

Chapter 1

Gender and Migration: An Introduction



1.1 Introduction

Why has it been important to incorporate gender relations into our understanding of migration processes and to engender migration research? The need to do so does not only stem from the fact that women globally make up just under half of international migrants. Gender is one of the key forms of differentiation within societies which interacts with other social divisions such as age, class, ethnicity, nationality, race, disability and sexual orientation. The drivers of migration impact on women and men differently. Women and men circulate distinctively, whether it be between rural and urban areas, intra-regionally or globally. Labour markets are often highly segregated and the possibility of women and men crossing borders may also be restricted or opened up through gendered discourses, practices, and regulations governing the right to move and under what conditions. Migration may in turn change gender relations within households and in the community and impact on gendered and sexual identities.

Gendered understandings of international migration emerged slowly in the 1970s and 1980s (Morokvasic, 1975, 1984; Phizacklea, 1983; Simon & Brettell, 1986). The special issue of *International Migration Review* in 1984 was titled ‘Women and Migration’ and highlighted historical and contemporary dimensions of a neglected issue, namely that of rural-urban and international migration and the incorporation of women into wage labour through labour migrations. Until then, women had been largely ignored in writings on international migration; they had been largely relegated to the home and seen as relatively insignificant economically and politically. As migrants, they were depicted as following men rather than as initiators of migration or moving as independent beings. However the gender blindness of migration studies began to be challenged through the writings of feminist scholars in the 1980s and then some mainstream authors in the 1990s (e.g. Castles & Miller, 1993; Cohen, 1995).

Initial studies had focussed on women and migration but by the 1990s there had been a paradigm shift to migration as a *gendered process*, where gender reflected the practices and representations of femininity and masculinity and relationships between women and men (see Chap. 2). Nonetheless, gender continued for many writers to connote women's experiences and lives. In a review of the field, the first handbook on this topic (Willis & Yeoh, 2000) noted that a gender perspective has drawn attention to the significance of the household and its reproductive activities (Truong, 1996), in particular of domestic and sex work. Labour migration, as the focus of much gender and migration, demanded an explanation and highlighted the complexities of migratory movements, their temporalities and circularities.

Poised at the cusp of new developments, the review identified emerging trends such as the diversity among women and men in which gender cut across class, ethnicity, sexuality, age and other social variables, an approach would become more evident with the development of the concept of *intersectionality*, the buzzword of feminist scholarship (Nash, 2008 and Chap. 2). Absence of men and masculinity would not be rectified until males were studied as gendered subjects (Charsley & Wray, 2015; Gallo & Scrinzi, 2016; Pasura & Christou, 2018) (Chap. 2).

Though transnationalism questioned the focus on the bounded nation-state in the 1990s, it remained masculinist until a decade later (Mahler & Pessar, 2001; Pessar & Mahler, 2003). The gender and migration literature also increasingly engaged with theoretical analyses of global inequalities and the counter geographies of globalisation that create new circuits linking the Global South and the Global North, and in which women significantly contribute to household survival in economies destabilised by economic restructuring and withdrawal of public welfare (Sassen, 2000). Concepts such as the global chains of care (Hochschild, 2000) reflected the growing global demand for reproductive labour (domestic, care and sex work). Though family migration had received relatively little attention (Kofman, 2004), with increasing labour migration more families were forced to live apart and stretched across space, as the study of transnational families in Europe (Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002), Asia (Yeoh et al., 2005) and North America (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997) revealed.

Three socio-economic and political changes have also oriented the development of gender and migration. They are firstly the enlargement of the EU and the growth of mobilities and migrations from Eastern to Western and Southern Europe where research has focused on domestic and care labour exemplifying the global chains of care (Lutz, 2011; Marchetti, 2013) as well as family networks (Ryan et al., 2008). The second is the financial crisis, especially severe in Southern European countries which had less impact on migrant women's employment, though it often put additional pressure on them as breadwinners. The loss of employment brought about new mobilities between sending and receiving countries (Herrera, 2012). It also led to emigration from Southern to Northern European countries, but here we know less about its gendered outcomes (Bartolini et al., 2017; Lafleur & Stanek, 2017). Thirdly conflicts in the Middle East and Africa generated large flows of asylum seekers and a renewed interest in gendered aspects of refugee flows and

