCTION AND REPRODUCTION: BALANCING WORK ROLES AND DOMESTIC ROLES

As a result of their inquiry into the question of whether women are universally subordinate to men, cultural anthropologists have contributed the domestic/public model to feminist theory. Embedded in this model are the notions that male activities in the public sphere are more highly valued, that men have formal authority over women while women exert informal influence and power within the domestic domain, and that women's status is lowest where these spheres are highly differentiated and where women are isolated from one another.⁷ A parallel model emanating from Marxism analyzes the interrelationship between production and reproduction.⁸ Feminist theorists have stressed that the way in which women's reproductive labor intersects with their productive labor is crucial to their position in society.

Although these models have been subjected to rigorous criticism for their lack of historical or cultural specificity, they have nevertheless influenced anthropological study of immigrant women in the United States.⁹ They have led researchers to explore whether wage earning serves to enhance the power and status of immigrant women within their households and to investigate whether greater sharing of household activities emerges as a result of the work obligations of women. While the latter question obviously pertains to all wage-earning women, the notion is that immigrant women often not only face a clash of cultures, but may also be deprived of the support networks of kinship and community that existed in the countries they left behind.

Chai explicitly applies the conceptual scheme of domestic/public to an analysis of Korean immigrant women in Hawai'i.¹⁰ Middle-class and well-educated, Korean immigrant women were relegated to the domestic sphere in their home society. In Hawai'i they must adjust to the economic demands of immigrant life by taking waged work outside the home. Husbands offer more help in the household than they did in Korea, but this is in part a function of age cohorts, and in many cases husbands retain ultimate authority over family decision making. However, some Korean women, according to Chai, begin to question their husbands' right to dominate them. "Women's wage earning," she concludes, "may lead to a more flexible division of labor, decision making and parental responsibility, as well as to less sex segregation in social and public places."¹¹ She also observes that as Korean immigrant women tire of the menial jobs to which they are relegated in the public domain of the larger society, they revert to working in family-owned businesses and construct their own public domain with its own ladder of achievement

within the Korean ethnic community. Workplace and home are combined and permit these women to spend more time raising successful children who will achieve social and political status within the majority culture.

The decision to combine work roles with domestic roles, and thereby fuse the reproductive with the productive, has been documented for a number of other immigrant women in North America. Meintel, for example, shows that Portuguese women with young children tend to turn to work as cleaning women or to home piece work because the hours and conditions of work are both more flexible and less stressful.¹² She observes, however, that such an option is possible only if these women are in stable marital relationships with partners who earn a good income. Another option is described by Lamphere for Colombian and Portuguese immigrant families in New England.¹³ Given the constraints of the local economy, wives and mothers are forced into the productive sphere of waged work in textile factories. As a result, reproductive labor within the household is reallocated and husbands take on many household chores that are normally defined as female tasks. In addition, husbands and wives work different shifts in order to accommodate child care. Nevertheless, some cultural conceptions, such as the belief that the male should remain the head of the household, are more resistant to change despite the economic contributions of women.

A similar disjunction between norms and behavior has been described for Haitian immigrant women in New York. Cultural definitions and expectations for sexual roles have changed less rapidly than the economic gains made by women. Furthermore, the financial independence of women exacerbates antagonism between the sexes. Haitian immigrant women put in a double day, working eight hours on the job and then coming home to housekeeping, cooking, and child care. If their husbands help, it is with reluctance because the *foye* (home) is the domain of women and it is there that a woman's primary responsibilities are located. The world of men is the *lari*—the street and beyond.¹⁴

If Haitian women have not experienced a dramatic reallocation of household tasks as a result of the demands made upon them by waged work, Dominican women, who are largely employed in the New York garment industry, have. Pessar describes a definite move to a more egalitarian division of labor and distribution of authority within the Dominican household.¹⁵ She quotes one Dominican woman who comments that "we are both heads." Dominican immigrant men are willing to help out with household chores, especially child care and shopping, though their role decreases as a daughter becomes old enough to help her mother. The more cooperative domestic arrangements that emerge within many Dominican immigrant households, as well as the fact that migration does not rupture the social sphere in which women are self-actualized, are

the major factors influencing the greater desire of Dominican women, by comparison with men, to remain in the United States.¹⁶

Within many immigrant Dominican households, income pooling, something that rarely occurs in the Dominican Republic, means that no distinction is made between the "essential" earnings of the male and the "supplementary" earnings of the female. However, this is not always the case. For example, Mexicana farm workers differentiate the "important" crops harvested by men from secondary "women's crops." Mexicana women "never express that their agricultural work is economically equivalent to men's." Instead when women work with their husbands, they define it as "*ayudandole a él*."¹⁷ It is in this "helping" context that women's waged work is ideologically acceptable. This is particularly the case when the household rather than the individual is defined as the basic productive (as well as reproductive) unit of the immigrant family.¹⁸ Chavira argues that Mexicana women's roles in subsistence as well as their manipulation of the subsidy programs and other bureaucratic resources that are made available to them give them a position of power within their families.

