



Continuities in Gender Relations: a Case of Immigrant Families from Huejuquilla el Alto, Jalisco

Patricia Zamudio

Northwestern University, USA

Resumen: El artículo examina la forma como las familias de inmigrantes mexicanos han negociado sus relaciones de género durante el proceso de establecimiento en Chicago. Contrario a otros estudios sobre migración mexicana a los Estados Unidos, he encontrado que los arreglos patriarcales originales (v. g. anteriores a la migración) en las relaciones de género, tienden a permanecer a través del tiempo y están presentes en las estrategias que las familias implementaron durante su establecimiento. Factores tales como cultura, economía - política y relaciones con su comunidad influyen el proceso.

Abstract: *This paper examines how mexican immigrant families have negotiated gender relations in the process of settlement in Chicago. On the contrary to other studies on mexican migration to the United States, I have found that former patriarchal arrangements of gender relations prevail a long time and are present in the strategies which particular householders developed during the course of settling down. Factors such as culture, political-economy, and community relations influence the process.*

Introduction

The importance of gender in migratory processed has been established. Works by Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994), Kibria (1993), Repak (1995), Grassmuck and Pessar (1995) and others have shown that the understanding of the different phases of migration can only be partial if we ignore the gendered nature of immigrants and the gendered character of their decisions and behavior. This scholarship brings to the fore the importance of change brought by migration into the lives of immigrants and their families, particularly changes in gender relations. Scholars have argued that there is a tendency towards the emergence of more equalitarian relations between husband and wife as a result of migration, with the corresponding debilitation of patriarchy in the family (Grassmuck and Pessar, 1995; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994; Kibria 1993; Repak, 1995). Plausible explanations for change refer to factors such as relative control over resources by men and women

(Kibria, 1993; Lamphere, 1987) and behavioral changes induced by the migratory process itself (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994).

This paper sets out to explain a different kind of experience of men and women—one of persistent patterns of patriarchal gender relations, among immigrant families. That is, the immigrant families that participated in my study presented little or no change in the way they experience and understand gender relations after migration. Moreover, it appears that the maintenance of patriarchal gender relations has been used strategically to maximize the use of resources available to them¹.

I suggest that the occurrence—or absence—of changes in gender relations in migratory communities is related in part to three interdependent factors. First, the character of the actual gender relations that were practiced in their hometowns, both in their personal experience and in that of the community as a whole. In what way did women and men arrange gender relations in their daily work to provide for their families? How were they utilizing resources and interpreting schemes in their strategies of negotiation?.

The second factor relates to the social and economic conditions immigrants face in their new environment and the level of success—i.e. correspondence between expectations, as they develop and change in the new environment, and achievements—they are able to attain. What are the material opportunities and limitations they have to deal with? How do they give meaning, especially gender-related meaning, to the resources they accumulate?.

The power of external pressures, particularly community pressures to maintain or modify gender relations, constitutes the third factor. How do family and friends legitimate, support, censure, or discourage certain gender strategies? How can they affect their implementation?.

This paper has four parts. First, I will explain the virtues of the method used for this study, that is a two-site research. Second, I will define the theoretical framework for the analysis. Third, based on data collected from participant observation and interviews, I will present an

¹ Moen and Wethington (1992:234), define strategies as "the actions families devise for coping with, if not overcoming, the challenges of living, and for achieving their goals in the face of structural barriers".

overview of the way gender relations have been organized in the hometown of the immigrants. Fourth, I will present a case that encompasses many of the negotiations *Huejuquillense* couples have developed in Chicago and shows how they have experienced and understood gender.

Method

This paper is based on a case study of thirty *Huejuquillense* families, fifteen resided in the Chicago metropolitan area during the time of the study and fifteen lived in Huejuquilla. About fifty *Huejuquillense* families live in the Chicago metropolitan area.

I have designed a method that includes participant observation and interviews in both places, Huejuquilla and Chicago. This design serves two purposes. First, it offers confidence in the assumption a certain uniformity in the experiences of immigrants previous to migration. Studies about immigrants that refer to "culture" (Portes and Sensenbrenner, 1993) or "gender" (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994; Kibria, 1993; Repak, 1995) assume that people coming from the same country possess similar experiences, ideologies, and practices. Those assumptions might be true up at certain point, but they operate on a level of generalization that might be misleading when explaining processes of immigrant incorporation into a new place (Guarnizo and Smith, 1998).

