Engendering indigenous Mexican migration into the United States. A case of study of the Yalálag Zapotec Women*

By Adriana CRUZ-MANJARREZ

Abstract

Over the last three decades, a significant number of studies of Mexican migration to the United States have examined the significance of gender in structuring migration and the ways in which migration has transformed the lives of immigrant women. In this article, I expand this research by focusing on the effects of immigration on gender as it relates to the experience of indigenous Mexican women in the United States. I concentrate on these women's experiences in relation to the situation of indigenous immigrant men and assess how immigration affects their gendered perceptions and social locations in their families, marriages, and home community in Mexico and the United States. I argue that after 50 years of Yalálag Zapotec migration to the United States, migration has been at the intersection of multiple changes in gender relations across two generations of Yalálag Zapotec immigrant women, who see and experience migration as a form of liberation. Further, I wish to demonstrate that the migration experiences of these immigrant women have impacted the lives of non-immigrant women at home.

Keywords: Indigenous Mexican migrants, transnationalism, gender, family, marriage

In this article, I examine the effects of immigration on gender as it relates to the experience of indigenous women in the United States. I concentrate on these women's experiences in relation to the situation of indigenous immigrant men and assess how immigration affects their gendered perceptions and social locations in their families, marriages, and ethnic community in Mexico and the United States. Building on the research of others (González-López 2003; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Hirsch 2003; Stephen 2002), I begin my discussion with an analysis of how gender has structured the migration of Yalálag Zapotec women to Los Angeles and how migration has transformed gender relations of immigrant and non-immigrant women and men in the Yalálag Zapotec community, as socio-cultural patterns are reconfigured differently and patriarchal relations undergo change across time and space. I wish to argue that economic, political, and social causes of migration have intersected with gender change as it relates to marriage, family, and community relationships across two generations and two localities: Los Angeles and Yalálag. Further, I wish to argue that migration has allowed Yalálag Zapotec women to articulate gender change through 'a sense of emancipation'.

* This research was generously supported by PROMEP, the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, and the University of Colima. I am especially grateful to Dr. Steven Vertovec, Dr. David Parkin, Dr. Ayse Caglar, Dr. Gabriele Alex, and fellows of the MPI Work-in-progress Seminar for their comments and suggestions on this research.

Research on migration, women, family, and marriage

In the last three decades, a significant number of studies of migration and women in the United States have examined the significance

of gender as a central organising principle of migration. According to this research, economic global dynamics and gender have determined specific patterns, routes, and dynamics of migration for men and women, and women have used women's kinship and friendship networks to immigrate and circumvent patriarchal structures within their own families (Cohen 2004; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994). In relation to conceptualising how the migration of Yalálag Zapotec women to the United States has evolved between the late 1960s and the mid-2000s, I find that this approach is useful for theorising how and when Yalálag Zapotec women, henceforth Yalaltecas, participated in the migration process, why the experiences of these immigrant women have encouraged non-immigrant women to immigrate, and how immigrant women have created their own networks and used their own economic resources to facilitate the immigration of non-immigrant women to Los Angeles during the last 50 years.

In the extant scholarship on migration and gender, some scholars suggest that as a result of migration, women and men change their understandings of their gender identity, roles, and expectations in their family, marriage, and work (Hirsch 2007; Malkin 2007; Menjivar 2003; Stephen 2007). In this regard, some researchers have found that as women begin to work, they become social and economically independent. Some start entrepreneurial enterprises, send money back home, and raise their children with the help of their husbands or by themselves if they divorce, their marriage falls apart, or their husbands die. In looking at Yalaltecas' social perceptions of their marriage and family relations in the United States, I can confirm that these findings resonate with the discussion presented here.

Over the last 50 years, many Yalaltecas have come to Los Angeles to work in the domestic and service sectors as result of poverty and a lack of employment and schooling in Yalálag. Consequently, the immigrant Yalaltecas have become economically independent, and some have benefited from education. As many of them have sent remittances to their parents in Yalálag and help relatives and friends to immigrate to the United States, they have gained special recognition in their ethnic community and families. Also, they have learned to negotiate their gender roles with men at home. In contrast to Yalaltec men in Yalálag, immigrant men in Los Angeles share housework, divide home expenses with their wives, and take care of their children. As a result, many Yalaltecas perceive their husbands or male relatives to be more egalitarian and less macho than men in Yalálag. It is important to mention that gender inequalities have changed in Yalálag, but that many women are still economically dependent on their husbands (because of a lack of remunerated employment) and continue to experience gender inequity.

