Global Restructuring, Transmigration and Mexican Rural Women Who Stay Behind:

Accommodating, Contesting and Transcending Ideologies

Ruth Trinidad Galván
University of New Mexico
College of Education
Department of Language, Literacy and Sociocultural Studies
MSOCO50
Hokona Hall 291
Albuquerque, NM 87131
trinidad@unm.edu
Abstract

In a time when globalization has escalated the migration of groups of people there is still little known of the families and communities that stay behind. Based on over 5-years of ethnographic research with campesinas (rural Mexican women) in a highly migratory part of Central Mexico, this article examines the manner in which campesinas who stay behind as their husbands migrate are implicated in global processes. As a result of the movement of spouses to and from the United States new ideas, capital, bodies and information are introduced that alter the roles and perspectives of women who stay behind. From a gendered glocal framework that links global and local processes and considers power relations stretched across various spaces and amongst gender relations, the author examines how women learn to accommodate, contest and transcend their transmigrant state and changing ideologies. Women’s integration in a non-governmental organization, reliance on family networks and cultural traditions, among others, help maintain their integrity and wholeness as single mothers, group leaders, and community participants.
Global Restructuring, Transmigration and Mexican Rural Women Who Stay
Behind: Accommodating, Contesting and Transcending Ideologies

¿Cómo va ése dicho? – “Llorate pobre y no te ll ores sola.” Así es. De que te sirve
vivir en un palacio si no eres feliz. Pero también por la pobreza no vive uno feliz…
Y dice el esposo – “Sabes me voy a ir al otro lado [E.E.U.U] a levantar si quiera un
cuartito [para la casa]…” Y después de todos los años y todas las situaciones uno
si sufre, se pone triste porque le falta el marido.

How does that saying go? – “Cry in poverty but don’t cry alone.” That’s the way it
is. What good is it to live in a palace if you are not happy. But one also cannot live
happily in poverty… So the husband says – “You know what I am leaving [to the
United States] to at least make enough for a small room [for their house]…” But
after all of the years gone by and all of the situations endured one is still unhappy
because we miss our husband. (Andrea Acosta Valdez, formal interview, May 31,
2000)

From the numerous stories of migration and struggle by many of Sierra Linda’s
populace, I examine here the migratory state of these rural communities and draw
attention to the joys, struggles and transformations of women who stay behind while their
loved ones work in the United States. My family’s own migration from Zacatecas to
Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua and eventual settlement in the United States led me to initially
consider the material repercussions this phenomenon had on the lives of rural Mexican
women. However, after a deeper examination of their translocal relationships and the
ideological and emotional conditions that these relations produced, it became evident that the ideological landscape of these rural communities also pointed to a very global and transmigrant setting. As a result of the constantly changing global scene women, like Andrea Acosta Valdez, have had to grapple with the advantages and shortcomings of being women who stay behind. It has essentially included accommodating to the changing situation, contesting this taken for granted reality, and moving beyond it.

This examination is based on an ethnographic study, consisting of 12 months of actively living, participating and recording the everyday activities and community work of over a dozen rural mestiza women (campesinas) (during 1999-2000), and subsequent visits and data collection that span over 5 years. I came to Sierra Linda after becoming acquainted with a grassroots organization implementing popular literacy work in the area. While Proyectos Laubach de Alfabetización Popular en México, Asociación Civil (Laubach Popular Literacy Projects in Mexico, Civil Association - PLAMAC) had a long trajectory of community work throughout the state of Guanajuato it had just recently begun popular education work in Sierra Linda (Trinidad Galván, 2005). I, hence, entered the community hoping to research the impact PLAMAC had on Sierra Linda’s rural communities. Almost immediately it became clear that women’s involvement with PLAMAC was based on much larger issues and relations affecting Sierra Linda.

Sierra Linda is a small town-like city nestled in Guanajuato’s mountain range. Its surroundings are made up of clusters of rural communities. Sierra Linda’s rural communities mirror many peasant mestizo communities across Mexico that have traditionally subsisted from the agricultural land. With the exception of Julieta Acosta Valdez—Andrea’s younger sister—most of the women I interacted with lived in Sierra
Linda’s rural communities. Like most of the community, they were directly affected by the migration of the men in their families. Indeed, no single factor in the last three decades affected these communities most than the constant exodus and movement of its members. During the period of study, the state of Guanajuato led the country in numbers of emigrants to the United States. Because men made up a greater portion of those migrating back and forth (about 80% of the men between the ages of 18 and 60 were gone during most of the year), this pervasive transmigration greatly affected the women who stayed behind to assume the duties left by the men. What I witnessed then was many of the women’s responses, transformations and changes to the juxtaposition of people moving and staying.

This examination juxtaposes the global and the local via the lives and differing ideologies of campesinas affected by the migration of loved ones. My aim here is to genderize and link global and local processes (glocalize) to generate a gendered glocal framework that brings together different theories. This includes 1) employing and expanding on Appadurai’s (1990, 1996) framework of “global cultural flows” (scapes) and linking them to micro level relations and processes and 2) utilizing feminist theories of global restructuring and power relations (among people and across space) to further understand the situation of women who stay behind. The outcome is a gendered glocal framework that links global and local processes and considers power relations stretched across various spaces and amongst gender relations to explain that although these women live in rural communities they exist in a transmigrant state. This transmigration—result of the movement of spouses, ideas, capital and information to and from the United States—introduces new ideas, capital, bodies and information and alters the roles and perspectives
of women who stay behind. I then turn my attention to the accommodations, contestations
and transcendence women’s emerging ideologies (ideoescapes) reveal about this
transmigrant state. I turn now to a discussion of globalization so as to unearth its large-
scale and deterministic focus and hence the reason for addressing the local.

