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## **Negotiating transnational mobility and gender definitions in the context of migration**

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### **Abstract**

The rise of the mobility and transnationalism perspectives in the social sciences has led to a burgeoning literature on the cross-border movements of people. Gender as a conceptual lens has increasingly taken a central stage in the analyses, unveiling unequal power relations as well as unmasking the often-hidden macro-social processes and structures that shape them. As a category of difference, gender influences individuals' attitudes and behaviour, including their decision to migrate or not across borders of nation-states. This raises the question of how transnational mobility and gender intersect in the lives of individuals. To shed light on this issue, the present entry takes stock of the literature on transnational migrations associated with social reproduction: labour, marriage, and reproductive migrations. Such research reveals individuals' tactics to negotiate their transnational mobility and gender definitions: using the dominant gender scripts in the country of origin, reconciling the gender ideologies in their countries of origin and destination, or aligning their narratives to specific moral values. Transnational mobility acquires different social meanings at certain points in time and in varying contexts, whereas gender remains at large anchored to its heteronormative foundation. Finally, based on the analysis of existing research, this encyclopedia entry calls for a more holistic approach to transnational mobility through a sexuality-inclusive, process-oriented, subjectivity/agency-focused, and time-sensitive framework.

### **Keywords**

transnational mobility, gender, negotiation, tactics, labour migration, marriage migration, re-pro-migration

### **Introduction**

Mobility has been defined and understood in many ways in different social science disciplines, periods of time, and geographical settings. In the “new mobilities paradigm” (Sheller and Urry, 2006), mobility “became acknowledged as part of the energetic buzz of the everyday” and came to be “seen as a set of highly meaningful social practices that make up social, cultural and political life” (Adey *et al.*, 2014, p. 3). In the words of Canzler and colleagues (2008), mobility is “a *change of condition*” (p. 2) and movement is part of this change. Movement has five interrelated forms, namely “corporeal travel of people”, “physical movement of objects”, “imaginative”, “virtual”, and communicative” travels (Urry, 2004, p. 28). Even before the advent of the “mobilities turn” (Hannam *et al.*, 2006) in the social sciences, the first form (that is,

“corporeal travel of people”) was already an important object of scholarly investigations, notably when it involved traversing nation-states’ borders. Since the early 1990s, such a cross-national border movement of people has been widely scrutinised through the lens of transnationalism – the process of (re)construction, maintenance, and reinforcement of various social ties of people linking their society of residence and other countries (see Glick Schiller *et al.*, 1992; Basch *et al.*, 1994). It has been called “transnational migration” that refers to the spatial movement of people from one country to another and their nurturing of social ties across national borders. This development, together with the “mobilities turn”, has produced a rich, still-growing literature on transnational movements of people and their underlying processes. Within this research field, gender has increasingly occupied a central stage in the analyses. This development raises the question of how transnational mobility and gender intersect in the lives of individuals.

To shed light on this question, the present encyclopedia entry examines the corpus of works on transnational mobility of people, that is, the combination of physical “movement, social imaginaries, and experience” (Salazar, 2019) that traverses the geopolitical borders of nation-states. Within this body of works, studies on transnational migration specifically offer an interesting site for the analytical exploration of the way people negotiate their migration and gender definitions. “Gender” as a term has been understood as a socially constructed category of difference (Scott, 1986), in other words, an identity marker like age, social class, and ethnicity situating individuals or groups in a particular social location (see Jørgensen, 2012). It is a social institution with prescribed roles and behaviours structuring people’s lives (Lorber, 1994). Gender is also a process of “doing”, which means “creating differences between girls and boys and women and men, differences that are not natural, essential, or biological” (West and Zimmerman, 1987, p. 137). As a process, gender entails performance (Butler, 1990) with repetitive acts, “corporeal signs”, and “discursive means” (Butler, 1999, p. 136). Historically speaking, the origin of the term “gender” (as opposed to “sex”) can be traced back to the latter part of the 1950s and 1960s in the field of medicine: in psychology in John Money’s work on hermaphroditism in 1955 and in psychiatry in Robert Stoller’s study of transsexuality in 1968 that adopted the term “gender identity” for the first time (Fassin, 2000). In the 1960s, Western feminists adopted the term “gender” “as a key strategy to counter the widespread beliefs underpinning women’s disadvantage” and as a response to the “conservative discourses and practices of biological determinism” (Clarsen, 2014, p. 98). In the 1970s, Anne Oakley’s book *Sex, gender & society* (1972) formally introduced the term “gender” in the field of sociology and became highly influential in feminist studies.

In the field of transnational migration studies, gender as an analytical lens has allowed scholars to deconstruct and unmask relations of power among different social groups such as women, ethnic minorities, and migrants. In recent years, migration scholars’ adoption of an “intersectionality” (Crenshaw, 1989) approach in their works has reinforced the gender perspective in the field as it relates to other categories of identity. In effect, initially employed to analyse the marginal situation of women of colour in the United States of America (USA), the “intersectionality” approach pays attention to the simultaneous crisscrossing of categories of difference producing precariousness and marginality, specifically gender, “race” and social class, in the lives of individuals. Intersectionality as a concept also helps unveil the relational and experiential dimensions of the social construction of masculinities and femininities (see Fresnoza-Flot and Shinozaki, 2017), among others.