Pessar cautions us to be aware of variations in household culture and organization that will influence individual attitudes toward women's work in the immigrant context, the sharing of domestic responsibilities, and the desire to remain abroad or return to the home country. Some Dominican immigrant men are reluctant to modify their patriarchal attitudes and behavior.¹⁹ This intransigence is the major cause of marital breakdown. Nevertheless, a significant proportion of Dominican immigrant women feel they are better off. They perceive waged work positively because it brings both economic and personal benefits. This is a conclusion also reached by Foner in her work on Jamaican women in New York.²⁰ Independence and financial control are viewed as definite advantages and are a strong deterrent to return migration.

Although they are dealing with a seasonal Mexican female migrant population, Guendelman and Perez-Itriago document similar positive subjective assessments of life abroad that are rooted in the contrast between family roles in California and those that pertain in Mexico. As one of their informants put it, "in California my husband was like a *mariposa* meaning a sensitive, soft, responsive butterfly. Back here in Mexico he acts like a distant macho."²¹ Many of the seasonal migrant women express an interest in returning to the United States in order to resume more cooperative relationships. Yet some, according to Fernandez-Kelly, are constrained by the pressures of caring for many children, especially if migration means facing the vagaries of undocumented illegal status in the United States.²²

The anthropological research on immigrant women that has been stimulated by the analytical oppositions between domestic and public

arenas or between production and reproduction indicates a set of complex and varied responses to the necessity of balancing work life with home life. In some cases greater equality between men and women is the result and in others it is not, and the differences must be explained by a close examination of cultural factors and economic constraints. Meintel and associates observe that "when changes in task-sharing and decision-making occur in conjunction with women's wage earning, they are likely to be found in areas which are most directly affected by women's employment: e.g., child care as opposed to housework, and financial decisions as opposed to those concerning freedom of movement and contraception."²³ It is common for anthropologists to emphasize the disjunction between behavior and norms, a disjunction that seems to have a powerful influence in the pace of change in various spheres of life for immigrant families. Cultural norms that continue to label men as principal providers and women as housekeepers and dependents are powerful deterrents to more egalitarian domestic arrangements. Nevertheless, in some situations immigrant women, like women elsewhere around the world, are able to exercise informal power.

If a number of immigrant women in the United States assess their increased earning capacity, their improved standard of living, and their greater opportunities to work and achieve upward mobility positively, they perceive other facets of immigrant life negatively. For many, the most negative results of migration are the temporary or permanent loss of a kinship support system and the absence of leisure time. It is thus to the social world of immigrant women both within and beyond the domestic sphere that we now turn.

HUSBANDS, WIVES, AND IMMIGRANT SOCIAL NETWORKS

"Strategy" and "process" have replaced "structure" as underlying concepts within anthropology.²⁴ Social networks, first examined with seriousness by ethnologists working in urban Africa in the late 1960s and the 1970s, have thus become a key focus of research on social organization. Anthropologists recognize the value of networks to migrants. These networks consist of friends or relatives of the migrant who are already in the destination area or those who are return migrants.²⁵ They serve as communication links between the sending and receiving communities. This seems especially important in international migration where the distances involved make adequate information harder to obtain.

There are two general types of networks. One serves the purpose of chain migration, where individuals channel their efforts to reunite extended family groups.²⁶ The other type is community based and operates

to support newcomers as they adjust to the demands of their new environments.²⁷ Immigrant women are frequently found at the center of these networks. They both initiate and maintain them. They are the "nodes" that connect people, and generally they do it so subtly and unobtrusively that the significance of their actions is sometimes little recognized even by themselves.²⁸

Though deeply embedded in migration processes around the world, kin-based migration networks that foster chain migration have proliferated as a result of the United States Immigration Act of 1965, which had as its aim the reuniting of families. The new law made it possible for individuals to "call over" other family members one at a time. Chavez, for example, writes of an unmarried El Salvador woman who first called her niece and two years later her mother and her nephew.²⁹

There are two distinct problems with the reunification policy. It takes a long time to bring over an entire family, and in many cases the definition of family that the law proscribes is not broad enough to fit the concept of family held by certain ethnic groups. As a result, complex strategies to bypass the laws and restrictions that perpetuate family separation have been devised and carried out.³⁰ In many cases these include marriages of convenience or the adoption of children. Often the migrations can only be managed in stages, with the newcomer first going to Canada or Mexico or to U.S. cities other than their final destination. Women have an active part in the decision process that determines the order of migration of absent members, and they hold down jobs that fund the moves. Stafford tells us that women continue to play an important role in Haitian chain migration schemes, helping themselves and others through the difficult adjustment process.³¹

Community-based networks take shape in both sending and receiving areas. Mexican men from the Nayarit region who leave their wives behind make sure that a network of wife helpers (usually drawn from among the husband's kin) is in place to help with short-term loans, repairs to the household, bills, the care and sale of animals, the purchasing of materials and other tasks normally carried out by the husband.³² When a man returns, part of what he has earned will be spent on gifts for members of this help network. This cements the obligation. However, as time passes and the woman becomes more self-sufficient, she relies less and less on these help networks. She becomes a *mujer fuerte* and gains esteem and social prestige while her husband is absent.