My study avoids such generalization by studying subjects from the same small region (see Goldring, 1996). All my informants were born and raised in the *municipio* of *Huejuquilla el Alto, Jalisco, México*. Besides location, *Huejuquillenses* also share a distinctive culture, originated by the *ranchero* way of life that prevails in the *municipio*, though differences among people due to class, economic activity, or particular social location within the *municipio* exist.

The second purpose of this method is precisely the possibility of doing research in both places. This allows to witness social dynamics otherwise inaccessible to the researcher. When talking about changes or continuities in immigrants' gender relations, it is important to have some first-hand knowledge about the practices in their places of origin as well, in order to compare with the gender relations developed in the new place.

The method I used has enriched the research in three ways. First, I have been able to incorporate in the analysis a more accurate descrip-

tion of gender relations prevalent in the place of origin—those gender relations that my informants in Chicago experienced themselves and saw others experience them before migration. By going to Huejuquilla, I have been able to witness negotiations in families, division of labor between men and women, patterns of mobility of men and women. This experience has prepared me to better interpret aspects of continuity or change in gender relations among *Huejuquillenses* in Chicago. Additionally, this dual-site research allowed for a critical but necessary incorporation of cultural elements in analyzing gender relations in both sites.

Second, I have had the opportunity to observe the crucial role of local and distant social networks of *paisanos* (people from the same hometown) in the shaping of gender relations. *Huejuquillenses* go to Huejuquilla as often as they can. They take their children along, even the married children. I have witnessed immigrants' arrival in Huejuquilla, observed the way they are received and treated by their fellow *Huejuquillenses*. I have seen "the wives left behind" (Snyder, 1993) receive their husbands or, at least, the money or gifts sent by them (I have been asked to bring some myself); I have seen their tears and their pride.

Third, by doing research in both places I have constructed a more complex picture of the meanings and experiences of migration in the *municipio* and how they affect immigrants' own experiences. I can see that when women and men in Chicago talk about their desire or reluctance to go back to their hometowns, patriarchal constraints (for women) and enablements (for men) are only part of a complex fabric where culture, family, work, and the very changes happening in the hometown itself—brought about in part by migration—shape expectations and desires and influence decisions of immigrants (Goldring, 1998; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994; Smith, 1998).

In short, the study of "transnational migrants" (Glick, Basch, and Szanton, 1995), of those immigrants who "build and maintain multiple relationships and social fields that span borders" (Basch et al., 1994:7), calls for "transnational methods." In this way, theory, method, and data form a complex ensemble that allows for a better understanding of the process (Clifford, 1992; Rouse, 1982).

Patriarchy and gender relations

Patriarchy has been defined in different ways (Curtis, 1986). -Sotelo, in her pathbreaking work on migration and gender, proposes a general definition of patriarchy that can serve as a point of departure for our discussion. She proposes that:

... patriarchy [is] a fluid and shifting set of social relations where men oppress women, in which different men exercise varying degrees of power and control, and in which women collaborate and resist in diverse ways. Such a definition, besides being very general, biases the researcher to focus basically on conflicts between men and women, and maybe to overlook the possibility of agency of women beyond the framework of "collaboration" with and "resistance" against patriarchy (Kaplan, 1982). When analyzing men and women in the familial space we observe that conflict exists, but there is also cooperation and, most of all, spaces for women—as well as men—to exercise agency (Hondagneu, 1994:3)

A definition of patriarchy that I find particularly useful is Stern's:

[P]atriarchy refers to a system of social relations and cultural values whereby (1) males exert superior power over female sexuality, reproductive roles, and labor power; (2) such dominance confers both specific services and superior status upon males in their relationships with females; (3) authority in family networks is commonly vested in elders and fathers, thereby imparting a generational as well as a sex-based dynamic to social relations (Stern, 1995: 21).