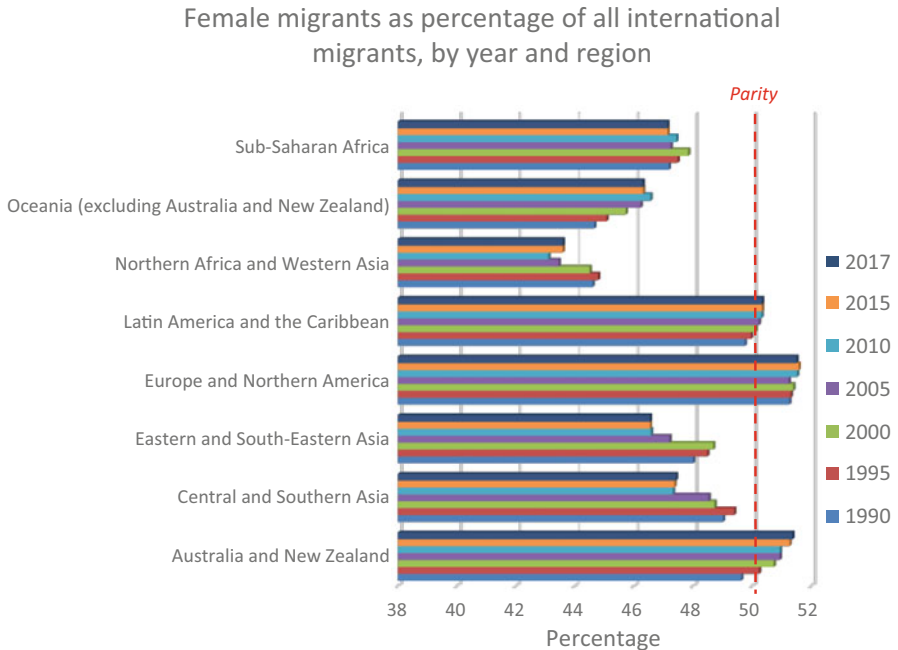
settlement in Europe in academic and policy studies (Freedman et al., 2017; Williams et al., 2020).

Throughout this period in the growth of studies of gender and migration, it has become common to speak of the *feminization of migration*, noted as one of the four key trends in the age of migration (Castles & Miller, 1993). Yet in the last few years, the notion of the recent feminization of migration has been challenged (Donato & Gabaccia, 2015; Schrover, 2013). Donato and Gabaccia (2015) note that globally the percentage of female migrants has only increased by a small amount from 46.7% in 1960 to 49.6% in 2005. They argued that migrations had already begun to feminise in the early twentieth century in settler societies and Europe. In the United States the share of women in immigrant flows increased sharply between the 1830s and 1860s, and again in the first half of the twentieth century, to attain 50% in 1930. In many European countries it was gender balanced before World War II, leading Schrover (2013: 123) to comment that ‘if there was ever a period of feminization, it was in this interwar period’.

During the twentieth century, the composition of flows tended to change according to immigration policies, recruitment practices and the nature of the labour market. In the 1920s, a number of countries restricted male migration but allowed female migration. Many German women migrated as domestic workers to the Netherlands and Scandinavian countries (Schrover, 2013: 112). After the war labour shortages emerged by the end of the 1940s. States with colonies, such as France and the UK, had largely free movement within the colonial system, often recruiting women for low level service and welfare work as with Caribbean women in France and Britain (Byron & Condon, 2008). Other sources of labour in the UK came from displaced persons camps and the Baltic (McDowell, 2016). The liberalization of labour flows in Western Europe following the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community initially favoured men but from the mid-1960s, the growth of the electronics industry and the search for so-called nimble fingers led to the recruitment of female labour in Germany beyond Southern Europe to countries such as Turkey (Erdem & Mattes, 2003). Sectors such as domestic work and concierges were largely filled by Southern European women, as Laura Oso (2005) highlighted for France. It is estimated that until the economic crisis of 1973 that the ‘guest worker’ recruitment comprised about 70% men.

However, the global average masks substantial differences between regions due in large part to types of migration (Fig. 1.1).