Global Restructuring, Local and Gender Processes

Antes llovía y la gente sembraba y tenía maíz y frijol, pero ahora con la sequía,
hora si que nos han dejado sin comer … también no sólo para comer, uno necesita
calzar, vestir, todas esas cosas, y que hace la gente … irse.
Before it rained and people would harvest and have corn and beans, but now with
the drought, now it has left us without food … but also one needs not only to eat,
one needs shoes, clothing, all of that, so what do people do … leave (Andrea
Acosta Valdéz, formal interview, May 31, 2000).

Contemporary global problems, such as, developing countries’ stagnant economies,
deremployment, ecological changes and lack of opportunity even for those individuals
receiving formal schooling continue to escalate the migration of people. Moreover, in
many parts of the world other factors like wars, the collapse of governments, such as the
eastern bloc, the disintegration of nation/states, and the continuing disparity between
developed and developing nations contribute to the movement of people. Andrea’s quote
above, whose husband has lived and worked in the U.S. during their 15 years of marriage,
reveals the ecological and economic changes occurring in the area that have partially
contributed to the migration phenomenon in her community. As Andrea’s words confirm,
men and women incessantly attempt to meet the basic demands of their families through their movement and the opportunities it might offer.

While growing global relations have forced individuals to uproot themselves in the hopes of better opportunities elsewhere, they have also increased the scale and the degree to which individuals have accessible information, ideas and a vision of their new destination. Social networks, the media and technology keep groups of people informed of economic opportunities and other ways of living (Ahern et al. 1985; Appadurai 1996; Arizpe 1981; Conway and Cohen 1998). Thus a growing trend surrounding globalization studies seems to concentrate on the extent technological innovations have made the world ever more aware of local occurrences throughout the planet. That is, increased technology and migration, for instance, which implicate more than those physically moving have bared not only the political economy but also socio-cultural relations and ideas. Clearly technology has had a tremendous impact on societies everywhere. For example, migrants rely on technology to communicate, send remittances and stay informed of occurrences in their native and receiving community. Although, we are well aware that globalization has effected every corner of the world and that rural communities in Sierra Linda would undoubtedly be affected in some way, the movement of loved ones adds another layer to these already changing communities. Indeed, it is crucial to emphasize that while my focus specifically addresses the effects of emigration I acknowledge that communities are living changing units that are constantly influenced by globalization and outside forces. However, this global influence continues to center large-scale relations that hide local interactions and consequently people’s resistance and resiliency to these processes.
Marchand and Runyan (2000), for instance, argue that issues surrounding globalization and its effects have generally centered on two macro-centered factions: (1) the political-economy and its effects on the world market, with particular emphasis on the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and World Trade organizations; or (2) its large-scale social and cultural significance and influence. For instance, a neoliberal economic emphasis, such as an export orientation even for developing countries lacking the technological innovation but who are rich in labor power, is one of many policies implemented around the world. In the case of Mexico, this has included three decades of export sector growth at the expense of local development and the accrual of a large debt for the acquisition of machinery and technology. Instead inward investment especially with regard to its population’s consumption and development is disregarded.

Globalization is also believed to alter social and cultural relations. The perpetual exchange of ideas is believed to contribute to a worldwide cultural homogenization (Brah et al. 1999). These sentiments are also proven extremist for even though globalization utters in defense of an unfettered mobility, with regard to commodities, it also believes in firm boundaries and closed borders with regard to people (Massey 1999). However, both views emphasize large-scale universal processes, which seem inevitably impermeable. Opposing views on globalization, on the other hand, expose its overstressed focus as a macro, inevitable, and unfettered process detached of any local events and uninfluenced by individual acts.

This study, hence, applies a face, an intimate view if you will, to globalization. A view that extends beyond an economic phenomenon that subsequently dismisses the incessant exchange of ideas and stories encountered in “power-filled social relations,” such
as those experienced by many campesino men and women (Brah et al. 1999, p. 8). Instead this study finds it important to consider that when issues surrounding globalization are seen as all engulfing large-scale events, the mundane daily occurrences and the portraits of resistance and resilience are overlooked. This resistance and resiliency is clearly expressed by some of Sierra Linda’s women in the latter part of the article.

Of concern here is the lack of human agency perceived in large-scale processes and the pre-determinacy of its effects. A greater amount of research on local relations and their influence on global events highlights individual/group political and social action as a continuous, pivotal and influential process. So what do we mean by globalization? Brah, Hickman and Mac an Ghaill indicate globalization (or more appropriately global restructuring)

may be understood as referring to the processes, procedures and technologies – economic, cultural and political – underpinning the current ‘time-space’ compression which produces a sense of immediacy and simultaneity about the world. The question of globalization is inextricably linked with the movement of capital, commodities, people and cultural imaginations and practices (1999, p. 3, italics in original).8

The processes and movements Brah et al. (1999) describe above are brilliantly highlighted and developed by Arjun Appadurai (1990, 1996) in his examination of the “cultural dimensions of globalization,” whose framework I first utilize to analyze the changing ideologies of campesinas who stay behind and employ to generate a gendered glocal lens. That is, I turn to Appadurai’s discussion of “global cultural flow” to begin to connect the global to the local and move global restructuring from merely a macro scope.
Viewing the global from the local

Appadurai’s examination of “global cultural flow” highlights the hybridity and fluidity of large-scale international relations to the local. As Appadurai suggests global restructuring has more to do “with certain fundamental disjunctures between economy, culture and politics…[witnessed] between five dimensions of global cultural flow which can be termed: (1) ethnoscapes; (2) mediascapes; (3) technoscapes; (4) finanscapes; and (5) ideoscapes” (1990, p. 6 & 7). Indeed migrants, exiles and other moving groups (ethnoscape), flexible technology (technoscape), global capital flow (finanscape), dissemination of information (mediascape), and ideologies frequently associated with particular states (ideoscapes) all affect the political, financial, imaginary, and ideological composition of individual nation-states, the world and the personal encounters occurring daily. These disjunctures provide diverse visual angles from which to perceive a shifting world encompassing multiple images “inflected by historical, linguistic and political situatedness of different sorts of actors: nation-states, multinational, diasporic communities…sub-national groupings, and even intimate face-to-face groups” (Appadurai 1990, p. 7). That is, his notion of scapes explores the fluid relations of multiple worlds constructed from diverse perspectives at various levels (just as a landscape might be viewed from different agents). Hence, his idea of scapes helps to explain the flow of social relations and interchange of ideas, capital, bodies, and information of people, like the women of this study, from multiple levels and perspectives.