A substantial number of Dominican immigrant women are single parents who want to provide a better life for their children than is possible in their home countries. They must make use of networks at both ends of their migration trail. If they have young children who must be cared for, they may choose to leave them behind with their maternal grandmother. Once in this country, women usually live in extended family

groupings that are composed of blood or marital kin who provide one another with financial and emotional support. Forming networks within their own groups, these women belie the stereotype of the passive Latin woman. They are not patiently waiting to be helped by husbands or brothers but are assuming active leadership roles, taking charge of their own lives and helping kinswomen do the same.³³

Korean immigrant women in Hawai'i also spend a period of coresidence with kin and, contrary to tradition, it is usually the relatives of the wife rather than those of the husband.³⁴ Laotian women, accustomed to carrying out daily tasks on a communal basis, form networks with kin and nonkin living nearby to help them cope with the loss of the support systems they had in Laos.³⁵ These networks are cooperative in nature and without accurate record keeping succeed in remaining balanced. Whether employed outside the home or not, the women share in caring for each other's children. They plan and carry out food shopping and preparation together. They provide for each other's social needs and serve as channels of community information.

Women have social license not available to men to share their personal concerns and worries with each other. These discussions take place informally as women gather at social and religious functions, or around a common worktable on the job. While outsiders may view these as gossip sessions, they actually serve as occasions for passing on valuable information and widening the range of an individual's contacts. O'Connor, for example, writes about the female-centered networks that emerge among Mexican immigrants, many of them undocumented, in Santa Barbara as a result of their labor force participation in local nurseries.³⁶ Based on the idea of *confianza* that is traditionally characteristic of kin and fictive kin relations in Mexico, these networks within the workplace provide the framework within which immigrant women seek help from formal agencies or mobilize themselves for social action. According to O'Connor, this represents a dramatic change from Mexico, where "women rarely work outside the subsistence economy, . . . have little knowledge of formal political or legal entities beyond local municipal affairs, . . . and participate in the social networks of their husbands and fathers [rather than] instigate network relationships of their own."³⁷

While the bulk of research on the networks of migrant and immigrant women deals with the larger kin group or the workplace, some studies consider how the role changes experienced by male and female immigrants are related to changing patterns in their social relationships. According to a theory proposed by Bott, couples share a social network and perceive each other as companions in direct proportion to how they normally divide conjugal tasks. If conjugal roles are separate, so also are social and kin networks. When roles overlap or become cooperative in nature, social and kin networks do also.³⁸ An instance that might lend

support to this theory can be seen in the experience of Korean women in Hawai'i.

In Korea the lives of men and women run on separate but parallel tracks. Labor is strictly divided, with men performing economically related tasks outside the home and women responsible for motherhood and other tasks inside the home. Each has distinct networks with which they interact and socialize on a daily basis. In Hawai'i women must hold jobs outside the home and many couples have made adjustments in the ways domestic duties are assigned. Men and women both are separated from their customary social and support ties and need to rely on each other. They spend more time together both in domestic tasks and in social activities. A majority of women, though by no means all, report enhanced marital relationships.³⁹

A similar situation is reported by Lamphere, Silva, and Sousa in their work on Portuguese immigrants in New England. The realignments in household division of labor resulting from women's work outside the home have drawn nuclear families closer, while ties to extended families and friends become less important.⁴⁰ Conversely, Bloch argues that the economic pursuits of Polish immigrants divide family members, sending each off in a different direction every day. The family unit becomes fractionalized as its members develop distinct sets of friends and a variety of interests, returning home at night too tired to reconnect with each other. Polish women express feelings of isolation, feel that they are overworked, and fear that they have lost touch with their children. They seem at a particular disadvantage compared to women of other ethnic groups because they are unable to draw support from friends and kin. Bloch reports that they operate on a basis of suspicion and competitiveness with both family and nonfamily members. Where other groups see increased opportunity for all flowing from information exchange and cooperative efforts, the Poles see in these behaviors only the possibility of losses of personal advantages. They therefore are fearful and secretive in their dealings with those from whom others draw support.⁴¹

A different outcome is experienced by middle-class Cuban women. These women view the role of wife as primary. Children are valued and loved, but the focal point of a Cuban woman's life is her husband and her relationship to him. In the United States, Cuban women are entering the work force in increasing numbers, and operating within it competently and aggressively, but they have not let this influence their interactions with husbands inside the home. What they have done, however, is to take on an additional role, one that was carried out by a man's mistress in Cuba, where showing off a beautiful mistress gave status to a man and did not dishonor his wife. Since United States customs do not provide the same approbation for such behavior, the Cuban wife fills it and thereby earns her husband the status he would otherwise be

denied. Women who in Cuba were able to become slightly plump must diet in the United States to maintain the image of youth and beauty necessary to fulfill this role.⁴²

Anthropological research has demonstrated that the balance contained within male-female relationships is upset by the migratory experience. Both men and women must adjust to the demands of changing roles inside and outside the home. Relationships with children change also. In some cases prolonged separation of children from parents becomes necessary, and in others parents find that the demands of operating and financing households in the United States leaves little time and/or energy for the sort of interaction with children that would have taken place in their home communities. New social networks may be forged or old ones sustained. These networks may or may not be shared by husband and wife. The networks of immigrant women are crucial for disseminating information not only about employment opportunities, but also about various institutions of the host society. One of these institutions is the health care system, and it is to these issues that we now turn.