Stern's definition is useful for three reasons. First, it adds a cultural element and therefore opens the door for a more complex understanding of the endurance of behavioral and ideological patterns, beyond mere usefulness or practicality (Hareven, 1991). Second, it is specific in the areas defined patriarchally, avoiding fruitless generalizations (see di Leonardo, 1991). And third, it puts part of the burden of patriarchy on the patriarchs themselves, when referring to the "services" that males have to provide to females (Kandiyoti, 1988). That is, patriarchy might be oppressive, but the oppressor is also obliged to provide and his status as patriarch will be contingent to his fulfilment of provision (Stern, 1995).

Based on my empirical findings, I will adapt and extend Stern's definition. Patriarchy exists in changing social environments and shifting economic contexts where people find themselves interacting. Within those contexts, people make use of resources and schemes to design strategies to achieve their goals for the improvement of themselves individually and the family they belong to (Bozzoli, 1991; Hareven, 1991; Moen and Wethington, 1992; Sewell, 1992). In this

process, they comply with, challenge, or use in their benefit diverse elements of patriarchy (Curtis, 1986; Kandiyoti, 1988; Kaplan, 1982; Stern, 1995).

I will loosely organize my analysis of gender relations among *Huejuquillenses* with respect to three aspects: division of labor, authority and kin (Hareven, 1991; Moen and Wethington, 1992). The first two aspects address issues of access to resources and power, the third relates to the importance of immigrants' social networks.

The first terrain: Huejuquilla

Huejuquilla el Alto is a rural *municipio* located in the northern region of the state of Jalisco, México. Its population of almost nine thousand is roughly the same as in 1960 (INEGI, 1996). Huejuquilla's subsistence economy is based on agriculture and cattle raising, some commerce, and on the remittances received from the United States. Poverty, perpetuated by political and economic isolation, has characterized the history of the *municipio*, translated into a persistent neglect by state and national governments (Bassols, 1988; Gobierno de Jalisco, 1975). According to a diagnosis of development of the northern region from 1975, the industrial activity of the area was very precarious. Some of the causes were: lack of communications, lack of markets (acquisitive power of population was very low), scarcity of raw materials, and lack of economic investment (Gobierno de Jalisco 1975). The situation of the *municipio* has not change much in the last twenty five years and has become a matter of concern for the state government, basically due to its negative population increase. Huejuquilla's index of population increase from 1990 to 1995 was -1.82%, whereas the state's index was 2.17% (Secretaría de Desarrollo de Jalisco, 1998).

Productivity of the land is very low. Most people's plots of land (with an area of 5 Ha. approximately) produce scarcely enough to survive. Waged labor is not available in Huejuquilla. In 1993, there were eighteen "economic unities" in the *municipio* (carpentry and metal workshops), employing fifty persons, there were also one hundred and ten commercial establishments, occupying one hundred and ninety five people (INEGI, 1996). When talking with people in towns and *ranchos*, the main concern is "*la falta de trabajo*" (lack of work). Government officials at the municipal and state level recognize that

people are able to survive thanks to the remittances of migrants in the United States.

Early in this century, *Huejuquillenses* incorporated migration among the strategies they developed to cope with their situation of scarcity. They established a regime of seasonal migration to the coastal state of Nayarit to work in the *pizca* (harvest) of cotton and tobacco. With the implementation of the bracero program in 1942², the *municipio* experienced a gradual shift in the destination, from Nayarit to the United States. Guadalajara and Zacatecas have also attracted many *Huejuquillenses*. This out migration has reached considerable proportions in a *municipio* with less than nine thousand inhabitants (Anuario Estadístico del Estado de Jalisco, 1996:8-921).

This brief description of the economic situation of the *municipio* is important to understand how economic factors have combined with cultural ones to shape the meaning that migration has for *Huejuquillenses* and the ways in which men and women negotiate gender relations in this context. Cultural aspects will occupy a center place in our analysis.

Huejuquilla is located in a region known for its *ranchero* culture, very influenced by their way of life. Two characteristics of *ranchero* culture are of importance to our argument. First, people's settlements, called *ranchos*, are dispersed, often separated by many miles. Under these circumstances, *rancheros* have developed ways to both secure their survival under conditions of isolation and access the support of friends and family across space. In response to isolation, they have developed a high sense of autonomy and independence. However, the need for support has developed dense —and flexible— networks of reciprocity, where the opportunity to help others translates into a legitimate demand for their help in times of need (Barragán, 1997).