Although Appadurai’s notions of scapes—“five dimensions of global cultural flow”—are situated in large-scale processes we can identify the manner capital, ideas, and
people move about globally (through the imaginary or otherwise) and how they influence various local communities by utilizing this framework in intimate micro relations. Essentially bring together the global and the local (glocal). That is, viewing the global from the local. While all of the scapes Appadurai refers to were evident in the translocal context of Sierra Linda, I foreground the ideologies and contrasting worldviews (ideoscapes) of the women and families that I worked with in the hopes of unearthing the manner in which the intimate micro processes of a group of rural women are embedded and changed by larger processes. It is in the latter part of the paper that I closely examine the ideological (ideoscape) disjunctures of many of the women who stay behind, but here tease through the various dimensions (scapes) by closely examining the translocal exchanges of a husband and wife in the following discussion.

Although I was considered part of PLAMAC and had fostered a relationship with Julieta’s older sisters, Andrea and Carolina, it was my eventual friendship to Julieta that enriched my overall relationship with her family and community. Julieta Acosta Valdez, a cheerful and talkative woman in her mid-thirties at the time of the study, was also the wife of a migrant man since the inception of their marriage over 15 years ago. Like other women in her community, the absence of her husband Manuel Alvarez meant she struggled alone to raise and educate their four children and care for their home and land. Indeed Julieta and Manuel’s distanced circumstances provide an excellent example of the diverse views, disjunctures and challenges intimate social interactions bring with them. For example, Manuel’s legal status in the U.S.—something uncommon for most migrants in the area—facilitated his returns on the average of three times a year and shaped his beliefs and worldviews (ideoscape). Six months after I left Sierra Linda in June of 2000, I
made a brief visit during the holidays and had the opportunity to interact with Manuel whom I had already met during one of his previous visits. I witnessed during this visit the couple’s opposing worldviews of progress the night he arrived.

Julieta, our children and I had spent the day sightseeing in a nearby city. We arrived to her home, where I was staying, to find Manuel awaiting her arrival. As we sat around the living room discussing his travel and the day’s events while he handed out gifts and items he brought with him, he asked Julieta to try on the outfit he had brought her. Coy and unwilling to show off her outfit in front of her family and mine, Manuel critiqued her way of thinking by engaging in the following dialogue.

Manuel – Deberías de ser más como los Americanos, ellos son bien positivos.
No se hubieran fijado.

Julieta – Pues yo no puedo ser como ellos porque yo no los conozco, no he vivido con Americanos.

Manuel – No se trata de eso [vivir con ellos], pero hay que ser como los Americanos, siempre le ven lo positivo a las cosas, no lo negativo….No me entiendes, yo sólo te digo que ya tenemos que progresar y ser más como los Americanos.

Julieta – Pues no, yo no puedo ser como alguien que no conozco.

Manuel – You should be more like the Americans [U.S.], they are very positive. They wouldn’t have minded.

Julieta – Well I can’t be like them because I don’t know them, I have never lived with Americans.
Manuel – It is not about that [living with them], but we need to be more like the Americans, they always see the positive side of things, not the negative…You don’t understand me, all I am saying is that we need to progress and be more like the Americans.

Julieta – Well not me, I can’t be like someone I do not know.

Their conversation proved to be a snap-shot view of their opposing ideologies (ideoscapes). In this case their opposing views of progress were evident. For Manuel progress consisted of a relative openness to new ideas and ways of being, while maintaining a positive outlook on life. It meant not being coy, as Julieta seemed to be, or closed-minded. However, both Manuel and Julieta vacillated back and forth between what they considered “progress.”

On that same evening and after Manuel’s earlier discussion of progress, we sat at the kitchen table and talked about Manuel’s legal status in the U.S. and the possibility of Julieta and the children traveling to the U.S. After asking him whether he had considered legalizing and migrating his family to the U.S., Manuel promptly answered that he had thought about it, but had quickly discarded the idea. His ultimate reasoning, women change too much in the U.S. “As soon as they go to the United States they become liberated and leave you,” was his answer. Clearly his response completely contradicted his earlier idea of progress and Julieta’s need to be more like the “Americans.”

Similarly, Julieta demonstrated contradictory ideas about progress. During my many months with Julieta, I was also able to witness her accommodation, subversion and transformation to these disjunctures. During a community meeting, for instance, Julieta dissented with others about the need for so many community celebrations by stating: “It’s
no wonder Manuel says we Mexicans are in bad shape, because we want to make a festivity for everything. That’s why we don’t progress”. Although Julieta resisted Manuel’s recommendation to be progressive and more like the Americans she later utilized these ideas to question and change traditional community perceptions about the materiality of community celebrations.

As Appadurai (1990, 1996) suggests, global cultural flow occurs via the interchange and disjuncture of these scapes (ideoscape, financescape, mediascape, ethnoscape and mediascape) and expressed and felt differently from each agent. Because Manuel frequented his native community he was a constant brought flow (ethnoscape) of multiple worldviews (ideoscapes), remittances (finanscapes) and cultural artifacts (mediascapes) that altered their everyday rural living.