HEALTH, ILLNESS, AND THE IMMIGRANT WOMAN

The study of how cultures change is fundamental to anthropology, and a number of processes by which this occurs have been delineated. Culture change is clearly of central importance in the study of immigrants, although research in this area often analyzes a group or population according to their participation in traditional practices. Considered are things such as the meanings involved in continuing to serve symbolic foods and whether or not these foods are prepared with traditional ingredients or with the use of substitutes that maintain the symbolic value but may lose authentic taste quality. Native language use and the efforts that are made to teach the original language to succeeding generations provide another arena for assessing change. Language is often at the core of expressions of ethnic identity.⁴³ Of interest also are the methods used to hand down traditional songs and dances.⁴⁴ Studies measure the number of ethnically based voluntary associations that are active within the community and the rate of participation in them by its members. Religious practices conducted in the ethnic vernacular and social activities that bring together the ethnic group are yet another indicator of cultural cohesion.⁴⁵ Many of these studies are not primarily focused on women, but they deal with domains of family life that are centered around women. Thus the way that immigrant women respond to cultural difference is of utmost importance to any understanding of how immigrant families adapt to a new way of life. One female-centered domain where both cultural differences and adaptation are significant is that of family health.

Major contributions to the study of health issues among immigrants have been made by medical anthropologists. Medical anthropology emerged as a subfield of the discipline in the mid-1960s, although the issues that scholars in this field address (ethnomedicine, cultural conceptions of disease, human reproduction, etc.) have a longer history within anthropology, many of them subsumed within ethnographic studies of religion, research on culture and personality, or investigations of international public health systems.⁴⁶ In directing their attention to the adaptation of immigrants in the United States, medical anthropologists have demonstrated that the health of migrants is worse than that of nonmigrants,⁴⁷ and that many suffer from significant stress disorders that are not necessarily alleviated over time.⁴⁸ Clearly the impact of migration on health issues has a gender component. Research on gender and health can be subdivided into three areas: studies of the relationship between ethnomedical and biomedical orientations toward sickness and healing, studies of mental health and stress, and studies of the use of the health care system.

Indigenous Health Beliefs and U.S. Health Care

Immigrants and refugees, even those who have been in the United States for some time, either continue folk healing methods or juxtapose their own medical beliefs and practices with those of the United States.⁴⁹ Scholars who have conducted research in this area emphasize that health care professionals must adopt a transcultural perspective.

Bell and Whiteford show that Tai Dai women hold different concepts of illness causality than do Euro-Americans.⁵⁰ They emphasize food, temperature changes, and supernatural forces to a greater degree. Samoan migrants in Los Angeles retain a belief in the concept of *aitu*, the ghost spirit who punishes the living by bringing on a variety of physiological and mental illnesses.⁵¹ For Samoan immigrant women, *M'ai aitu* is a culturally appropriate and patterned way to cope with anxiety and stress. DeSantis shows that while Cuban immigrant women in Florida have a biomedical orientation to illness and health care that is similar to that of Western health care professionals (illnesses and their associated symptoms are identified by their biomedical names), Haitian women are more ethnomedically oriented and tend to "give folk interpretations of biomedical explanations regarding pathophysiological processes." She associates these differences with (1) the educational and health care systems in the countries of origin, (2) the socioeconomic and political situation that affects immigrants in the localized receiving community, (3) household structure and function, and (4) beliefs about child behavior (the study focused on children's illnesses).⁵²

Many immigrant and refugee women combine orientations and there-

fore remedies. Thus, the Cuban women discussed by Kirby use prescription tranquilizers in conjunction with herbal teas and other home remedies in their search for a cure for "nervios."⁵³ Cohen claims that Latina women frequently seek consultations with native pharmacists from their home country to supplement the care that they receive from the U.S. system.⁵⁴ Sargent, Marcucci, and Ellison show that Khmer women increasingly seek prenatal care at U.S. hospitals and clinics and tend to deliver their babies in hospitals. However, they also continue to follow traditional postpartum protective measures and to consult the indigenous midwife (*chmop*).⁵⁵

Scholars in a number of disciplines have studied fertility patterns among immigrant women, mostly demonstrating a decline after migration.⁵⁶ Anthropologists have tended to focus on the cultural factors that influence attitudes toward childbirth, pregnancy, and other female health issues.⁵⁷ Morse and Park document cultural variations in perceptions of the pain that is associated with childbirth and explain them according to whether or not childbirth is viewed as natural or not.⁵⁸ In another article on the Khmer community in Dallas, Sargent and Marcucci demonstrate how pregnancy is culturally and socially constructed. The Khmer, like many other cultural groups, believe in humoral concepts and use them to diagnose pregnancy, treat symptoms, and control diet during pregnancy.⁵⁹ Similar humorally based attitudes are described for Indochinese women in California. They influence their preference for formula over breast milk.⁶⁰ Korean immigrant women in Honolulu have trouble communicating their anxieties about *naeng*, a folk illness rooted in ideas about a cold womb, to clinicians. Frequently, humoral and cosmopolitan lore are synthesized as an explanation for personal affliction.⁶¹ Finally, Engle, Scrimshaw, and Smidt have worked on sex differences in attitudes toward newborns among Mexican immigrants in the Los Angeles area. Although they discovered an absence of preference among mothers (especially by comparison with fathers), they also suggest that "the more acculturated women express less positive attitudes toward their newborns," and the relationship was slightly stronger for girls than boys.⁶²