At the individual level, the definitions of gender vary in function of socio-cultural contexts. These various definitions most often stem from the dominant “gender ideology” in which individuals are socialised and inhabit. This gender ideology can be understood as “a set of attitudes about the appropriate roles, rights, and responsibilities of men and women in a given society” (Lucas-Thompson and Goldberg, 2014, p. 13). When migrations envisioned by individuals challenge the dominant gender ideology in their society of origin, the way they negotiate their spatial mobility and existing gender definitions demonstrate not only their agency but also subjectivity. Agency refers to an individual’s “capacity to act within, rather than against,

the contradictory constraints and opportunities of subjectivation engendered by the globalization of neoliberal policies and politics” (Mai, 2018, p. 10). In contrast, subjectivity means the contextually situated lived experiences of individuals (Ellis and Flaherty, 1992) and their sense of self. As Cresswell and Uteng (2008) argue, “[a]cquiring mobility is often analogous to a struggle for acquiring new subjectivity” (p. 2).

To focus on this process of negotiation, it is necessary to attend to the dynamics of interactions and relationships among individuals occupying different social locations. As such, this encyclopedia entry adopts Sørensen’s (2007) definition of negotiation as “the attempt at reaching agreement, in the sense of a momentary acceptance of differences and similarities in the relationships between people and expressed in terms of rights and obligations necessary for social reproduction” (p. 47). The latter term – social reproduction – implies the maintenance of human beings’ biological and social existence on “a daily basis as well as generationally” (Kofman, 2014, p. 90), and this takes place not only within households and family units but also in other social institutions (see Kofman and Raghuram, 2015). In this vein, it is worthwhile to review the scholarly works on transnational migrations that are associated with social reproduction: migrations oriented towards the labour market, marriage, and bio-reproduction. Among these migration patterns, the one oriented towards the labour market manifests a strong educational dimension, which the next section of the present entry unveils. The boundaries among the migration patterns mentioned above are unfixed, as the migration of an individual may display successively characteristics supposedly associated with one or the other of these patterns. Despite this reality, examining the literature on transnational migrations provides three crucial contributions. First, such research highlights the way individuals negotiate their movements and gender definitions through different tactics. Since negotiation implies power relations, the term “tactics” can reveal the mechanism of such relations, as it refers to individual’s creative response and resistance to formal authorities and people in privileged social position, specifically to their “strategies” that de Certeau (1984) defines as “the calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships” (p. 35). Second, a literature review on transnational migrations reveals the emerging meanings of spatial mobility and gender. And third, a thorough state of the art of transnational migration identifies the remaining research gaps as well as possible thematic tracks that scholars could pursue to understand the mutually constitutive relationships between mobility and gender. As Clarsen (2014) remarks, “[u]nderstanding precisely how and by what means shifting ideas of gender have come to structure the meaning of mobility in particular historical contexts is [...] an unfinished project” (p. 100). Hence, by taking stock of what has been studied so far regarding individuals’ negotiation of transnational movement and gender definitions, the present entry participates in the on-going scholarly enterprise of completing this project.

### **Labour migration: gender ideology and categories of difference**

Studies on migrations that are mainly oriented towards the labour market reveal the various ways in which individual migrants negotiate their spatial movements. Their migration most often entails the redefinition or reinforcement of their gender roles and identities in the family and/or nation.

The case of lone migrant mothers in the paid domestic sector and seasonal agricultural work demonstrates how they negotiate their absence from home. Entrusting their children to women in their kinship network before their departure represents one of their tactics (Olwig, 1999; Schmalzbauer, 2004). Socially expected in their country of origin to care for their children and other family members, these women once in their receiving country resort to transnational mothering: for example, sending remittances and gifts (Horton, 2009; Parreñas, 2001) as well as communicating regularly with their family members (for example, Francisco-Menchavez, 2018; Kim, 2017; Mandianou and Miller, 2012). This mothering contributes to the upward social class mobility of their families, as their remittances increase the buying power of their family members and facilitate their stay-behind children’s completion of university education in many cases (see

Bartlett and Ghaffar-Kucher, 2013). It also allows migrant women to “reframe their migration as a duty” (Paul 2015, p. 271), thereby satisfying the gender expectations placed on them to act as “good” mothers who manage to provide care to their family despite obstacles. They also permit them to redefine their motherhood by including productive labour and its economic benefits in its meaning (Nicholson, 2006; Ducu, 2014). Moreover, they strive to be “good workers” by fulfilling their employers’ expectations: for example, Moroccan migrant mothers who are fruit pickers in Spain comply with the contract they signed by working diligently and by returning to Morocco at the end of their employment (Djemila, 2011). At the macro-societal level, although there are critics about mothers’ migration as a threat to family solidarity and as a risk for their children stay behind, their sending countries do not particularly hinder their movements but instead in many cases encourage it due to their financial contribution to the national economy. In the Philippines, for instance, migrant women (like their male counterparts) have been portrayed as “modern heroes” (Debonneville, 2013; Rodriguez, 2010), a discourse that the state uses to counter civil society’s critics of its insufficient attention to its migrant citizens’ welfare. The attention paid by Philippine media to the educational success of many stay-behind children related to the transnational “labor of love” (Francisco-Menchavez, 2018) of migrant mothers also alimnts this “modern heroes” discourse. Hence, the state’s emphasis on migrants’ economic contribution to the nation’s economy is one way in which it negotiates the contradiction between espousing labour exportation and protecting its citizens.