It is clear here that as everyday occurrences and interactions are considered they uncover not just the local, because as Poku, Renwick and Glenn suggest, what “structures the locale is not simply that which is present on the scene; the visible form of the locale conceals the distanciated relations which [partially] determine its nature” (2000, p. 17). This visible form reveals that relations, although separated by space and time, remain connected (Kearney 1996, 2000). That is to say, Manuel and Julieta’s comments are not simply a reflection of their immediate (local) experiences. For instance, one might question how well Julieta knows the “Americans.” Even though, as she mentions, she has never lived with “them” the ideas and beliefs (ideoscapes) her husband (ethnoscapes) brings, among others (mediascape) pierce her daily living. In other words, what other perceptions of U.S. society does she receive from commercial Hollywood movies on her living room shelf?
Equally significant, however, is the manner she prevents certain ideas from fully infiltrating her values and beliefs and that of her children. Clearly, she lives in a rural community in Mexico where she continues to hold on to particular values and ideas. I say this because it is also worth noting that localities also have some level of autonomy that global restructuring does not invade. Namely, campesinas’ spiritual and ancestral traditions continue to be an important source of their sobrevivencia (beyond economic survival) to global and local occurrences (Trinidad Galván, 2006).

Beyond the Global: Gendered Glocal Relations

My use of Appadurai’s “five dimensions of global cultural flow” helps to frame glocal relations, that is, the juxtaposition of international macro process to intimate local relations. But how can we best understand the landscape of women and women who stay behind specifically? Feminist theories and accounts of global restructuring and power relations contribute another important dimension to a gendered glocal framework. For instance, although it is evident from Julieta’s translocal relations that women who stay behind are indeed implicated in glocal relations women’s position in this process continues to be understudied. Consequently feminist scholars in this area continue to criticize global and migration studies for ignoring gender relations (Alexander & Mohanty 1997; Glick Schiller et al. 1992; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Karpinski 1999; Marchand and Runyan 2000). As with many other issues, women are affected differently and influence circumstances in particular ways. Because global restructuring continues to emphasize First World, capitalist and Western views there must exist a deliberate focus on poor women and other marginalized groups. Although I center the manner gender is absent
from discussions of global restructuring, campesinas’ rural demarcation is never detached from their ethnic, racial, and class status. Moreover, in Mexico’s context the mere marker of campesina suggests rurality, hence, poverty.

As the above discussion on global restructuring and Appadurai’s (1990, 1996) notion of scapes reveals, a plethora of actors and subjectivities are implicated in and contribute to the movement of ideas and commodities. For example, the movement of women is also growing drastically, however, women experience inequalities whether they move or stay. Thus even researchers centering women’s implication in international relations must be weary of departing from a global perspective that privileges only women’s direct participation, as workers in the world economy.10 Rather, gendering glocal processes requires that we be mindful of its multifarious power relations and its consequences on all involved.

Runyan and Marchand, for example, point out that “feminist accounts…reveal more clearly the broad range of power sources at work in global restructuring by examining cultural and social forces. They also stress multiple forms of human agency in terms of both the construction of and resistance of global restructuring” (2000, p. 225). Gendered glocal relations, hence, shed light on the power relations, complexity and interconnectedness of these relations. This interconnectedness requires further understanding genderized social relations of power as women traditionally conceived of in private realm spaces are excluded from any discussion or reference to macro issues of the economy, politics or state. How does global restructuring impact/implicate women differently?
Massey (1994), for instance, argues for the interlocking of social and power relations across various spaces (nations, communities) and levels (global, local). From her analysis, one ascertains campesinas are implicated in these glocal, social and power relations because the movement of loved ones (ethnoscape) and other disjunctures alters their ideas, roles and positions in the community. Massey’s work also presses us to question how their position as rural women who stay behind alter what is meant by ideoscapes, ethnoscapes and finanscapes. In actuality, Appadurai’s scapes more closely explain the landscape of traveling males. For instance, ethnoscape refers to the movement of people and the transformations that come with their movement. In this case, for example, women who stay behind must confront community antagonism and contend with community and familial responsibilities they are unprepared to assume. These contentions are clearly linked to women’s unequal position in society. These gendered glocal relations point to the numerous power relations women straddle locally through their husbands’ movement.

Evidently, as more women migrate—especially poor women—their involvement in the transmission of goods, services and ideas increases as well as their implication in international matters (Marchand and Runyan 2000). My argument lies in the extent to which they are already permeating the ideas and values discussed globally from their localized spaces (again the manner these are glocalized). Yet, because my research centers on Sierra Linda’s mujeres (women) and their role as women who stay behind, I can only speculate on the degree of influence they have on their husbands’ ideas and worldviews (ideoscape) that they in turn bring to the U.S (ethnoscape). Hence, based on the work of others that examine the cultural influence of Mexicans in the U.S. it is fair to assume
husbands also transport (ethnoscape), in this case, cultural understandings (ideoscape) (Gomez-Peña 1998; Guerra 1998; Kearney and Nagengast 1989; Suarez Orozco 1998b). For example, on more than one occasion Julieta instructed Manuel on the use of alternative medicine that she had learned about and bought in Sierra Linda. Although he was skeptical he attempted to bring them into the U.S. without success (INS was suspicious of the herbal liquid medicine and proceeded to confiscate them). His beliefs (ideoscape) about alternative medicine, however, were definitely altered and introduced (ethnoscape) to his life in the U.S. Such is the case that in his last visits back home he would bring with him curative green rubbing alcohol that she in turn used for a number of illnesses. Julieta used and recommended it so much to others that Manuel would bring numerous bottles for Julieta to share.

The translocality and consequent changing ideologies (ideoscape) of campesinas who stay behind can best be understood from a gendered glocal lens. That is, the fluid stretched out gender power relations that span the global and the local. Gendered glocal relations point to the numerous power relations women straddle locally and abroad through their husbands’ movement. Locally, as will be evident shortly, they must contend with power struggles that hinder leadership, educational and employment opportunities. Nationally their campesina demarcation also forces them to contend with class, race and ethnic discrimination. As mentioned earlier a gendered glocal framework simultaneously juxtaposes numerous theories of the global and the local (global restructuring and Appadurai’s “global cultural flows”) and feminist accounts of power relations across space. The foregrounding of women’s ideologies serve to uncover one complex aspect of these gendered glocal relations, to which I turn next.
Campesinas Who Stay Behind: Accommodating, Contesting, and Transcending their Transmigrant State

Their social relationships and their varying and multiple identities [are] generated from their simultaneous positioning in several social locations both to accommodate to and to resist the difficult circumstances and the dominant ideologies they encounter in their transnational fields (Glick Schiller et al. 1992, p. 4).