The second characteristic of *ranchero* way of life is the pattern of seasonal mobility of families, from the location where they plant the crops (*barbecho*) to that where they raise cattle (*rancho de ordena*) (Barragán, 1997; González, 1995). The separation of spaces is due mainly to the configuration of the terrain. The topography is very irreg-

² Agreement between México and the United States (1942-1964) primarily to supply farm labor to California (López Castro, 1986).

ular, characterized by elevated *serranias* (mountains) (Gobierno del Estado de Jalisco 1975). Small valleys will contain the land for planting and the *sierra* (mountain) will provide the grass necessary for the cattle. In short, mobility and isolation, with the development of a strong patriarchal ideology and the importance of autonomy and independence have shaped gender relations in Huejuquilla (Barragán, 1997; González, 1995).

Teresa Rodríguez remembers how life was in her childhood:

We used to go to the rancho in June (the beginning of the rainy season), after finishing school. We would go with my mother and my aunt in horses and burros. It would take several days to get there... It was better when we were going to the same place as the year before³. That meant that we would not have to build the house again. . . . My father would be in el Norte (the United States), working in the fields. We would take care of the animals, milk the cows, and make cheese.

As it is shown in Teresa's account, women were supposed to be strong and prepared to survive by themselves, take care of the family, even build a house (Chávez, 1994). Adult males, for their part, were also supposed to make a good use of their time and capacities and look for extra means for the family (Barragán, 1997). Teresa's family—like most other families in the *municipio* would go back to their communities or town by September, the time for school and the beginning of the *pizca* (harvest). At this time, they "would eat what was made during the time we spent in the *rancho* (i.e. cheese)" and hope to have a good harvest of *frijoles* (beans) and *maiz*—their main food for the rest of the cycle. Their diet would be complemented with milk, fruits from their own trees and those things they could buy with money earned by selling cheese and vegetables. The money earned by the father would buy furniture, clothes, books, the raw materials for the next planting season, and after a few migrations, some land and some animals (see Jones, 1992).

In Huejuquilla, all productive work can be performed by women or men, according to the needs of the family. That is, if there are many male hands, women will be preferred to perform animal raising and

³ Her father rented the land, thus there was always the possibility of a new *rancho*, usually within the same region, though.

housework. However, in the case of scarcity of males, the tasks of planting and harvesting will need the participation of all members. In this case, women's work will increase considerably because males would not participate in housework.

There is only one dimension of work that shows clear division between *ranchero* men and women: housework is a female activity. This is acknowledged by everybody in Huejuquilla. I have recorded several cases in which female friends and family will take care of males left temporarily alone by their wives. Even those men who have been alone in the United States for long periods will secure the help of a female.

Within the limits of patriarchal gender organization, thus, *ranchero* women and men are used to high degrees of cooperation for the survival and advancement of the family. Personal interests or behavior rarely conflict with their commitment to their families. When they do, however, issues of authority come under scrutiny.

In the *ranchero* culture, males keep a superior status over females. The father is the authority of the family. Mobility—and the related regulation of sexuality—is one of the main terrains where patriarchal authority might create certain conflicts (Stern, 1995). Here the issue of legitimacy is important. When are women's and men's excursions out of their homes legitimate? For women, excursions are legitimate only when they are work related or church related. Women going out "*sin asunto*" (with no business) will be seen with suspicion by their relatives and the community as a whole. However, daily activities demand from women to leave home several times a day. This means constant interaction with other women in the town or the community. Men are free to spend their times in the *cuadro* (central square), *cantinas* (bars), or with friends, as long as they fulfill with their roles as providers for their families (Barragán, 1997; Stern, 1995).

Finally, kin—real and fictive—is also a very important element in the lives of *Huejuquillenses*. Social networks present the ambiguous character of strength and flexibility. Families' autonomy and independence are kept, but peoples' behavior is highly regulated by relatives and the community as a whole. It is surprising to notice how news travels around the *municipio* and between it and Chicago. Mobility itself helps to disseminate news of events, particularly those that seem to

violate codes of behavior. This way, social pressure acts as a factor to maintain certain traditions across space.