Men migrants in precarious employment situation have been shown to negotiate their spatial mobility using the notions of masculinities that prevail in their natal country. For example, Bangladeshi young men frame their migration as a rite of passage towards becoming a man and fulfilling their filial “duty” (Pande, 2017, p. 393). Likewise, Filipino migrant men working in seafaring industry “help propagate the exemplary masculine images of the ‘heroic’ seafarer as seasoned adventurer, as sexually experienced, as provider and patron, as father and husband to boost their status in their families and wider communities” (McKay, 2007, p. 628). This way of negotiating a spatial mobility oriented towards a dangerous job sector allows Filipino seafarers to display an “ideal” Filipino masculinity attached to “breadwinning, family and community respect” (McKay, 2011, p. 4), and also to reinforce the social value of their labour. On the other hand, Polish migrant men in “handyman services” in London emphasise “the opportunities migration afforded for breadwinning and the economic well-being of their families”, a narrative stressing their productive role as fathers that is aligned with the “traditional gender division of labour” in their country of origin (Kilkey *et al.*, 2014, p. 182). Other migrant men negotiate their gender definitions when they end up engaging in paid care labour, which is socially considered to be “women’s” job. For example, migrant men domestic workers in Italy adopt the following tactics: highlighting their physical prowess as compared to their women counterparts, emphasising the practical aspect of their work as a source of income allowing them to fulfil their role in the family, and interrogating the “essentialist” view on men’s labour and know-how (Gallo and Scrinzi, 2016). Bangladeshi migrant men in South Africa who experienced demasculinisation during their encounter with migrant traffickers embrace two forms of “protest masculinities” - “hypermasculinity” characterised “with an emphasis on violence and sex” as well as “misogyny”, and “ummah masculinity” that underlines celibacy and engagement with “a transnational supra-geographical community of Muslims” (Pande, 2017, pp. 400-403). Such reinforcement of the masculine self can also be observed among Thai migrant construction workers in Singapore, who “actualise their ideal norm of being a man” and express their “sexual intent and desire” through intimate relations with women from other countries (Kitiarsa, 2012, p. 51). These various tactics of (re)gaining one’s ideal of masculine identity suggest the power of the dominant gender ideology in migrant men’s country of origin, which continues to influence them transnationally.

Interestingly, unlike their counterparts in the so-called “low-skilled” labour migration who most often reinforce their gender definitions, highly educated migrant women and men in “skilled” labour movement display varying attitudes during the migration process. For instance,

early-career academics reconfigure their couple life in many ways: dual-career ones tend to “maintain gender-equal arrangement” when they do not have children, whereas couples in which the woman or the man is the primary mover tend to pursue asymmetrical gender arrangement (Schaer *et al.*, 2017, p. 1298). Likewise, the couples of non-Christian Keralan nurses in the USA display a more egalitarian gender arrangement than those of Keralan Christian nurses; in this latter case, the wives minimize “adjustments” in their household in terms of division of domestic labour in order to boost the “self-esteem” of their husbands, who after following them in the USA experienced “diminished powers at work and at home” (George, 2000, p. 162). In Australia, skilled Chinese heterosexual men accentuate the hegemonic form of Chinese masculinity more than their gay co-nationals who, because of their marginalised situation, emphasise their receiving country’s ideal manhood based on “sports, sexual prowess and performance” as well as “alcohol consumption” (Hibbins, 2005, p. 167). These cases suggest that, as highly educated migrants reinforce in their receiving countries the gender roles and identities from their countries of origin, their “cultural capital” (Bourdieu, 1997) in the form of educational qualifications becomes paradoxically less pronounced in a context where the said capital is socially recognized. Thus, migrants need to validate in their new country not only their cultural capital (Erel, 2010) but also their gender identities linked to the heteronormative ideologies in their countries of origin to facilitate their immigrant lives. The ways highly educated migrants negotiate their mobility and/or gender definitions add nuances to our understanding of the links between mobility and gender. These links are not straightforward but rather complex, subject to change across time and space, as well as shaped by other categories of difference such as family situation (having children or not), social class (notably in the form of cultural capital), religious belonging, and sexual orientation.

The latter factor – sexual orientation – brings forth the situation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) migrant workers who are often overlooked in the study of social reproduction. For example, in their study of gay labour migrants in North America, Lewis and Mills (2016) observe that gay workers’ migration results from the negotiation of “the uneven landscapes of inclusion and visibility” in sectors and locales where they are, and that they move to new sites where their sexuality is “more accepted” and “better protected”. The case of these workers highlights that “workplace *is* a site of social reproduction where affective needs are potentially met” including the creation of “professional identities” (p. 2497). Like these gay migrants, Thai transgender migrant women in Europe inhabit a working landscape where economic production and social reproduction intersect: they view their engagement to sex work not only for economic reasons but also “for their own self-worth, feminine identity formation and sexual pleasure” (Pravattiyagul, 2018, p. 21). Migration allows, therefore, gay and transgender migrants to seek security and to pursue their desired gender identities. In this case, transnational mobility can be framed as a global pedagogy, a learning process during which migrants find themselves fitting differently in one context.

The studies of labour migration underline migrants’ subjectivity as stemming from the interacting categories of difference and bring into the fore their agency as reflected in their tactics of negotiating migration and gender. In the next section, other examples of negotiations in the context of marriage migration are unveiled, revealing a certain extent of similarity with those observed in the labour migration setting.

### **Marriage migration: pursuing gender idea(l)s “here” and/or “there”**

Studies on mixed couples show that women and men migrate to form either an “ethnic heterogamous union” in which the partners have different ethnicities or an “ethnic homogamous” one in which the partners share similar ethnic origin (Eeckhaut *et al.*, 2011). These individuals most often find themselves negotiating mobility and gender in ways that satisfy social expectations in their countries of origin and/or destination. These expectations are usually based on specific gendered idea(l)s that define what a “good” partner, parent, and/or natal family member is.