As Glick Schiller, Bash and Blanc-Szanton’s above quote suggests, rural Mexico’s translocal character drive both the migrant and those remaining to creatively survive the various situations in which they find themselves. An examination of transmigrant communities, like this one, demonstrates quite dramatically the complexity engrossed in the movement, integration, struggle and resistance of travelers and stayers (glocal). Campesinas, for instance, have to survive economic and emotional limitations, but also learn to organize and create new identities, coalitions and spaces of self and communal empowerment. Within a single community women and their families are responding differently and in contradictory ways to their transmigrant state. Ultimately, how does the overall composition and dynamics of a transmigrant community change as men and women come and go (physically and emotionally)? And what transformations do the ideologies (ideoscape) of campesinas who stay behind take? What follows, then, is gendered glocal analyses of the manner campesina ideologies (ideoscape) accommodate to, contest and transcend their translocal state.
Accommodation: “But at least we strive and don’t just stand here waiting”

As women stay behind without their husbands, brothers and sons, they learn to accommodate their beliefs (ideoscape) and responses. Their accommodation comes as a result of the many responsibilities they have to assume in their home and community that essentially drives them to rely on family, community and organizing networks for support.

Campesinas who stay behind endure more responsibilities both at home and in their communities. The larger workload that women assume as their spouses and loved ones leave requires an extensive amount of time and energy. Women find that the hours in the day are not enough to care for all the chores of home, harvest and children. In addition most women feel a tremendous responsibility is imposed on them from faraway spouses and community members to perform all of their tasks quietly and without bitterness. As discussed by Suarez Orozco, the social remittances of men “affect the values, cultural models, and social practices of those left behind” as advanced technology makes communication with loved ones easily accessible (1998a, p. 10). Men, therefore, are kept current on family occurrences or dilemmas at which time they exercise their power, ideas or judgment. Women, hence, learn to accommodate to men’s patriarchal judgment and control by altering their beliefs of men’s role in the family and strategically utilizing family networks when handling family troubles.

Family networks act as immediate intimate moral support and not just transmigrant economic and cultural networks as argued by others (Arizpe 1981; Chavez 1988; Cornelius 1989; Suarez Orozco 1998a). Indeed, studies centering the traveler emphasize the importance of economic and social networks utilized by those moving from community to
community without taking into account the very important task social networks at home have on the healthy existence of the awaiting family (Ahern et al. 1985; Guerra 1998).

Additionally, these social networks also include community organizations, such as PLAMAC, that provide for its members economic and social support as well as new outlooks on the migration phenomenon and women’s roles in it. PLAMAC’s vision included promoting a critical consciousness so as to motivate people to act on their situation (Trinidad Galván, 2005). Guillermina Lopez Bravo, co-director of PLAMAC, worked closely with several groups of women in Sierra Linda. From her direction, the groups spent time reflecting on the social and economic problems of their communities. During one meeting Guillermina reflected on the situation of women who stay behind and stated:

Yo digo que para las mujeres que tienen hermanos, niños o esposos en el norte no pueden estar esperanzadas en el dinero. Porque como puede llegar [el dinero], no puede y que van hacer. Los hombres están allá en peligro y un mes mandan y otro a la mejor no. No pueden estar con los brazos cruzados esperando que les caiga. Como mujeres podemos hacer lo nuestro. Pero hasta lo que esté en nuestras posibilidades aquí. Lo que se pueda. Pero por lo menos luchamos, no nos quedamos sólo esperando.

I say that for women that have brothers, sons or husbands in the north [U.S.] they can’t be dependent on the money. Because like it may arrive [the money], it may not and then what are you going to do. The men over there are in danger and one month they may send and another they may not. You can’t have your arms crossed waiting for it to fall on you. As women we can do something. But depending on
what is at our disposal here. What we can do. But at least we strive and don’t just stand here waiting.

Guillermina often spoke strongly about the need for women who stay behind to lead the development of their community, since most men’s illegal status in the United States could not assure them their job, residence or income. She argued the economic subsistence of men, women and entire families was frequently at the disposal of unjust U.S. government policies and employers that could deport men at any time. Therefore, Guillermina felt it was partially PLAMAC’s duty to uncover these tribulations, expose a different lived experience (ideoscape), and provide the tools to make it a reality. That is to say, if families found themselves without the income of emigrating family members, as it often occurred, there were other possibilities for subsistence.

Elsewhere I discuss at length the work and influence that PLAMAC had on these rural communities, however, it suffices to say that from PLAMAC’s popular education work and critical literacy vision they helped the women accommodate, question and transcend their circumstances (Trinidad Galván, 2001 & 2005). Women like Andrea accommodated to their circumstances by leading community groups, opening their own small businesses, and engaging in personal development activities. As a result of Andrea’s leadership role and participation in PLAMAC’s community groups she—with the help and support of her sisters and family network—initiated several community projects and was even nominated for local office. Antiquated ideas that women were not made for politics or must resign themselves to a life without their husbands were quickly being challenged.

Contestation: “I would rather beg in the streets than be far-away from you”
Women who stay behind learn, with the help of loved ones, to accommodate to their new situation and responsibilities. However, many of the same women also resisted their transmigrant state. Many realized they could not resign themselves to the permanent migration of their loved ones. For instance, the women of this study struggled with both their aversion for the migration of their men and their need for economic remittances. Consequently, some women in translocal communities find migration favorable, others unfavorable and still others caught between the two. For instance, in her interview Julieta spoke to migration’s economic benefits but was also weary of the disintegration and breakdown of the family. She states migration both benefits and complicates their lives.