Some words about the importance of *ranchero* culture in the process of migration. Hareven (1991) has shown that cultural patterns tend to endure and that structural transformations have only a relative influence on changes in families. I argue here that with respect to gender relations, *Huejuquillenses'* culture prevails over the dramatic structural change immigrants experience in Chicago. *Ranchero* women are used to a high level of mobility, which has provided them with opportunities to strengthen their social networks and access various resources.

The strongest tenet of the patriarchal arrangements that prevail in Huejuquilla have to do with men's recognition as heads of the families and control women's sexuality (Barragán, 1997; González, 1995). Nevertheless, even these two are not absolutely followed. For one thing. First, men have been relying on their wives strength for generations. Even now, men's supposed control is ameliorated through the management that women do of the resources, through convincing their husbands about the best way of action. As long as there is not a frontal confrontation to his 'authority', women have an important say in their husbands decisions.

Second terrain: Chicago

The immigrants of my study had certain intentions, goals, when they moved from Huejuquilla (see Massey, 1999). Some scholars have drawn on works that challenge the concept of "family strategy" arguing that conflicts exist in the household and power struggles grow out of differences of interests among the members, particularly husband and wife. Immigrant families' experiences are seen as further evidence of conceptual and empirical difficulty of sustaining an approach that considers the household as a unity (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994; Grasmuck and Pessar, 1995). For the *Huejuquillense* families of my study, however, migration is seen as a strategy developed by the family with the purpose of familial and individual improvement.

In this context, the patriarchal arrangements of gender relations of *ranchero Huejuquillense* families in Chicago seem to prevail regardless of the different strategies particular individuals and households developed to respond to the challenges they had to overcome in the new environment. What I want to argue here is that the former gender

relations that immigrants had experienced, either personally or in their families and communities have a very significant impact in the way new gender relations are shaped. This has been recognized in the literature. Nevertheless, there have been very few attempts to actually investigate the particularities of gender relations in the places of origin of the immigrants⁴.

I will follow an approach that focuses on four crucial moments in the experience of one immigrant couple to show how gender has been negotiated and why the patriarchal character of "former gender relations" has been maintained, even defended by both, men and women. Most of the families I studied followed a similar pattern, during their lives in Chicago. I will present four moments of negotiation: the moment of migration, decisions about having children, entering into the labor force, and the maintenance of networks with the hometown (Bozzoli, 1991).

Yolanda and Manuel Casas's journey

Yolanda belongs to a landless family who used to live in a rancho close to the town. Her father was a bracero in Texas for many years. Manuel's family had some land in a rancho a few miles from the town. His father was also a bracero in Texas for many years. Manuel worked on the land until the age of sixteen, when he migrated for the first time. He worked in Texas for a couple of years and then went to Chicago. In one of his trips to Huejuquilla, Manuel met Yolanda in a dance and soon started dating. Two years later, Manuel went home again and they got married.

First moment of negotiation: migration

Yolanda and Manuel married in 1970. Shortly after the marriage, he left for Chicago; a couple of months later, she joined him —already seven months pregnant.

Contrary to what other studies have found (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994; Grassmuck and Pessar, 1995), for most of my informants, the moment of migration was not a dramatic one. Political-economic con-

⁴ For two good examples see Goldring (1996) and Smith (1998).

ditions of the municipio made migration the only alternative for most to get ahead. Besides, the *ranchero* practice of mobility of families and individuals had made family separation a painful but endurable necessity.

Manuel had come to the U.S. at age fifteen, with his father and two brothers. Yolanda "never thought of the U.S. [as a place] to live" but her father had been a *bracero* worker for several years and one of her brothers was already living in Chicago. Migration was becoming a mass movement in Huejuquilla at the time when Yolanda and Manuel decided to move (Massey, 1987).

Their first months in Chicago were not very promising. Manuel did not actively pursue a job and spent his time drinking⁵. The family was helped again by relatives and friends (Manuel's). At this first moment, the couple was just starting to confront the consequences of their decision to migrate. For Yolanda this was her first encounter with a new environment. Manuel had been there, but as a single man—now his responsibilities had changed. There was uncertainty everywhere.