In marriage migration in which women from economically developing countries numerically dominate, mobility is often negotiated as an effective option to counter their marginalisation in their societies of origin where a double standard of morality and sexuality can be observed (see Lapanun, 2012). It is also framed as the best way to achieve one's dream of forming a couple or family, notably for women having difficulty to find a potential partner in the local marriage sector, such as divorced women, aged and single ones, university diploma holders, as well as those occupying a socially valorised profession (Constable, 2003). Moreover, many women migrant spouses view spatial mobility for or through marriage as a path to economically empower themselves, as migration may provide them work possibilities allowing them later on to support their natal family back home (Bélanger *et al.*, 2011; Piper and Roces, 2003; Suksomboon, 2008). This economic aspect of marriage migration may influence the young generation, notably schoolgirls (see an example in Butratana and Trupp, 2020), to project themselves in the future as migrant spouses rather than as professionals. Marriage migration appeals to these young people as a viable "career" option outside of the traditional education system. In addition, marriage migration appears to offer women the possibility to pursue a more egalitarian gender arrangement in a social context different from that in their country of origin. On the contrary, when it is the woman who makes a partner migrate in her country of residence, an ethnically homogenous union is considered as a way to shift "the power balance in gender relations" in their favour (Beck-Gernsheim, 2007; see also Charsley, 2005). Whether migration is framed as a strategy for socio-economic improvement or it is regarded as a route to escape patriarchal practices, it is evident that women try to pursue a better gender arrangement in the intimate realm of their lives.

In addition, migrant women spouses usually negotiate their gender definitions with those in their receiving country to become "good" wives and mothers on the one hand and "good" members of their natal family and kin networks on the other hand. Cole (2014) shows in her study how Malagasy women "straddle different worlds, each with their own regimes of value" (p. S90) by converting their "migrant social status and wages" into the "quasi-mystical force of someone who 'has the first word' in Madagascar" (p. S93). Similarly, Thai women in Belgium try to satisfy gender expectations accomplishing their reproductive role in their mixed family in Belgium and their filial duties to their parents back home through remittances and other transnational caregiving practices (Fresnoza-Flot and Merla, 2017), making them "hindlimbs of an elephant" (the elephant being their family circles and the two nations they inhabit: see Fresnoza-Flot, 2020). In Western countries such as France and Belgium, such behaviour of migrant spouses can be partly interpreted as their response to the rising "femonationalism" (Farris, 2017) in their receiving countries, an ideology stemming from the "convergence" of "different political projects" in which non-Western migrant women are viewed as "victims to be rescued, injured and exotic subjects lacking autonomy" (p. 102). This view influences many Western countries' integration programs aiming for the "*de*-nationalization and *re*-nationalization" (Farris, 2017, p. 103) of non-Western migrant women, as well as various political and scholarly discourses invoking women's rights and upholding Western values. In non-Western countries, migrant women spouses are generally expected to reproduce the nation by becoming traditional wives and mothers, which exerts pressure on these women to follow the normative gender expectations on them. For example, Japanese women in couple with Pakistani men negotiate their transnational mobility to take care of their children (for example, by going with them to Pakistan for their schooling) and also to look after their aged parents (Kudo, 2016). By doing so, these women construct themselves as good Muslim mothers and daughters in Pakistan and Japan, respectively. In East Asia where migrant women are "considered as a 'problem', even a 'danger'" (Le Bail, 2018, p. 31), state-sponsored integration programs instil in these migrants the traditional gender ideology of wifeness and motherhood (Faier, 2009; Kim, 2008). While migrant spouses strive to follow such ideology, they continue their transnational caregiving to their natal families back home. Those who are unable to straddle two gender regimes suffer from devalued social status in either their country of origin or their country of

residence and from a negative reputation in the eyes of their children and other family members (see Suzuki, 2017; Yea, 2008). These women's predicament points to their new subjectivities incurred through migration and marriage.

Concerning men who chose to marry women from other countries, notably from the so-called "Global South", making their partner join them in their country and form a family appears inscribed in their exotic imagination and phantasm. For instance, some men in economically developed countries such as USA and Germany imagined Filipino women "as the epitome of the traditional wife" (Ordonez, 1997, p.123) possessing the conventional values of femininity and therefore "loyal", "modest", and "affectionate" partners (Rheinhard and Koss, 1989 cited by Beer, 1996). South Korean, Taiwanese, and Singaporean men also consider Vietnamese women as such and expect them to play traditional gender roles (Bélanger and Wang, 2012; Cheng, 2012; Kim, 2012). In the Vietnamese diaspora, Vietnamese men of working-class background in the USA look for potential wives in Vietnam to accentuate their self-worth as men (Thai, 2008). Likewise, Western men who form a couple with Thai women in Thailand and fulfil the role of family provider reinforce the masculine ideal in their countries of origin and at the same time become *farang* (foreigner) sons-in-law to the parents of their wives (Maher and Lafferty, 2014; Thompson *et al.*, 2016). These cases show that men negotiate their mobility mostly at the intersection of gender and social class.