Mental Health and Stress

A certain amount of stress is associated with the experience of immigration. A number of scholars, both sociologists and anthropologists, have examined variations in mental health by gender.⁶³ Friedenberg and associates show that Argentine immigrant women in New York are more demoralized across socioeconomic strata than are males, especially those who are nonworking or without household help to assist in child care.⁶⁴ In a study of Hmong refugees in Minnesota, Westermeyer and associates

show that men experience greater stress during the initial phase of migration because of a loss in power and status and an inability to cope adequately with the public domain. However, as their employment situation and linguistic capabilities improve, their symptoms decrease. By contrast, women in the initial phase experience less psychological distress than men because they continue in their traditional domestic roles and do not have to deal with the obligations of financial support. The exceptions are women who become employed: "They reported more Phobic Anxiety symptoms . . . due to the new and relatively nontraditional roles as wage workers outside the Hmong community."⁶⁵ However, mental illness and stress increase for women over time, particularly as they become concerned about the Americanization of their children. Women heading their own household experience constant stress, a fact also noted by Cohen for single Latina immigrant women who have settled on the East Coast of the United States.⁶⁶

Vega and associates also focus on the initial migration phase, and argue that depression symptom levels of Mexican immigrants are higher among those who have been in the United States for less than five years.⁶⁷ They find a positive correlation between depression and disrupted marital status, serious life events, poor physical health, and being a single head of household. Depression is negatively correlated with educational and income levels, and there seems to be no relationship according to the number of children. They argue that for women in particular "family structure and normative expectations are unstable and deeply conflicted. . . . The effort to maintain traditional cultural role expectations within the context of a highly urbanized and affluent social system could be expected to increase stress and economic marginality."⁶⁸ When migrant women maintain contact with their support network of kin in Mexico, they are much better adjusted.⁶⁹

The conflicts between motherhood and breadwinner roles create significant stress for a number of immigrant women in the United States. Among Latin American women in San Francisco, illness, whether mental or physical, validates a claim to maternal identity.⁷⁰ Korean women in Hawai'i complain of a variety of health disorders from insomnia to chest pain, to loss of appetite and frigidity. Chai suggests that many of these complaints are psychosomatic and are an informal strategy used by these women to legitimize and reaffirm their roles as good wives and mothers in a situation where their inadequate English, limited knowledge of American culture, employment in degrading jobs, and the double burden of waged and domestic work leads to declining authority over their children.⁷¹

Finally, Kirby describes the solace from stress that Cuban women in South Florida find in increased use of minor prescription tranquilizers. This stress is a result of the conflict between the ideal sex roles defined

by Cuban culture and the economic realities of immigrant life—particularly the need to take on waged employment and to juggle work, child care, and other household responsibilities.⁷² Tranquilizers alleviate ailments associated with *nervios*—a mental health ailment described by other scholars of immigrant women in North America,⁷³ one that is commonly attributed to poor working conditions, low wages, and gender relations.⁷⁴ Use of tranquilizers, in Kirby's view, "may be indicative of an adaptive strategy for dealing with culture change, and not merely as an example of illicit drug abuse."⁷⁵

Access to and Use of the Health Care System

A number of anthropologists have focused on the access to and use of the health care system by various immigrant and refugee groups in the United States. For many, contact with the system is minimal. In a study of Laotian Tai Dam female refugees in Iowa, Bell and Whiteford show: (1) that two thirds of Tai Dam women do not use and have never used birth control because of insufficient knowledge and cultural norms, (2) that language creates problems of communication with doctors, (3) that a quarter of Tai Dam women are not covered by insurance, and (4) that close to a quarter have never seen a dentist and almost half do not have a personal physician.⁷⁶ Mexican immigrant women tend to underutilize health facilities even for prenatal care.⁷⁷ Illegal status and both the lack of insurance and fear associated with it provides one explanation. Work factors may also be important. Fifty-five percent of a sample of Mexican immigrant women in one study had at least one illness episode during their stay in the United States, and more working than non-working women reported illness.⁷⁸ This may not be the result of the harsh conditions of work per se but of the increased access to medical care through work, which may influence the reporting of illness.

Other research shows that women immigrants seek medical attention and assistance as a way to alleviate tension and stress—being sick is a culturally appropriate means of gaining sympathy and support. For Latin American immigrant women in San Francisco, "illness may provide the opportunity for involvement in one of the few truly recreational activities available to women—going to the doctor."⁷⁹ When immigrant women do seek access to the U.S. health care system, it is largely through their own social networks.⁸⁰

Chavira characterizes their role as "subsidy providers" as one of the more important among Mexicana migrants in the midwestern United States. "Women always carry, handle, and store all the family's documents and handle all bureaucratic matters affecting the family. In these ways, women are responsible for the family's health and other business. They function, as well, as cultural brokers as they introduce the family

to the medical bureaucratic culture."⁸¹ By becoming the health experts, women gain prestige and authority in vital decisions about geographical movement.