At this moment, patriarchal arrangements were clearly in place. In an urban environment, the division of labor between men and women becomes less permeable than in the *ranchito*, spaces become less permeable as well. Women's place is at home, responsible for housework and child care. Men's place is at work. She was sticking to the rule, but he was not responding. Understandably, she was fearful⁶.

But she was also hopeful. She knew that Manuel was a hard-working man. She hoped that he would catch up with *his* responsibilities and start providing for the family. Besides, friends and rela-

⁵ For two good examples see Goldring (1996) and Smith (1998).

⁶ Not all couples in Huejuquilla migrate together. There are many women who "stay behind" and endure the burdens of taking care of the family with the resources they have available (López Castro, 1986). However, in Chicago there are only a couple of cases of men who live separated from their wives. Social networks have helped this process of "family unit migration" (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994). Carmen Gutiérrez regrets having staying with her children when her husband migrated: "I have stopped caring about him as I used to do. Before, I would not eat until he ate with me. Now, I just leave the food on the table and he can come whenever he feels like it". She has taken the task to advise young women in Huejuquilla about joining their husbands in the U.S.

tives were also exerting some pressure over Manuel for him to stop drinking and start working.

Second moment of negotiation: number of children

With the help of friends and relatives, Manuel found a job, their child was born, and they found a place to live. They followed the steps of many other *Huejuquillenses* that had moved to the suburbs shortly after arriving in Chicago. Such a decision was very much shaped by the availability of jobs that the Chicago metropolitan area offered.

A year later they had another child. After the second child, she saw a way to prevent more pregnancies. It was only one year after she arrived in Chicago, and she was already realizing that having more children was not going to help their situation and did something to prevent it. Interestingly enough, and contrary to some stereotypes about Mexican macho men, she talked Manuel into the idea of having a IUD inserted⁷.

This is an interesting use of cultural resources

As I explained before, one of the main elements of *ranchero* culture is the adaptability to new circumstances. Chicago offered resources that were practically unthinkable in Huejuquilla: first, availability of waged jobs for both men and women; second, the access to birth control methods (and information); and third, the possibility of real accumulation of wealth. Yolanda and Manuel, like many other *Huejuquillenses*, reorganized their family—in relation to families in Huejuquilla—to take advantage of the opportunities that migration was offering them.

The family adapted in other domains of their lives as well. *Ranchero* women commonly participate in the organization of the family budget, but it is always the man who represents the family in public affairs. In Chicago, *Huejuquillense* women have become the agents in charge of managing the family's economy. Whether wage earners or not, they are the ones who sign checks, pay the bills, arrange the acquisition of a house. However, the decisions around spending money are usually

⁷ I have found that most *Huejuquillense* immigrant women used the IUD as a means to prevent pregnancies. This is the case in Chicago as well as in Huejuquilla with ex-migrant women.

agreed upon, with the man giving the last word about it. He can be—and usually is—talked into doing something he might not agree at the beginning, but his authority remains basically intact.

In the case of the Casas family, Yolanda took over budget management almost from the beginning. She knew better what was needed at home, how to distribute the little money Manuel made at the factory. Yet, she always allowed Manuel to have the money he needed to spend with his friends—most of whom were from Huejuquilla. Both were using the resources available and their dignities were safe.

Third moment of negotiation: Yolanda enters the labor force

Yolanda realized soon that one income was enough to keep them going, but not to improve their situation significantly. Since Manuel agreed to it, it was not a difficult decision. She just needed somebody to watch the children. An old female neighbor did it for little money. Yolanda found a job in a radio factory, "It was my luck which helped me find a job. Nobody took me there." Yolanda used to work overtime very often, and get extra money. With this arrangement, Yolanda and Manuel were able to save money and soon were ready to buy a house⁸.