Moreover, it is important to note that spatial mobility does not only take place during the beginning of mixed union formation but also may occur at some points during the couples' family trajectory: for example, when migrant spouses visit their country of origin after the birth of their child or to take care of their ageing parents (Bélanger and Wang, 2012; see also Kudo, 2016). These transnational practices reinforce kinship ties and allow migrants to fulfil their filial duties. In order for these practices to take place, migrant spouses and their partners need to continuously negotiate their mobility and often gender definitions as they strive to maintain their family unity in different social spaces and temporalities. Indeed, mixed couples live in constant adjustments across their life course, a life in movements or, in the word of Therrien (2017), in constant "voyage". Their ways of making sense of their situation, from migration to marriage or vice versa, indicate their intention to continuously inscribe their actions in the gender idea(l)s "here" and/or "there".

### **"Repro-migration" in reproductive mobilities: gender idea(l)s and intersecting inequalities**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century has been witnessing the rise of a global market of bio-reproduction in which bodies, feelings, and reproductive services have become highly commodified. This phenomenon triggers "reproductive mobilities", that is, "mobilities (geographic, of the imagination, class, tourism, and migration, for example)" that "inform and are shaped by different reproductive practices" (Speier *et al.*, 2020, p. 110) and that go beyond egg and sperm donations, surrogacy, and reliance on Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ART). These mobilities take place within intersecting inequalities and entail negotiations of normative gender idea(l)s of sexual reproduction, motherhood, and family making. "Repro-migration" - national border crossing oriented towards reproductive practices of intended parents and is connected to other forms of global (im)mobilities (Nahman, 2011) - can illustrate this process, specifically fertility and maternity migrations.

Fertility migration is the spatial movement of intended parents towards countries where they can "rent wombs", access "commercially provided ARTs", and afford other reproductive services (Ulla and Nawaz, 2020). Intended parents are usually "single women, post-menopausal women, homosexual couples, and, in some European countries, unmarried couples" who are "not eligible for infertility treatments" (Ferraretti *et al.*, 2010). These individuals appear not fitting societal normative definition of "ideal parents" who are in reproductive age and heterosexual marriage. Fertility migration offers them the possibility to negotiate this normative obstacle to parenthood and challenge gender idea(l)s of the family. Nonetheless, this possibility is not easily accessible to everyone as studies show, given the cost of migration and reproductive services (Ulla and

Nawaz, 2020). The inequality of access to the global market of bio-reproduction appears stemming from the differential economic power among intended parents. Such social class inequality intensifies and intersects with other inequalities based on gender, age, and ethnic differences in the destination countries where intended parents meet reproductive women workers with less economically privileged background. Some of these workers are migrants from developing countries like Central European women in the surrogacy market in Russia (Weis, 2017). In such a market, intended parents choose surrogate mothers based on different parameters such as age, ethnicity, and religion (Nahman, 2018; Weis, 2017). The “intimate labor” (Boris and Parrenas, 2010) that these mothers provide to intended parents transgresses the normative gender ideal of sexual reproduction, that is, “naturally” conceiving a child biologically-related to oneself. These women negotiate this ideal by viewing their intimate labour as a financial resource to support their families (Pande, 2011), a form of philanthropy (Svitnev, 2013), and a “labor of love” (Jacobson, 2016). This rationalisation of intimate labour as something beyond economic motives highlights the moral respectability of reproductive workers, both migrants and non-migrants.

In the case of maternity migration in which pregnant mothers move to a country and deliver there their babies, inequalities and transgression of normative gender idea(l)s of motherhood are present. For instance, using the case of migrant women who arrived undocumented and pregnant in Ireland, the Irish state restricted the access to Irish citizenship of undocumented migrants and their Ireland-born children through measures such as abolishing the *jus soli* principle in their citizenship law (Luibhéid, 2013). The state considers migrant women’s childbearing as a threat to “a desirable future for ‘properly’ Irish citizens” (ibid., p. 150). This case shows how the Irish state demonises migrant women’s sexuality to keep its normative gender idea(l)s of motherhood and nationhood based on whiteness and heterosexuality. In the USA, the discourses around pregnant migrant women are founded on the gender idea(l)s of middle-class motherhood based on whiteness and influenced by patriarchy (Sac, 2019). Migrant women are accused of using their sexuality to access regularisation and citizenship rights because they give birth to the so-called “anchor babies” - children born in the destination country who could pull their undocumented migrant parents and other relatives towards obtaining the citizenship of their receiving country (Bloch and Taylor, 2014). To negotiate accusations and negative stereotypes about them, migrant women adopt narratives and acts of good motherhood: for instance, Maya migrant women rape victims from Guatemala do not resort to abortion, as for them the “act of giving birth” is “an act of resistance against genocide” (ibid., p. 327). Political discourses and restrictive policies targeting migrant women and their children reinforce the social divide in many migrant-receiving countries between “desirable” and “undesirable” immigrants at the intersections of gender, ethnicity, sexuality, and social class. The case of “maternity” migrants reverberates the situation of more affluent pregnant women in birth tourism, who move to an economically prosperous country to give birth there and return after to their country of origin. These women view such mobility as a way to increase their children’s future motility through the acquisition of their birth country’s citizenship (Lozanski, 2020; Rodriguez, 2018).

In sum, fertility and maternity migrations unveil social inequalities at the crossroads of various categories of difference. Fertility migration shows that the global market of bio-reproduction is highly stratified, providing differential access to people according to their gender, social class, ethnicity, sexuality, and age. Maternity migration, on the other hand, reveals the normative ideals that underpin nationhood in Western societies – whiteness, heterosexuality, and patriarchy. It shows how migrant-receiving countries exclude “undesirable” migrants and “bad” mothers who pose a threat to their ideals of the family and nation, which in the process further reinforces social inequalities and marginalities. To confront the state’s policies and negative stereotypes, migrants negotiate normative gender idea(l)s of parenthood and the family through sense-making of their practices as aligned to specific moral and gendered values.