Regions such as Europe and North America, Australia and New Zealand, and Latin America and the Caribbean have a gender balance with a very slight increase since 1990. These regions offer permanent settlement as well as the right to family reunification and the possibility for family members to accompany labour migrants. This tends to push up the gender balance due to the feminised nature of family migration. In contrast, in other regions, male predominance has risen slightly since 1990. In Western Asia, which includes the Gulf States, demand for less skilled and skilled male labour has been strong even though female domestic workers are also in demand (Malhotra et al., 2016). Thus, the number of female migrants may have increased in absolute terms while relatively declining, a distinction which should be



Source: UNDESA (2017)

Fig. 1.1 Proportion of female migrants of all international migrants 1990–2017

taken into account in the discussion on the feminization of migration (Vause & Toma, 2015). The evidence does not substantiate the view that feminization has been linear nor always a new development, but rather that it is dynamic and complex. We need to distinguish between the feminization of migration and the feminization of the ‘migratory discourse’ in which women are conceptualised as actors of migration (Schrover, 2013; Vause & Toma, 2015).

Lastly, a different critique of the view that migration has become feminised draws upon the increasingly higher levels of education of migrant women to contend that what we have been witnessing in the past few years is the feminization of skilled migration (Dumitru, 2017). Highly educated women in particular are migrating to a much greater extent than men with a similar educational level with the number of tertiary educated migrants increasing by 79% between 2000/01 and 2010/11, 17% greater than for male migrants to OECD countries (OECD, 2016). In the countries of the South, among women aged over 25 years, highly educated women are the most mobile groups, especially from poorer countries, such as sub-Saharan Africa, where almost 20% of the highly educated in 2010 had emigrated compared to 0.4% of the least educated (Dumitru & Marfouk, 2015). Women have thus formed an increasing percentage of skilled migrants (defined by their level of education rather than the occupation they take up after they have migrated). As we shall see in Chap. 3, there

has been relatively little research on highly educated women or those undertaking highly skilled jobs post-migration.

It should also be noted that the discussion about feminization focuses on labour migration, yet in 2015 the largest source of permanent migration in OECD countries was family migration, ahead of labour and humanitarian migration, with 38% of migrants entering through this route. Over 50% of this type of flow are women, with 60% in European OECD countries, 57% of sponsored family in Canada and two-thirds in Australia. In some countries with a large number of family permits, such as Canada, the UK and the US, the proportion of accompanying family of other admissions streams, such as the economic, pushes up the proportion of family-related reasons for migration. Most family migrants are spouses, followed by children and parents (OECD, 2017: 125). In some countries where family reunification is not permitted for less skilled migrants, one of the most significant forms of family migration is marriage migration as in Asia (Chung et al., 2016; Constable, 2005). In general, the number of family migrants may fluctuate according to the general level of migration, as in Southern Europe, or due to shifts in immigration policy where governments seek to control this form of migration, often in favour of skilled labour migration, as in Australia in the 1990s (Boucher, 2016).

The focus on labour migration framed the migration of women within a general push-pull model, even if a social dimension was added. Only more recently has a more comprehensive reflection on how female migration to a much greater extent than male might be driven by a desire to escape socially discriminatory institutions and social control. Evidence from the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI), which measures discrimination against women in social institutions, indicates that gender inequalities serve as both a motivating factor and barrier for women's migration (Ferrant & Tuccio, 2015; Ruysen & Salomone, 2018). On the one hand, women who face discrimination in their country of origin may want to migrate abroad, and may chose destinations where levels of gender discrimination in social institutions are lower than at home. On the other hand, gender discrimination in countries of origin can also prevent women from being able to migrate, when they have onerous family responsibilities, limited access to resources and social networks, little bargaining power or the right to initiate migration themselves. Qualitative research further supports the finding that discrimination is a driver of women's migration. Studies show, for example, that women migrate internally to larger cities, or across country borders, to avoid child, early and forced marriage and other forms of violence against women in the family (Parish, 2017).

And lastly, we should take into account that migration has become complex in its directions and orientations. It is varied in its duration with migrants not necessarily starting out with fixed intentions or what Engbersen et al. (2013) have called 'liquid mobility'. In Europe the opening up of free movement in 2004 in the context of increasingly liberalized and deregulated labour markets has generated large-scale movements from East to West with such migrants often replacing racialized migrants beyond Europe (Favell, 2008). Subsequently the severity of the economic crisis in Southern Europe, loss of employment, especially among youth and the austerity

measures drove many highly educated young people to seek employment and opportunities in Northern Europe (Lafleur & Stanek, 2017).