Still, she was in charge of the housework and did not even think of asking Manuel for help. He would volunteer sometimes to watch the children (see Hochschild, 1989). After a few months of working under such arrangement, she brought her mother from Huejuquilla, "I needed her to help me with my kids; she was alone there, anyway." Her mother would do the housework as well:

⁸ Most *Huejuquillenses* in Chicago own the place they live in, either completely or they are paying the mortgage. This is a significant accomplishment, considering findings about the time that it usually takes for immigrants to become homeowners. According to Myers and Woo (1998) fewer than twenty percent of 1970s Hispanic origin immigrant arrivals between the ages of 25-34 were homeowners in 1980, in Southern California. The percentage increased to little over thirty percent in 1990. Even if the conditions were better in Chicago, the low levels of education of *Huejuquillenses* and the low-skill jobs that they have held since their arrival tells us the high priority that home-ownership has had in their allocation of resources. The fact that most of them are married also helps to explain the trend.

My mother used to do everything, cleaning, and cooking. Sometimes I felt bad about it, because it was my responsibility. I tried to cook myself, but she would get offended and ask me if it was because I did not like her food. I would tell her that I was just trying to make it easier for her, but she never understood.

Yolanda was making more money than her husband, and is she who mobilized her kin to arrange for baby-sitting, organized the family budget, and still was very aware of her responsibilities as the housewife, and willing to perform them.

This moment of negotiation in the Casas family needs explanation in two arenas, one structural and one subjective. First, it is a very well stated fact that illegal immigrants enter low-skilled jobs that are also low-waged (Betancourt, 1993; Morales and Bonilla, 1993; Sassen, 1988). What has taken long hours of statistical work to scholars, is a very well known reality for illegal immigrants. Manuel and Yolanda had a very clear understanding about how the labor market worked.

Second, the subjective arena of this moment of negotiation is well expressed in Yolanda's strategies. To understand her determination to hold on to her role as mother-wife, we should not overlook the fact that Manuel was complying with his part of the patriarchal arrangement (Stern, 1995). He was working steadily and bringing his earnings home. He was cooperating in the construction of the household in the way he was expected to. He was also available for repairs and to make improvements to their home, when they bought it. Finally, he was an authority figure for their children. Given their circumstances, the only other possible source of income for the family was her work. Her work increased and she looked for ways to manage her newly acquired responsibilities outside the home.

We might think of such decisions as unjust for Yolanda. And it was. But she did not conceive it as an issue of fairness. As Sen reminds us:

In some contexts, the family identity may exert such a strong influence on our perceptions that we may not find it easy to formulate any clear notion of our own individual welfare(Sen, 1990:125-6).

Well, Yolanda actually did and that is why she asked her mother to come help her. Besides, having a paid job had been her decision, out of her sense of obligation, but still a product of her own agency (Sen, 1990).

Each spouse was doing her or his part under the assumption that both had the same goal of building and improving their household (Bozzoli, 1991; Hareven, 1991; Stern, 1995). Their negotiations did not challenge the patriarchal arrangement, even though might have modified certain specific elements, like who is in charge of budget management. Woman's mobility was not a big change either. In those conditions, patriarchal assumptions, arrangements, practices, were not significantly challenged by Manuel or Yolanda (see Kibria, 1993). Besides, their social networks provided a sense of continuity with their hometown's patriarchal ideology. At the same time, these networks reinforced the legitimacy of negotiation in the pursuit of a better life (Rouse, 1989).

Fourth moment of negotiation: The possibility of going back

There is another moment of clear use of resources and negotiation of rules in the Casas's family. It was when Yolanda was deported to México because found working illegally by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). They had been trying to legalize their migratory status, but it was taking too long. She went there, taking her children and her mother. It was 1982, her oldest child was nine. Since they had accumulated some wealth in the form of savings and their home in Chicago, Yolanda thought that the conditions were propitious for starting a new life in México. She bought a plot of land in Huejuquilla and started to build a house. In this instance, it was Manuel who was not very convinced. He considered that his job in the factory was good and that maybe they should just be patient with the INS.

Other studies suggest that it is usually immigrant women who want to remain in the U.S. and it is man who want to go back to México (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994; Goldring, 1996), not so in the case of Yolanda and Manuel. Manuel's reluctance to go back involved more than the preservation of a good job. He knew that there was not so much to do for him in the *municipio*, no wage work, no land. And it was not time to retire yet. His self-image as provider for his family prevented him from going back. After all, his patriarchal rights had been maintained all along in Chicago and they would become under question if he did not continue working (Stern, 1995). As for the practical reasons as well, their jobs in Chicago had already allowed them to accumulate wealth in ways unthinkable in Huejuquilla.