Through their dealings with the health care system, immigrant women come into contact with one aspect of state bureaucracy. In the final section of this chapter we explore other aspects of this interaction as well as the significance of social class.

IMMIGRANT WOMEN, SOCIAL CLASS, AND THE STATE

The political economic perspective has attuned anthropologists to the way in which global processes and class relations influence everyday lives. Within feminist anthropology this has resulted in a rich body of data on the impact of national and international development projects on women and in an exploration of how the social position of women is affected by the social, economic, and political policies of states. Research has emphasized not only how national immigration policies influence the demography of international female migration, but also their insertion in the receiving society. A model that addresses a threefold oppression or a "triple invisibility" according to gender, class, and ethnicity has emerged from these concerns.⁸² One scholar has described a fourth oppression stemming from internalized self-perceptions whereby an exploited position is accepted as normal and natural.⁸³

Class is experienced in the context of a transnational division of labor that is in turn linked to local and generally segmented occupational structures that funnel immigrant women into a few sectors of the economy, the garment industry and domestic service in particular.⁸⁴ Safa, for example, argues that the job market explains why Hispanic immigrant women outnumber men in the New York area.⁸⁵ A decline in these jobs in recent years has forced them to scramble to find other ways to support themselves. Alternatively, Fernandez-Kelly and Garcia show how local and federal agencies, operating within the framework of capitalist government policies, contribute to the growth of an informal or underground economy that employs numerous Hispanic women in Los Angeles and Miami.⁸⁶

While these macro political and economic concerns have occupied the attention of some anthropologists, others have focused more closely on internalized perceptions of class and particularly the experience of downward mobility that is voiced by immigrant women who defined themselves as middle class prior to their arrival in the United States. Brazilian women in New York who were used to employing servants are now employed as servants. They cope with this change in social position by defining their situation as short-term and temporary.⁸⁷ Haitian women

who held professional or white-collar positions in their home country express enormous resentment about their loss in social status and the fact that their education and skills are not valued in a predominantly English-speaking society. One Haitian woman who found herself working in a leather goods factory in the United States commented, "The job I do is for an animal. It's the same day after day. . . . I used to be a schoolteacher in Haiti. Now I'm doing a job that doesn't even require me to think."⁸⁸ High status middle-class Korean women who were not employed outside the home prior to emigration generally work at menial jobs that are not commensurate with their education once they arrive in the United States.⁸⁹ They are forced to take on these jobs because of the discrimination faced by their husbands. Professionals, managers, and white collar workers in Korea, these men find themselves working as janitors, gardeners, painters, and dishwashers in the United States. The same is true among Soviet Jews and Vietnamese refugees.⁹⁰

Interestingly, it is the studies of middle-class female immigrants that show waged work failing to enhance women's status. The major motive for international migration among Colombians is the proletarianization of the middle class; they face increasing unemployment and poverty in their own country.⁹¹ Perhaps because they had waged employment in their home country, Colombian immigrant women do not gain self-esteem and autonomy in relation to their spouses because of their earnings. In the "least attractive categories in the labor market" of the United States, they are insecure about their position as workers and earn less than their husbands.⁹² According to Boone, Cuban women in Washington, D.C., do not value labor in and of itself because it is an extension of their domestic roles and is expected of them.⁹³ Alternatively, another study argues that Cuban mores restricted women's activities to the home and that women gained prestige and high standing by remaining within the domestic domain.⁹⁴ This status is lost as a result of the necessity of employment in the United States. The meaning of this loss of status is perhaps best expressed in a statement made by a Cuban respondent in a study conducted in Hudson County, New Jersey. "I used to work as a doctor's secretary in Cuba. I could dress well and it was a respectable job. Here I have to do factory work. . . . Instead of improving myself in coming to the United States, I feel like I'm going backwards every day."⁹⁵ The contradictions in the research on Cuban immigrant women's attitudes toward work emphasize most blatantly the need to be precise about the social class background of immigrants.⁹⁶ This is nowhere more apparent than in a comparison between Cuban entrepreneurs in Miami and proletarianized Mexican women in Los Angeles. In one case, home work becomes a strategy to maximize earnings and reconcile the cultural and economic demands placed upon women; in the other it is an avenue to increasing vulnerability.⁹⁷

While social class is significant, anthropologists are quick to emphasize

that the exploitation and discrimination that immigrant women experience may result more from their foreignness and/or femaleness. Foner notes a number of factors that divide Jamaican women from other immigrant or working-class women and, conversely, unites them with Jamaican men in a common cause.⁹⁸ Among Dominican women, "the identification and satisfaction with improvements in life-style dampen the collective sentiments and solidarity that are potentially nurtured and ignited in the workplace."⁹⁹ These women view themselves as middle class and measure themselves against where they were when they left their home country. Their orientation, according to Pessar, is individualistic rather than collective, and as a result they shun unions, legislative processes, and collective community action.