### **Emerging meanings of spatial mobility and gender**

The scholarly works on transnational migrations associated with social reproduction bring out how spatial mobility and gender operate, are negotiated, and intertwined. Whereas spatial mobility is most often subscribed to and justified using the dominant gender idea(l)s in the country of origin and/or society of residence, individuals' gender definitions are either (re)configured or reinforced to fit the context of spatial mobility and to counter negative stereotypes.

One can easily observe how the shifting social conception of gender influences the meaning of spatial mobility, from socially devalued to valorised act. For instance, in the 1980s and 1990s, many countries in Asia banned the deployment of their women workers abroad: Pakistan prohibited the recruitment of nurses, whereas Sri Lanka, India, and Indonesia forbade female domestic workers' migration (Oishi, 2005). Such a ban was intended to "protect" women citizens, who were viewed by the state as more vulnerable to exploitation and abuses than their male counterparts. Since the advent of the 21st century, there has been no legal ban in the aforementioned countries where women's migration strongly contributes in the economy. Pakistan has a dynamic overseas migration of nurses leading to a "brain drain" phenomenon (Abbasi and Younas, 2016), which shows how Pakistan's thriving nursing education sector paradoxically diminishes the nurse labour force in this country. On the other hand, Sri Lanka, India, and Indonesia are among the major exporting countries of domestic workers to the Middle East (Gamburd, 2017; Ray, 2019; Silvey and Parreñas, 2019). Another example is maternal migration, which engendered a moral panic in its early beginning. In the Philippines from the 1980s to the early 2000s, for instance, the social image of families with migrant mothers abroad was dismal due to the public concern about the negative implications of the absence of a mother on the well-being of her children and on the unity of her family (see Parreñas, 2005). In this context, the transnational mobility of mothers was less valued socially compared to that of fathers whose migration was considered part of their productive role in the family. As a result, Filipino migrant mothers at that time redefined their meaning of motherhood to confront the negative social image about their migration and to portray themselves as good mothers and citizens. Since the latter part of the 2000s, the families of these migrant mothers, specifically their children, are no longer viewed as pitiful and their educational success stories have become the focus of media and academic interests. Likewise, when maternal migration has intensified in Eastern European countries during the same period, migrant motherhood has acquired negative social image in those societies due to the situation of stay-behind children growing up without proximate maternal care (see Lutz, 2017).

In contrast to women migrants who have to justify their migration when it is socially seen as transgressing traditional gender ideology, men who move for work abroad do not undergo similar social pressure as their spatial mobility is considered aligned with their gender role in the family and nation. Nonetheless, they are socially expected to sustain their stay-behind families regularly, and doing so make them "good" fathers and husbands (Pribilsky, 2012). Since before the Second World War, the literature on transnational migration has shown that men's labour migration remains socially viewed as mainly attached to their family role as breadwinners. In fact, for many years until the visibilisation of women in migration studies in the latter part of the 1970s, migration itself was considered as essentially economic in nature and men's affair. Women were viewed as mere followers of men in their family (Morokvašić, 1984). It is only in recent years that other non-economic motives are identified as triggering men's spatial movement. For example, Carillo (2004) coined the term "sexual migration" to stress that sexuality can also drives people to migrate abroad. He describes in his recent work how sexual, economic, and familial factors motivate the migration of Mexican gay and bisexual migrant men to the USA and how they pursue sexual freedom and autonomy in their receiving country (Carillo, 2018). Similarly, Lewis and Mills (2016) observed that migrant gay men in Ottawa and Washington DC moved there in search of a gay-friendly work environment. Kitiarsa (2012) also unveils that some heterosexual migrant men express their sexual desire to reaffirm their masculine ideals. These

recent works suggest a more nuanced meaning of spatial mobility wherein gender and sexuality are simultaneously shaping the subjectivities of individuals.

In the marriage migration phenomenon, the spatial mobility of women was framed in many studies until the 2000s using the lens of trafficking, thereby presenting women as passive victims and as “mail-order brides” deprived of agency (for example, Glodava and Onizuka, 1994). Marriage migration is depicted in this case as dangerous for women and as a threat to the nation, which echoes the historical past when the so-called “interracial marriages” were legally restricted in many countries and when women automatically lost their citizenship when they entered in such a marriage (De Hart, 2015; Loos, 2008; Stoler, 2002). Scholarly works from the 2000s onwards have contributed to unveiling the agency of marriage migrant women to decide their spatial movements and to fulfil multiple simultaneous roles in different social settings (Constable, 2003; Piper and Roces, 2003). These migrant spouses negotiate their mobility and gender definitions through different tactics. Although restrictions and control imposed on marriage migration still exist in many migrant-receiving countries (see Collet, 2017; Fresnoza-Flot and Ricordeau, 2017; Maskens, 2015), spatial mobility to form a mixed couple or family is gaining social approval, notably from states undergoing demographic problems. For example, countries like South Korea and Japan that are experiencing brides’ shortage (notably for their male citizens in rural areas) rely on mixed marriages to reproduce their nations. On the perspective of some countries of origin of migrant spouses, marriage migration may provide economic opportunities to these women’s natal families as well as to the local economy (Ricordeau, 2012). Hence, the marriage migration of women, notably from economically developing countries, has become a socially valuable form of spatial mobility offering them possibilities to improve their lives and their natal families’ as well as to contribute as citizens in reproducing the nations in which they belong.