Manuel's concerns shed light on the importance of considering the particularities of immigrant groups' alternatives, according to gender, when interpreting their wishes. Yolanda was not concerned about "losing" the power that her entering the labor force and managing the budget in Chicago provided them. For her, going back meant to re-constitute her former social networks, to raise her children in a familiar environment, and to avoid the hectic pace of her life in Chicago. At the moment, she might have even forgotten the very reasons why they migrated to the United States in the first place. Going back was not a good decision in that respect. For Manuel those trade offs were not enough to compromise his own image as a good provider. Again, "gender relations" back home strongly influenced immigrants' decision, this time about considering resettlement.

Legalization was another factor in the life of Yolanda and Manuel. This was the time prior to IRCA⁹, and the process for acquiring legal residence was long and difficult. After several years of procedures, they finally became legal residents, she came back with the children and found a new job. Once legal, the Casas family started to visit Huejuquilla once or twice a year. They also maintained strong ties with other *Huejuquillenses* in Chicago and other parts of the United States.

The Casas family is about to celebrate twenty five years of existence. The main celebration is to be held in Huejuquilla. Their older children are married and the little one goes to middle school. Their patriarchal nature of the family's gender relations continues.

Conclusions

This paper has presented three themes. One emphasizes the advantages of using "transnational methods" to understand "transnational processes." I have explained the importance of having direct contact with the place of origin of the immigrants, observing the social dynamics and talking to people in the town. I have also seen the migrants them-

⁹ IRCA means Immigration Reform and Control Act. It was a legislation provision that basically "allowed undocumented immigrants who had been in the U. S. in illegal status since before January 1, 1982, to apply for legal residence" and made it illegal for an employer to knowingly hire undocumented workers (Calavita, 1998:95-6).

selves in their hometown and the way friend's and family's expectations help to regulate their behavior in "*el Norte*."

The second theme is the character of gender relations in Huejuquilla and the importance of *ranchero* culture in shaping them. Isolation, mobility, autonomy, and social networks, influence the way patriarchy is exerted in the *municipio*. Women experience situations that provide them with skills for managing resources to fulfill their goals and expectations. Those goals and expectations do not challenge patriarchy, but attaining them helps to create conditions for improvement for the entire family. I have shown also the conditions of Huejuquilla, its history of migration, and the meaning that migration has had and has for *Huejuquillenses*, given the precarious economic conditions of their hometown.

The third theme refers to the maintenance of patriarchal gender relations after migration. Yolanda and Manuel's case has shown that patriarchy is used as part of the strategy to construct a household, to "*salir adelante*". Most of the cases I have observed in Chicago follow this pattern. It is usually women who assume the management of the house, sometimes at the cost of being overworked, but always maintaining their husband's authority intact. There are some cases that have deviated from this pattern, but they tend to take the Casas's path over time.

The case I have presented and most others I have observed suggest that the actors who seem to have a more influential role in the fate of the households are the women. Men seem to be only reacting to women's suggestions, keeping for themselves the right to accept them or reject them. They usually see the advantages and follow. A possible exception to this has been Manuel's reluctance to go back to *Huejuquilla*. In this case, what was in place was also a "patriarchal concern" that did not conflict with the improvement of the household.

The case of Yolanda and Luis shows the mobilization of resources by men and women and the maintenance of cultural schemes in their favor, all towards the construction of a household and within the constraints and possibilities opened to them by migration. The experience of migration has provided our protagonists with various degrees of empowerment in different aspects of their lives, particularly those that tell whether they have "gotten ahead." The modification of gender relations has not appeared as an important issue for most of their lives,

and so, their erosion has not arisen as a significant factor to measure the success of their journey.

The negotiations I presented did not start with migration. They stretched spatially from Huejuquilla to Chicago; temporally, from the moment the protagonists were born and started to learn about being a woman and being a man there. This case will be compared with others, looking at the contentions of men and women using resources and schemes in their favor, working towards the construction of a household, within the limits that patriarchy imposes upon their gender relations.

patzam@nwu.edu

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