Por un lado nos beneficia [la migración] y por el otro nos perjudica.
Económicamente tal vez. Yo también digo que tal vez vivir uno en pareja, en familia y solucionar los problemas juntos, sean buenos o sean malos, es mejor, porque con sacrificios va salir adelante.
In some cases it benefits us [migration] and in others it harms us. Economically probably. But I also say that maybe living together as a couple, as a family and resolving our problems together, good or bad as they may be, is better, because with sacrifices one can advance (Focus group interview, December 17, 2000).

As the spouse of a migrant man, she depended on Manuel’s remittances to economically provide for her family, but his absence also produced physical and emotional sorrow. I listened to narratives of—and from our close relationship witnessed—physical ailments that she related to the excessive responsibilities of being a single parent.

Jovita Gomez, whose economic situation was the most precarious, expresses an equally important social dimension of migration. Jovita’s narrative clearly stresses that the
migration of loved ones and the financial security that it may provide does not sufficiently make up for the loss of emotional and familial support.

Horita que me atacan [la comunidad], que me echan habladas yo lo soportó, yo lo soportó porque lo tengo a él [a su esposo con ella]. Él es el único apoyo que tengo. Yo me siento muy contenta que esté él…y yo le digo – “Yo lo siento mucho pero yo prefiero pedir limosna pero no estar lejos de ti. Porque si iba estar sola [sin pareja] pues mejor me hubiera estado en mi casa [con sus padres].

Right now that I am attacked [by the community] and they talk about me I can endure it because I have him [her husband with her]. He is the only support I have. I feel really happy that he is with me … and I tell him – “I am very sorry but I would rather beg in the streets than be far-away from you.” Because if I was meant to be alone [without a partner] then I would have stayed at home [with her parents].

(Formal interview, June 15, 2000).

Jovita’s family represented for her not only economic remittances but also the care, love, support and strength women possess against the many struggles they face. She felt she could neither accommodate nor resign herself to such a situation. In addition many women here resisted not only the separation of families and lack of support that emigration produced, but the lack of recognition they received for their work.

It must be acknowledged that entire households are responsible for the mobilization of remittances and resources and consequently women who stay behind call for recognition for their share of these responsibilities. Julieta, for example, recognizes the crucial role she plays in her husband’s contributions. At one point she expressed this insight to Manuel after he complained (by phone) that she was not properly caring for their children.
Sí, es cierto que no les dí [desayuno esa mañana que él habló con los niños]. Pero tú tampoco, por lo menos yo de ves en cuando, pero tú nunca porque no estás. ¿Tu crees que con sólo mandar dinero eres padre? Pues no, el dinero no se mueve sólo, aquí yo tengo que moverlo.

Yes it's true I didn’t give them any [breakfast the morning he called and spoke to the children]. But you also don’t give them, at least I do now and then, but you never do, because you aren’t here. You think that by merely sending money you’re a father? Well you’re wrong, money doesn’t move on its own, here I have to make it work (Informal interview, December 16, 2000).

Indeed, many women who stay behind oppose and resist the migration of their loved ones, because they find it to be socially costly. Although many believe migration constitutes a household survival decision, Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994) argues migration is indeed not a family decision but rather an individual male decision. Undeniably the women of this study show feelings of contestation and resentment as they understand migration to be only one answer to family survival. Women, however, are not resigning themselves to this situation and instead question, like Andrea, when their family will finally be reunited.

Cuando uno se casa y forma la pareja, vive muy poco tiempo como pareja. Unos a los días agarran y se van y hasta los años vienen y otra vez se van. Así se va uno año por año. Yo a veces le decía [a su esposo] – “Cuando iremos a estar juntos. Será hasta que ya estemos viejos, que ya no sirvamos para nada.”

When one gets married and becomes a couple, one lives very little as a couple. Some leave days after [they are married] and don’t come back for years and then
leave again. And that is how one lives year after year. Sometimes I would tell him [her husband] – “When are we going to be together. Will it be until we are old and good for nothing” (Informal interview, December 16, 2000)

Clearly, unlike Ahern et al.’s (1985) work, the women of this study cannot resign themselves to a solitary life and the added responsibilities that come with it. Instead Julieta, Andrea and Jovita and many other women, convey feelings of contestation, resentment and alienation. Hondagneu-Sotelo’s work with women also demonstrates a degree of household discord with regard to the issue of migration. She recommends a closer look at the “power relations operating within the family or household unit” so as to ascertain the kind of contention and family decision-making transpiring (1992, pp. 395-396). Julieta and Andrea’s mother, Doña Carmen’s wishes, for instance, to report her son’s illegal stay in the U.S. to the migra (INS) so as to force his return back home demonstrates the extent to which families diverge in opinion.

Statewide grassroots organizations have also chosen to change community perceptions about the need to emigrate and leave their communities. One woman put it well when she stated:

Alguien un día dijo que en México no hay pobreza sólo migración, pero nosotros como mujeres tenemos que enseñarles a nuestros hombres que aquí sí se puede. Para que no tengan que ir a otro país que no es el nuestro, y no perder nuestras culturas y tradiciones. Porque de allá sólo vienen muertos, esposos e hijos.

One day someone said that in Mexico there is no poverty, only migration, but women like us must show our men that they can do it here. So that they don’t have to leave to another country that is not ours, and lose our culture and traditions.
Because from there they just return dead, husbands and sons (Community meeting, March 25, 2000).

Indeed, those that stay behind must also contend with the grief that accompanies the permanent loss of a loved one. Many campesinas must also endure the hardship that some men and women do not return, either because they have found permanency and a new family in a distant country or departed this life in their attempts for better opportunities. Since initially writing this piece, Manuel, at the young age of 47, died of a cerebral hemorrhage in Houston, Texas. Fortunately and without due notice, his last days were actually spent with Julieta who only 3 months prior had crossed the border to be with her husband. Although they spent his last living moments together, she now struggles with U.S. and Mexican authorities to claim his rightful retirement funds.