Men who engage in marriage migration and settle in their wives’ country of residence may violate by doing so the traditional gender norms in their own country. For instance, the masculinity of Chinese men who move abroad to join their foreign wives is questioned in China where it is the woman who is supposed to integrate the household of her husband and not the other way around (see Wang, 2017). This also happens to some Pakistani men in couple with UK-born Pakistani women: in Pakistan, women are traditionally the ones joining the family of the man, but in the UK, these Pakistani men reside in their wives’ families and subsequently experience socio-economic difficulties (Charsley, 2005). These examples indicate that not all spatial mobilities produce reinforcing effect on traditional gender ideology. There are spatial mobilities such as marriage migration that can be at the same time valorising and demasculating for men. There are also movements such as labour migration that are conventionally viewed as boosting men’s breadwinning role and masculine selves, but in reality, can sometimes undermine men’s sense of masculinity (Margold, 1995).

In the case of repro-migration in reproductive mobilities, studies show how intersecting categories of difference inform individuals’ spatial mobility, which simultaneously challenges and reifies the normative idea(l)s of sexual reproduction, parenthood, and family making. This process reproduces social inequalities. In fertility migration, there is an “intimate care” (Boris and Parrenas, 2010) chain linking reproductive women providers in developing countries and their economically privileged recipients from wealthy countries. Providers and recipients occupy differing social locations, but both experience marginality. Women providers with a working-class background and reproductive qualities (healthy, non-menopausal, heterosexual, and so on) seek in many cases economic resource (Pande, 2011) and are prone to the exploitation of intermediary actors. On top of this, their reproductive service is frowned upon in many societies as it goes beyond the heteronormative idea(l)s of motherhood, that is, bearing one’s biological child without payment in return. On the other hand, recipients could not “naturally” satisfy the normative idea(l) of parenthood due to infertility, menopause, sexuality, and/or non-marital union excluding them in many countries from state reproductive assistance (Ferraretti *et al.*, 2010). Only those with sufficient economic capital can access the costly reproductive services in

the global market of bio-reproduction, excluding thereby economically deprived individuals and couples. As regards maternity migration, women's childbearing and sexuality challenge their receiving country's traditional gender ideology of motherhood and nationhood. As a result, their receiving states demonise their sexuality that is considered to be antithetical to the hegemonic femininity and sexuality of insider women citizens, the "legitimate" reproducers of their nations. Affluent women in birth tourism (Lozanski, 2020; Rodriguez, 2018) and pregnant migrant women escaping gender violence in their country of origin (Bloch and Taylor, 2014) also undergo such demonisation. However, unlike maternity migrants who are prone to be deported, the former intentionally return after childbirth to their country of origin, whereas the latter are often viewed by the state as helpless victims to be rescued. The spatial mobility of all these women unveils the often-invisible hierarchy of gender and sexual identities in which migrant women's femininities and sexualities occupy a marginal position compared to those of insider women citizens in their receiving country. Interestingly, providers and recipients in the global market of bio-reproduction, as well as repro-migrant women, emphasise the moral dimension of their practices of reproduction and mobility in order to elevate their sense of self and respectability as "good" parents and citizens.

Overall, spatial mobility in transnational migrations magnifies not only migrants' gender identities that are mobile and malleable, but also their sexualities and their intersections with other categories of difference such as social class, ethnicity, and age. It appears at the same time highly gendered (Cresswell and Uteng, 2008; Clarsen, 2014) and sexualized (Luibhéid, 2013). At the individual level, people experience transnational mobilities and deal with their multiple implications differently, as spatial mobility acquires different social meanings (some valorising, some not) at certain points in time and in varying contexts.

### **Discussion: gaps to fill and possible paths to take**

Examining the way individuals negotiate their migration and gender definitions through a literature review was a useful exercise to understand human's subjectivity and agency, the link between spatial mobility and gender, and their shifting meanings. Doing so also unveils remaining gaps to address in the study of transnational mobility and gender, and highlight promising paths towards a more holistic research on this theme.

Methodologically speaking, most of the studies on transnational migrations associated with social reproduction make use of qualitative data-gathering techniques: ethnographic observations, interviews, documentary research, and so on. These approaches widely adopted in case studies produce rich, refined empirical data at the micro and meso levels, thereby providing vivid information and thick descriptions of the everyday lives of people. Nonetheless, the findings generated by these studies cannot be easily generalised, which unveils the need for more innovative research methods that can dissect at the same time the micro, meso, and macro dimensions of a social phenomenon. Mixed methods combining qualitative and quantitative data-gathering techniques appear well suited to fill this gap. Another possibility is the use of "mobile" data-gathering tools (cameras, digital recorders, tablets, among others) and online technologies of communication (Urry, 2007). These research instruments provide an innovative way of collecting data but accompany certain ethical obligations on the part of researchers. Reflexivity is also needed in this case to grasp how gender and other categories of difference affect researchers' positionality and the quality of data they collect and analyse (see Bott, 2010; Shinozaki, 2012).