And whilst, as we shall see in Chap. 3, many young Europeans experienced dequalification and deskilling, especially in the initial period of movement, those with recognized cultural capital, and often from a solidly middle class background, are able to enter more smoothly into skilled occupations, for example, as with Spanish migrants in France (Oso, 2020). In this way gender, racialization, class and age have stratified the outcomes of their migratory projects. The ability for European citizens to move with relatively few barriers has also initiated onward migration of new EU citizens of migrant and refugee background (Ahrens et al., 2016; King & Karamoschou, 2019) which breaks down a straightforward relationship between origin and destination country. Gender plays a part in whether the family moves and in the severity of the often precarious experiences of such onward migrants (McIlwaine, 2020).

1.2 Scope and Aims of the Book

There are a number of ways in which one may structure the field of gender and migration which has in the past two decades begun to crystallise into an epistemic community (Kofman, 2020; Levy et al., 2020) as a production of knowledge amongst a network of scholars around certain topics and approaches. Some scholars have focussed on threading an analysis around key perspectives such as intersectionality and transnationalism (Amelina & Lutz, 2019) or integration (Anthias et al., 2013). In this book we trace the emergence of knowledge production of the field in general followed by the key drivers or motives for migration – labour family and asylum/refugees. These are the building blocks of contemporary migration governance, and as categories implemented by states and international organisations, they shape and control the modes of entry open to migrant women and men and also structure the nature of academic outputs. This is not to say that these categories determine migrant lives or that the categories themselves are fixed; they are in fact entangled, articulated and dynamic.

In the past few years, reflections on the construction of categories in migration research and policy have come to the fore (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018; Dahinden et al., 2021; de Haas et al., 2019; Schrover & Moloney, 2013). Throughout the book we acknowledge the fact that the categories we are dealing with have been determined by states and international organisations, and often disseminated by the media. Classifications and categories emerge in a particular social and political context and period; they may evolve in certain instances, whilst in others they remain largely unchanged in a reality that has changed. Within the broader categories, there are numerous issues which demand critical attention. Especially pertinent are definitions of skills and their gendered implications, the notion of the family, usually nuclear and heterosexist for the purpose of entry, and of the refugee more likely to have been displaced through mass movements arising from conflicts rather

than the individual (male) figure envisaged by the 1951 Refugee Convention. Our three prevailing categories are those used to classify modes of entry but the bearers of these classifications assume a range of identities in societies post entry. The labour migrant may form a family, the family migrant is increasingly likely to work, and the asylum seeker/refugee seeks to work and reunite with their family or to form a new one. Thus the gendered division of labour draws upon migrants entering through the entire range of categories i.e. those entering through family channels or asylum also participate in the labour market. So too are the categories and the ways they are applied challenged by activists and researchers. Examples are the heterosexist nature of the family in immigration policy which has, in a large number of European countries, recognised same sex and cohabiting couples as constituting families; equally there has been an attempt to inject gender and sexuality-related persecution grounds into the Refugee Convention (see Chap. 5). In terms of participation in a society, the concept of integration too has been subjected to considerable critique (Anthias & Pajnik, 2014) at a time when many states are imposing greater demands on migrants (see Chap. 6).

Thus this book seeks to cover the general development of the field of gender and migration in the past 30 or so years, both in relation to different forms of immigration and post entry insertion into societies. In doing so, we seek to raise debates and explore different and emerging approaches. Intersectionality has become a major concept in gender and migration studies though it struggles to encompass the full range of the interplay of different social divisions (see Chap. 2). Moving on from women to gender, there remains nonetheless a tendency to focus on women, although the need to recognise men and masculinity is being addressed in general and across a range of topics. So too is the relevance of sexuality in migration patterns and outcomes. Most of the literature referred to in the Reader is in English but we acknowledge the large bodies of academic and policy writing in other languages, and in particular French, German and Spanish. Whilst both authors subscribe to looking beyond the global North as the source of theoretical insights as part of the decolonisation of gender and migration and the uneven circulation of knowledge (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2020; Grosfoguel et al., 2015; Kofman, 2020), the restrictions of a short reader have meant the book is largely limited to a European focus unlike in a longer volume (Mora & Piper, 2021). Nonetheless, wherever possible, we have incorporated wider theoretical insights. The limitations imposed by length have also meant we have been unable, except to some extent through the discussion of transnational families, to connect up origin and destination, though here too we do not assume migration is in any way a linear or permanent journey.