Transcendence: “I understand it as the self-improvement of a person”

Many of the women who stay behind also find ways to transcend community ideologies and conditions. Although the absence of men calls upon women to assume men’s roles, such as that of community leaders and heads of household, socially and culturally the community is unwilling to accept women in these roles. Hence, women must also contend with not only added responsibilities and the loss of loved ones but gender-specific attitudes of women’s role in the home. Even with the absence of many community members, women are continually antagonized for their participation in public community affairs and their “negligence” in the home.
Andrea, for instance, who often struggled to encourage women to join community projects stressed that women who did not participate in community projects or PLAMAC were afraid of not only their husbands’ criticism but the community in general.

Tienen miedo hacer un proyecto… -[Dicen] - “No, yo no me quiero meter en problemas, yo no quiero que hablen de mi y que digan que yo hice esto…” Ellas tienen un miedo, que…la gente hable de ellas. Por ejemplo, a nosotros nos dicen mujeres huevonas sin quehacer. No lo han dicho en nuestras caras. Pero yo pienso que mas que nada es un proceso. Un proceso del que primero, hasta no ver no creer. O sea cuando ellas se asesoren de que esto es algo bueno y se les quite la superstición [que las mujeres no deben participar en asuntos públicos].

They are scared to work on a community project… [They’ll say - ] “No, I don’t want to get into problems, I don’t want them to talk about me and say I did that…” They are scared… people will talk about them. For example, they tell us we are lazy women that have nothing better to do. They have said this to our faces. But I think that it is more than anything a process. A process that entails seeing is believing. That is, until they take stock that this is something beneficial and they rid themselves of the superstition [that women should not participate in public matters]. (Focus group interview, December 17, 2000)

Women’s ability to transcend these cultural and androcentric ideologies has often meant making sense of the contradictions of womanhood, since many times it is other women who critique them for being actively involved in community projects. Sofía Villenas and Melissa Moreno’s (2001) examination of mujer-oriented mother-daughter pedagogies suggests that women’s teachings include the contradictory and often complex
expectations of being a mujer del hogar (a woman of the home) and one that knows how to valerse por si misma (make it on your own). Julieta and Andrea’s discussion of other women’s perceptions of a mujer del hogar follows a similar vein to what Villenas & Moreno describe as a gender socialization founded on a “Spanish colonial legacy of honor y vergüenza (honor and shame)” (2001, p. 677). Upon deeper examination they find that women’s vergüenza comes as a result of not “fully” contributing to their household (economically). Hence, women in those cases embrace el hogar (the home) so as to equally contribute to the household. As discussed previously with regard to women’s participation in community projects, the women of this study did find ways of contributing to their household by establishing small family businesses or learning a trade (i.e. seamstress) that eventually could provide an income. Women like Andrea and Julieta who engaged in community projects were coming to terms with not only their new held responsibilities as jefas del hogar, as mentioned earlier, but also proactive ways of minimizing the future migration of their children. Because they were trying to create livable conditions at home they did not question their contribution to the household. Indeed many of the women felt their contribution to the household far outweighed that of their absent husbands.

Interestingly enough, it is also the absence of men that gave these women greater flexibility to maneuver their chores and time away from home, because even though male dominance is still present, community needs have forced women to transcend and alter this cultural norm. Similarly in Hondagneu-Sotelo’s study with women and families who have migrated to the U.S. from Mexico, the migration of men “enables them [women], indeed requires them, to act decisively and autonomously” (1994, p. 65). In fact, it became a joke around women’s community reunions to respond – “Es que tengo el gobierno en la casa”
(the government awaits at home) when women could not participate for more than several minutes. Women learned to joke about the inflated power given to men in their communities, since they were keenly aware that due to the absence of men they had the opportunity to participate in PLAMAC’s community groups. Although at times emotionally affected by their community’s perceptions of women’s place in the home, women like Julieta, Andrea and Jovita, transcended these ideals because their own beliefs (ideoscape) changed. The men’s absence essentially forced and made way for them to attend to public matters that eventually also shaped their perceptions. Their incorporation and work in PLAMAC, for instance, proved to be a determining factor (Trinidad Galván, 2005). Andrea and Julieta, who both participated actively in PLAMAC’s work express their need to do something more than care for home and children.

Andrea – Mas que nada para mi yo lo entiendo como la superación de una persona, uno trata de superarse. Ellas están en una rutina diaria, haciendo lo mismo, su quehacer. No les interesa mas que su puro quehacer, lavar, planchar, ver sus hijos. Yo no siento que le estamos faltando al marido ni nada por el estilo, porque uno quiere superarse…[Queremos] también ver cosas nuevas.. superarse, salir.

More than anything I see it as the self-improvement of a person. That one tries to self-improve. They [women who stay home] are in a daily routine of chores, doing the same thing. They are not interested in anything else than their chores, wash, iron, look after their children. I do not feel that just because one wants to advance that we are disrespecting our husband or anything of that nature…We also want to see new things…advance, get out.
Julieta – No es tanto que yo siento que me aburra [de los quehaceres] pero como que yo siento la necesidad de buscar la manera de superarme un poco más. Yo sé que no va ser todo lo que yo quisiera, pero también pienso que si uno le hace la lucha no se va quedar así. Disfrutar algo más de la vida.

It is not so much that I get bored of house chores, but rather that I feel the need to find a way to advance a little more. I know that I won’t change as much as I would like, but I do believe that if one tries you are bound not to stay the same. Enjoy life more. (Focus group interview, December 17, 2000)

Likewise, in Hondagneu-Sotelo’s study, the temporary absence of men, the incorporation of women into the labor market, and/or the integration of men to a country that debilitates their power position, result in changes in gender relations. Women find they can assume more control or negotiate household authority and transcend traditional gender roles. As Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994) suggests, women’s newly acquired leadership opportunities and capabilities result in an increase in “her sense of self-esteem as a good wife who then eventually identifies as a mujer fuerte [strong woman]” (pp. 65-66).