Pessar's observations draw attention to the pitfalls of ascribing our own concepts of liberation and oppression to immigrant women, who either feel the inevitability of their situation or have a different set of standards by which to evaluate their success. Both these factors explain their comparatively low level of political consciousness. Although there are a few exceptions, generally where anthropologists and other social scientists have even acknowledged the stirrings of group-based political expression, they describe it as incipient or weak.¹⁰⁰ The fact that community and social organizations tend to be male oriented explains, in Gordon's view, the low level of collective action among Caribbean immigrant women.¹⁰¹ Their social world is the interpersonal world of kin and neighbors. Another factor is the basic division in the working class along ethnic lines. Lamphere describes some of this resentment between older (Italian, Irish, French-Canadian) and newer (Portuguese, Latin American) female immigrant factory workers in a New England apparel plant. Much of it centers on accusations of "rate busting." The perception is that new immigrants work too fast and the piece rate is lowered such that all workers have to increase their output to make the same pay. Despite these divisions and tensions, a culture of resistance that crosses ethnic lines can develop, according to Lamphere, when unions base their organizational activities on the informal networks that are established among women who bring their social and familial roles to the workplace.¹⁰² This humanized work culture may not emerge in every situation, but where it does it can provide a powerful base for collective action by immigrant women.¹⁰³ Certainly more research is necessary to unravel the possibilities for political consciousness among immigrant women more generally.

CONCLUSION

Anthropology is a diverse and holistic discipline that encompasses within it a wide variety of theoretical perspectives and an unlimited

number of research problems that are both interesting and important. This breadth is reflected in the scholarship on immigrant women in the United States. While much of this research is carried out at the micro community level, today it is rarely without some recognition of the significance of macro economic and political forces. While feminist models have suggested new questions to address, the emphasis within anthropology on the insider's interpretation of events has meant that universal dichotomies are not applied categorically. What is perhaps less apparent in studies of immigrant women, though fundamental to the anthropological imagination, is the comparative perspective. Ethnologists have tended to focus on single cultural groups and as a result lose the context within which to delineate how culture as opposed to some other factor, such as class, influences the lives and experiences of immigrant women. However, from the perspective of anthropology, social classes also have culture. It is the concept of culture that leads us to appreciate the multiple voices of immigrant women.

NOTES

1. Robert F. Spencer, ed., *Migration and Anthropology* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1970).
2. Douglas S. Butterworth, "A Study of the Urbanization Process Among Mixtec Migrants from Tilantego in Mexico City," *America Indígena* 22, 3 (1962): 257-274; Abner Cohen, "The Migratory Process: Settlers and Strangers," in Abner Cohen, ed., *Customs and Politics in Urban Africa: A Study of Hausa Migrants in Yoruba Towns* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), pp. 29-50; Edwin Eames, "Some Aspects of Urban Migration from a Village in North Central India," *Eastern Anthropologist* 8, 1 (1954): 13-26; William Mangin, ed., *Peasants in Cities: Readings in the Anthropology of Urbanization* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969).
3. Brian DuToit and Helen I. Safa, *Migration and Urbanization: Models and Adaptive Strategies* (The Hague: Mouton, 1975) and *Migration and Development: Implications for Ethnic Identity and Political Conflict* (The Hague: Mouton, 1975).
4. For examples of studies that use the household as the major unit of analysis, see Janet E. Benson, "Households, Migration and Community Context," *Urban Anthropology* 19, 1 (1990): 9-29; Elizabeth K. Briody, "Patterns of Household Migration into South Texas," *International Migration Review* 21, 1 (1987): 27-47; Ina Dinerman, "Patterns of Adaptation among Households of U.S.-Bound Migrants from Michoacan Mexico," *International Migration Review* 12 (1978): 485-501; Patricia Pessar, "The Role of Households in International Migration and the Case of U.S.-Bound Migration from the Dominican Republic," *International Migration Review* 16, 2 (1982): 342-364; Charles Wood, "Structural Change and Household Strategies: A Conceptual Framework for the Study of Rural Migration," *Human Organization* 40, 4 (1981): 338-343.
5. Anthony Leeds, "Women in the Migratory Process: A Reductionist Outlook," *Anthropological Quarterly* 49, 1 (1976): 69-76; Parminder K. Bhachu, *Twice*

Migrants (London: Tavistock, 1985); Brettell, *We Have Already Cried Many Tears*; Hans C. Buechler and Judith Maria Buechler, *Carmen: The Autobiography of a Spanish Galician Woman* (Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman, 1981); Nancy Foner, *Jamaica Farewell: Jamaican Migrants in London* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978); Lisa Gilad, *Ginger and Salt: Yemeni Jewish Women in an Israeli Town* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989); Charity Goodman, "Immigration and Class Mobility: The Case of Family Reunification Wives in East Germany," *Women's Studies* 13 (1987): 235-248.

6. In this chapter we use migrant and immigrant interchangeably, though we are always talking about women who are crossing an international boundary. In general, we are dealing with the literature on relative newcomers to the United States, but occasionally studies of second- or even third-generation ethnic groups are included. We have included some research on refugee groups. These populations are the focus of increasing attention by anthropologists, and they often experience problems similar to those of economic migrants. Finally, where we thought it relevant, we have made reference to some studies of immigrant women in Canada.