1.3 Organisation of the Book

In this Chap. 1 we have briefly traced the development of gender and development from the 1980s and then in the 1990s the adoption of the idea of feminization of migration propounded by mainstream scholars as well. However others have

questioned the simplicity of the analysis and suggested gendered patterns as more complex geographically and over time.

In Chap. 2, we turn to the major theoretical perspectives and the shifting analytical parameters from women to gender and the introduction of intersectionalities, said by some scholars to be the key contribution of feminist scholarship. We then examine some of the recent conceptual developments and methodological shifts and their implications for gendered understandings of migration. We end Chap. 2 with a discussion of research and ethics in undertaking migration studies.

In Chap. 3, we turn to one of the major empirical areas of study in gender and migration, that of gendered labour. This title reflects the fact that labour may be derived from a number of sources, ranging from labour migration, family migration, asylum seekers and refugees as well as students, and that it may have regular or irregular status. We argue that the labour market for migrants is heavily gendered both among the lesser and more highly skilled sectors. There has been a tendency to focus on what we have called the *emblematic figure of the female migrant*, that of domestic and care work especially supporting the social reproduction of the household, but as we indicate there are other sectors both in the lesser skilled sectors, such as hospitality, and in the skilled, such as health professionals as well as academia which deserve more attention. There are also a few studies of women in predominantly male sectors such as IT and engineering. We also recognise that migrants are distributed across the labour market but there are few studies to draw upon. Indeed focussing on the sectoral division may mean one loses sight of the trajectories of individual migrants both in relation to deskilling as well as social mobility.

Chapter 4 explores family migration, for a long time understudied and treated as a secondary form of migration in which women followed men. As from the beginning of this century it captured more attention and is the main reason for permanent migration. Furthermore familial reasons generate more moves than labour in intra-European mobility. The interest in the family and familyhood has spawned a growing literature on diverse aspects of transnational families and how migrants have engaged with borders and split lives and separated families. Thus transnational parenting and children have become significant topics as have considerations of cross-border intimacies and sexualities.

In Chap. 5 we discuss another form of mobility and displacement in which women traditionally did not manage to get to European shores to the same degree as men who had greater resources to make often difficult and dangerous journeys. We show how gendered representations played a part in maintaining the binary between the 'there' beyond Europe and 'here' in Europe. Gender-related persecution had difficulty in fitting into the male political figure of the refugee enshrined in the 1951 Refugee Convention and the attempts to incorporate such concerns as well as sexual orientation and gender identity in asylum determination. The second part examines the contemporary 'Migrant/Refugee Crisis' generated by recent and protracted conflicts in South Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa and Middle East, especially Syria (Freedman, 2016). Although initial flows were male dominated and gave rise to representations of male refugees as cowardly and threatening to European societies, after the summer of 2015 the gender balance shifted towards

women. In particular, we engage with the critique of the prioritising of certain asylum categories through the application of the concept of vulnerability by states, the European Union and international organisations.

In Chap. 6 we move to academic critiques and debates about integration and the application of the concept to target certain categories of migrants. It has been recognised that integration fails to take into account class and race (Schinkel, 2018) but we argue that gender considerations have also been absent, yet integration measures and policies have targeted migrant women, too often assumed to have come from backward and patriarchal societies in the Global South and are either reluctant or held back by men from integrating. The second section examines the different gendered discourses applied to integration of women and men in the past 20 years, especially targeting Muslims as disrupters of a modern society. The third section seeks to go beyond integration and how migrants have sought to contest discrimination and lack of rights, especially in the workplace, as well as claims to political subjectivities seeking to recognise them as fully participating members of society.

In the Conclusion we suggest that that it is important to understand the history of gender and migration and the way in which particular issues, such as feminization and intersectionality, have evolved. We end by highlighting the emergence of significant events – the COVID-19 pandemic, Brexit and Black Lives Matter – which have implications for the scholarship of gender and migration and our engagement with broader societal developments.

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