At the empirical level, the experiences of LGBTQ migrants remain largely neglected in studies on transnational migrations due to the still on-going heteronormative tendency in these fields of research. Most present-day works remain focused on the situation of heterosexual migrants who fit the dominant conceptions of gender in the societies in which they are enmeshed. It is therefore not surprising that gay men (like other LGBTQs) who "fall outside" these conceptions are most often "absent from discussions of social reproduction" (Lewis and Mills, 2016). Empirical research on LGBTQ migrants in different social contexts (countries of origin,

transit, and destination) appears therefore necessary to reach a deeper understanding of the nuanced meanings of mobility, gender, as well as sexuality.

At the analytical level, this concept of sexuality is an important framework to help scholars go beyond heteronormative interpretations of individuals' experiences, notably through the adoption of a queer perspective. As Manalansan (2006) explains, this perspective "suggests that sexuality is disciplined by social institutions and practices that normalize and naturalize heterosexuality and heterosexual practices including marriage, family, and biological reproduction by marginalising persons, institutions, or practices that deviate from these norms" (p. 225). Sexuality appears here as a category of difference and therefore crucial to be included in intersectional analyses (Crenshaw, 1989) that have focused so far on three main categories – gender, "race", and social class. Besides, migrants' negotiation of their spatial mobility and gender definitions mostly occurs at the intersection of varying categories, including sexuality. This reality underlines the need for more attention to the process in which categories of difference intersect. A process-focused analysis can reveal, on the one hand, the social construction of interacting categories, and on the other hand, the tactics individuals employ to counter the impact of intersected categories. One example of a process-focused analysis is the study of gender negotiations in migration setting that unveils individuals' tactics to resist and navigate unequal power relations as well as to make sense of their newly acquired subjectivities in mobility. Nonetheless, a focus on gender negotiations alone is not enough to unmask social inequalities. The role that state policies and institutions play appears indispensable to take into account, notably the intersecting "regimes of mobility" that "normalise the movements of some travellers while criminalising and entrapping the ventures of others" (Glick Schiller and Salazar, 2013, p. 189). Another heuristic framework to bring the field of transnational mobility one step further is a critical focus on the interconnections between subjectivity and agency. These two notions are not always treated together in the study of migration in which agency has increasingly occupied a central position and has been widely used as an analytical framework itself since the rise of gender and migration scholarship. Considering subjectivity and agency together in the analysis may deepen our understanding of the way "power geometries" (Massey, 1994) functions at the micro and macro levels (in which the hierarchisation of nation-states based on their socio-economic and geopolitical prowess permeate individuals' imagination, shape their subjectivities, and influence their agency). Finally, it is essential to incorporate in the analyses the temporal dimension of transnational mobility. Some studies unveil that the social value of such mobility varies across time, thereby shaping individual migrants' discourses and tactics. Studying the way the temporal dimension interacts with spatial aspects will illuminate how and why both transnational mobility and immobility can be valued at one point in time in a given society. It will reveal the broader mechanisms at work, such as structuring gender ideologies and state's policies. Following the successful call for the "engendering" of the field of migration studies (see Mahler and Pessar, 2006; Pessar, 1999), it is time to push for a more holistic approach in this research domain by adopting a sexuality-inclusive, process-oriented, subjectivity/agency-focused, and time-sensitive framework.

## **Conclusion**

The review of literature on transnational migrations associated with social reproduction in the present encyclopedia entry sheds light on the way transnational mobility and gender intersect in the lives of individuals. It shows that gender can push or hinder people's mobility and that spatial mobility can make people modify or reinforce certain gender idea(s) in their cross-border social spaces.

The entry's main contribution lies in its identification of the multiple tactics that people adopt to negotiate their movements and gender definitions. These tactics appear to vary in terms of migration patterns. In labour migration, most migrants frame their mobility and redefine their conception of gender using the dominant gender scripts in their country of origin. In contrast, those in marriage migration are likely to reconcile the gender ideologies in their country of origin

and of destination. On the other hand, individuals in fertility and maternity migrations and other mobilities towards bio-reproduction negotiate normative gender idea(l)s of parenthood and the family by aligning their narratives to specific moral values. Nonetheless, tactics may also range in terms of social class, religious belonging, family situation, and sexuality as the case of highly educated labour migrants illustrates. Based on this observation, gender is not the sole magnified category intersecting with transnational mobility; other categories including social class in the form of educational qualifications become salient too during the migration process.

In addition, this entry illuminates the changing value of spatial mobility across time. This particularly concerns the transnational movements of women that underwent social devalorisation in the past, which may be due to the dominant essentialist, reductionist association between women and sedentariness on the one hand, and between men and mobility on the other hand. Although this essentialisation continues, women's spatial mobility has become a global phenomenon and is now socially valorised for its contributions to the reproduction of many nation-states in the world. Nonetheless, not all nation-states welcome women migrants in their territories as global mobility phenomenon co-exists with the reification of some traditional gender scripts. This reification demonises women migrants whose ethnic, social class, sexuality, and religious backgrounds are considered posing a threat to their receiving nation's imagined identity. It also exerts pressure on them to perform their gender roles in society continuously, which suggests that women remain the symbolic representation of nation-states (Oishi, 2005; Yuval-Davis, 1997).

Furthermore, it is evident that mobility has varying significations for different groups of people: it can be liberating (as the case of some LGBTQ migrants show), empowering (like some migrant women and reproductive women providers with limited socio-economic resources), and disempowering (like what some migrant men workers experience). Gender too has different meanings, but its hegemonic conception appears to remain heteronormative across time and space even in the context of transnational mobility. Whatever these meanings, migrants strive to satisfy roles and expectations stemming from the conception of gender dominant in their country of origin and/or country of destination, thereby demonstrating in the process their agency and shifting subjectivity.

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