7. Rosaldo, "Women, Culture and Society," pp. 17-43.

8. Claude Meillassoux, *Maidens, Meals and Money* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the Political Economy of Sex," in Rayna Reiter, ed., *Toward an Anthropology of Women* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), pp. 157-210.

9. Felicity Edholm, Olivia Harris, and Kate Young, "Conceptualizing Women," *Critique of Anthropology* 3 (1977): 101-130; Olivia Harris, "Households as Natural Units," in Kate Young, Carol Wolkowitz, and Roslyn McCullagh, eds., *Of Marriage and the Market* (London: CSE Books, 1981), pp. 49-68; Henrietta L. Moore, *Feminism and Anthropology* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988); Susan Carol Rogers, "Women's Place: A Critical View of Anthropological Theory," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 20 (1978): 123-162; Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo, "The Use and Abuse of Anthropology: Reflections on Feminism and Cross-Cultural Understanding," *SIGNS* 4, 3 (1980): 497-513; Sylvia Junko Yanagisako and Jane Collier, *Gender and Kinship: Toward a Unified Analysis* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1987).

10. Chai, "Adaptive Strategies of Recent Korean Immigrant Women in Hawaii," and "Freed from the Elders but Locked into Labor."

11. Chai, "Freed from the Elders but Locked into Labor," p. 229.

12. Deirdre Meintel, "The New Double Workday of Immigrant Workers in Quebec," *Women Studies* 13 (1987): 273-293.

13. Lamphere, "From Working Daughters to Working Mothers"; "Working Mothers and Family Strategies: Portuguese and Colombian Women in a New England Community," in Simon and Brettell, *International Migration*, pp. 266-283; Lamphere, *From Working Daughters to Working Mothers*.

14. Stafford, "Haitian Immigrant Women," p. 186.

15. Pessar, "The Role of Households in International Migration"; Pessar, "The Linkage between the Household and Workplace Experience"; Pessar, "The Role of Gender in Dominican Settlement in the United States," in Nash and Safa, *Women and Change*, pp. 274-294; Pessar, "The Dominicans"; Pessar, "The Constraints on and Release of Female Labor Power."

16. Pessar, "The Role of Gender in Dominican Settlement," p. 276.
17. This concept of helping—women help men outside the home and men help women within it—has been described for other immigrant groups. See Goody, "Introduction to Female Migrants and the Work Force"; Alicia Chavira, "Tienes Que Ser Valiente: Mexican Migrants in a Midwestern Farm Labor Camp," in Melville, *Mexicans at Work*, pp. 64–73, here, p. 69.
18. Briody, "Patterns of Household Migration."
19. Pessar, "The Dominicans," p. 123.
20. Foner, "Sex Roles and Sensibilities."
21. Guendelman and Perez-Itriago, "Double Lives," p. 268.
22. Fernandez-Kelly, "Mexican Border Industrialization."
23. Meintel, "Migration, Wage Labor and Domestic Relationships: Immigrant Women in Montreal," *Anthropologica* 26, 2 (1984): 135–169, here, p. 162.
24. Sherry B. Ortner, "Theory in Anthropology since the Sixties," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 26, 1 (1984): 126–166.
25. Gonzalez, "Multiple Migratory Experiences"; Daniel O. Price and Melanie M. Sikes, *Rural-Urban Migration Research in the United States*, Center of Population Research Monograph (Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 1975).
26. Nancy B. Graves and Theodore Graves, "Adaptive Strategies in Urban Migration," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 3 (1974): 117–151.
27. Janet E. Benson, "Households, Migration and Community Context," *Urban Anthropology* 19 (1990): 9–29; Steven J. Gold, "Differential Adjustment among New Immigrant Family Members," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 17 (1989): 408–434.
28. Smith, "Networks and Migration Resettlement"; Cohen, "The Female Factor in Resettlement"; Stafford, "Haitian Immigrant Women"; Sylvia Junko Yanagisako, "Women-Centered Kin Networks in Urban Bilateral Kinship," *American Ethnologist* 4 (1977): 207–226.
29. Chavez, "Coresidence and Resistance."
30. Stephen M. Fjellman and Hugh Gladwin, "Haitian Family Patterns of Migration to South Florida," *Human Organization* 44, 4 (1985): 301–312; Vivian Garrison and Carol I. Weiss, "Dominican Family Networks and United States Immigration Policy: A Case Study," *International Migration Review* 13 (1979): 264–283.
31. Stafford, "Haitian Immigrant Women."
32. Ahern, Bryan, and Baca, "Migration and La Mujer Fuerte."
33. Cohen, "The Female Factor in Resettlement."
34. Chai, "Adaptive Strategies of Recent Korean Immigrant Women in Hawaii," and "Freed from the Elders but Locked into Labor."
35. Muir, *The Strongest Part of the Family*.
36. O'Connor, "Women's Networks," p. 82.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 85. See also Lamphere, "Bringing the Family to Work," and Zavella, "Abnormal Intimacy," for additional discussions of how networks affect women's consciousness among migrant and immigrant populations.
38. Elizabeth Bott, *Family and Social Network* (New York: Free Press, 1971).
39. Chai, "Adaptive Strategies of Recent Korean Immigrant Women in Hawaii," and "Freed from the Elders but Locked into Labor."