However, this study demonstrates that taking the “reigns” (tomar la rienda), as Hondagneu-Sotelo and others suggest, comes at a high cost for women. It is through painful experience and time that women transcend gender-specific cultural norms and come to be accepted, valued and appreciated for being mujeres fuertes. Even though most of the women can be said to already be mujeres fuertes in their own way, it is through their public participation that they learn the hardships of being assertive.

The experiences of campesinas in Sierra Linda also coincide with those of Turkish migrant women in Abadan-Unat’s study. Abadan-Unat states, “migration causes changes
in the composition of the family, and the acceptance of new frames of reference…[such that] migrant women become psychologically ready to accept new patterns of behaviour” (1984, p. 146). In addition, Abadan-Unat points out that many women must also deal with mental disturbances manifesting as a result of the separation and monumental changes of their relocation. Even though the women of Sierra Linda cannot be said to suffer from the anxieties of relocation, they were certainly exposed to the death of loved ones, changes in family composure and the separation of families. Julieta’s dire situation after the death of her husband certainly indicates one such monumental change. On the whole, Sierra Linda’s migrating community members exposed themselves to great danger each and every time they illegally crossed the border.

Conclusion

The testimonies heard here are stories of sobre-vivencia and resiliency in the face of hardship, mourning, struggles and accomplishments among campesinas who stay behind and assume the care and responsibility of their children, farm and overall community. As rural community dynamics change in the midst of transmigration and global restructuring, community dynamics and perceptions need to respond to their new translocal position. Consequently, women who stay behind are placed in an array of relationships, activities and positions shaping their multiple identities, contradictory ideologies and their overall responses. These multiple and changing ideologies (ideoscape) are a result and response to the disjunctures of a global landscape (Appadurai, 1990 & 1996). The gendered glocal framework developed here is an attempt to capture global and local processes as they
transcend spaces and intertwine in gendered power relations, such as those experienced by campesinas who stay behind.

Notes

1. This research was funded by an AERA-Spencer Fellowship and the Steffensen-Canon Fellowship and Presidential Graduate Fellowship of the University of Utah. The invaluable conversations and suggestions of the reviewers and Ed Buendía, Sylvia Celedon-Pattichis, Donna Deyhle, Leslie Poynor, Frank Margonis, Glenabah Martinez, Melissa Moreno, Charise Pimentel, Octavio Pimentel, Juan de Dios Pineda, Troy Richardson, Tracy Stevens, Audrey Thompson, and Sofia Villenas transformed this article.

2. People’s names and places have been changed to protect the anonymity of all involved.

3. Throughout this article I utilize Stephen’s understandings and definitions of tranmigrant/tranmigration and translocal. “Transmigrant suggests a more or less permanent state of being between two or more locations, some people may spend a good part of their lives engaging in this state of being, others may live for longer periods of time in one place or another, and still others may leave their home communities only one time or never” (2007, p. 21). “Translocal refers to the movement of place-specific culture, institutions, people, knowledge, and resources within several local sites and across borders—national and otherwise” (2007, p. 65). Both are evident in Sierra Linda’s case. While acknowledging the movement displayed in the translocal is not unidirectional, this article focuses primarily on the
knowledge, ideas, and capital migrants transport back home and women’s responses and changes to their translocality and participation in a grassroots literacy organization.

4. Elsewhere I discuss the role the organization played in the women’s personal and educational development (Trinidad Galván, 2005).

5. So as to provide her children with greater educational opportunities, Julieta lived in Sierra Linda during the school week and in her rural community home on the weekends.

6. The following table reflects the top seven Mexican states with over 100,000 emigrants to the United States during the period of 1997-2002.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mexican State</th>
<th>Seasonal Migrants</th>
<th>Migrants who did not return from the United States</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guanajuato</td>
<td>152,492</td>
<td>213,631</td>
<td>366,123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jalisco</td>
<td>127,401</td>
<td>164,256</td>
<td>291,657</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michoacán</td>
<td>97,208</td>
<td>150,832</td>
<td>248,040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Luis Potosí</td>
<td>49,656</td>
<td>85,727</td>
<td>135,383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zacatecas</td>
<td>44,988</td>
<td>71,363</td>
<td>116,351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>México</td>
<td>_________</td>
<td>_________</td>
<td>111,837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oaxaca</td>
<td>21,085</td>
<td>88,608</td>
<td>109,693</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. Various studies mentioned later in this paper describe migration as a survival tactic and in the case of the communities I worked with, nearly the whole community has chosen migration as their means of economic survival. See Suarez Orozco’s (1998b) edited book for studies arguing this idea. For the intent of this paper, survival is utilized as the authors of many migration studies define it, which is people’s ability to withstand and make due. Elsewhere, I discuss more specifically what is meant by sobre-vivencia (beyond economic survival) for women who stay behind and what survival tactics and cultural practices are taken to meet their and their family’s everyday needs (Trinidad Galván, 2006).

8. I choose to borrow Marchand and Runyan’s (2000) use of the term global restructuring over globalization as it “allows us to analyze how the market, state, and civil society are embedded in and (re)constructed through these processes,” (p. 7). From here on I will use the former as I find it suggests movement and is a much more flexible and workable term.

9. Audrey Thompson, Frank Margonis and Ed Buendía helped me to understand and develop this idea further.

10. See Marchand and Runyan (2000) and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, (1997). The research base of these authors speaks to the dilemmas and struggles of migratory women, whose experience and exploitation certainly expand and offer insight to the discussion of global restructuring. However, as their work and that of others shows, global events are not detached from local occurrences that all women are a part of. Thus, to privilege mobile women for being “directly” involved in the world economy, I believe, is to defeat a gendered glocal perspective. In other
words, in light of the fact that these authors expand traditional notions of global restructuring as encapsulating more than just an economic perception, their feminist concern comes from the fact that more women are involved in the world economy as migratory labor workers.