In the early 1990s, the anthropologists Glick-Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton (1992) proposed the term transnationalism to describe the strong social, economic, and political relationships maintained by contemporary immigrants with their families, communities, or countries of emigration. The literature on transnational migration with an emphasis on gender points out that as immigrant women transform their lives in ways that are different socially and economically from their non-immigrant counterparts, they influence non-immigrant women to immigrate. Also, as Levitt (2001) suggests, non-immigrant women are encouraged to 'try on new gender roles' and ideas (Levitt 2001: 11) in their place of origin, when they see immigrant women experiencing more egalitarian marriage relations. According to Hirsch (2007), transnational immigrant women, in contrast to women who have not migrated, experience less unequal relationships with their husbands and have access to social justice when domestic violence occurs within their marriages. Yet, while immigrant women experience more egalitarian relations in family and marriage (when compared with their experiences back home, or those of older generations, or the current situation of non-immigrant women in their place of origin), this new equality does not necessarily extend to all aspects of their working and family lives (Espiritu 1997; Foner 1986; Velasco 2007). Namely, patriarchal relations undergo significant transformations

in the migratory setting as immigrant women become economically independent, control their own earnings and lives, participate in marriage and family decision-making, and as the societies in which they live create mechanisms to eradicate gender inequality and move toward a more egalitarian society. However, immigrant women continue to be exposed as women to other forms of social control and gender subordination, such as in their workplace (Espiritu 1997) and in ethnic associations (Goldring 1998).

In this article, I focus on the transnational processes that have shaped gender change in community, family, and marriage relations for Yalaltecas in both Los Angeles and Yalálag. Building on Levitt (2001), Mahler's (2003) and Hirsch (2003) analysis of transnationalism and gender, I offer an investigation of how new gender dynamics in the migratory setting have encouraged some non-immigrant women to immigrate and transformed their expectations as women, mothers, wives, and citizens within their families and ethnic community before and after migration. One argument in this work is that as Yalaltec immigrant women experiment with new ideas about marriage (cf. Hirsch 2003; Stephen 2002) learn about women's rights, and earn more years of schooling; they encourage and help non-immigrant Yalaltec women to immigrate (cf. París Pombo 2006). As I argue elsewhere (Cruz-Manjarrez 2006, 2008), after 60 years of Yalálag Zapotec migration within Mexico and between Mexico and the United States, Yalálag Zapotecs and various aspects of their culture have undergone transformations. Thus, I place my work on gender and indigenous women within a transnational framework (Brettell 2003; Goldring 2001; Stephen 2007) to explain how immigrant women and men have been agents of social change in the transnational Yalálag Zapotec community and culture as reflected in transformations in marriage practices and family dynamics, and the social location of Yalaltecas across three generations of immigrant women and between two localities: Yalálag and Los Angeles.

In this article, I emphasise that Mexican women are diverse and that the category of Mexican immigrant women is not homogenous. Unlike *mestizo*[1] Mexican women, indigenous Mexican women, like the Yalálag Zapotec women, are different in terms of the languages they speak, their group history, culture, religion, marriage practices, family characteristics, and history of migration to the United States. In the migratory context, differences in their 'social location' as indigenous women are significant. They express the specificities of these women's experiences of migration to the United States. In this study, I want to suggest that changes in gender relations as they relate to the 'social location' (Zavella 1991) of Yalaltec immigrant women in their families, marriages, and ethnic community (namely, where women are located in relation to communal social organisation and social institutions) have been the result of a gradual and conscious rupture by immigrant women and men with cultural practices and the gender ideology of their place of origin.

This study was based on qualitative research methods. Through multi-sited fieldwork in Mexico and the United States, I used an ethnographic approach to examine the history of Yalálag Zapotec migration into the United States. By using life-history narratives throughout five decades of international migration, I describe when, how, and why Yalaltec men and women have come to California. To study the impact of migration on gender and women, I used semi-structured and open-ended interviews, informal conversations, and focus groups with immigrant, non-immigrant and second-generation Yalálag Zapotec women and men. For my research in the city of Los Angeles, California, I conducted thirty-six interviews with immigrant women and men, and twenty-five with second-generation Yalálag Zapotecs. For fieldwork in the Zapotec village of Yalálag, Oaxaca, I conducted fifteen interviews with yalaltec women and fifteen with men. Fieldwork in community and family events

[1] This is a racial category that refers to people in Mexico of a mixed race: indigenous, Spanish, and African roots and blood. This category has its roots in the sixteenth century when the Spanish conquerors divided New World society according to 'purity of blood', namely, in terms of their 'descent and race' (Wimmer 2002).

was conducted in California in 2003, 2007, and 2011. In Yalálag, it was carried out in 2003, 2007, and 2010. This field research included multiple short and month-long visits between 2003 and 2011.

In what follows, I discuss the history of immigration of Yalaltecos to Los Angeles to explain how women have participated in the international migration process.

The migration of Yalálag Zapotecs within Mexico and the United States

During the first decade of the twentieth century, the first groups migrating from Mexico into the United States came from rural areas, mainly from the states of Jalisco, Michoacán, and a few north-western states in Mexico, and consisted of *mestizo* peasant, single men. In the 1940s, major transformations in the patterns of Mexican migration to the United States began to take place; the points of origin in Mexico and the destinations in the United States diversified. The number of immigrants and their ethnicity, race, gender, and class changed. Between the mid-1940s and early 1960s, the Yalálag Zapotecs were drawn into this international migration process. Recruited in Mexico City and Oaxaca City to work in the *Bracero*[2] (farmhand) Program, Yalaltec men began to migrate temporarily to California. In that program, this first generation of migrants was admitted as farm workers on short-term contracts to work in the commercial agricultural fields. In the late 1960s, changes in the selection of labour market opportunities from the agricultural sector to the service sector in the city of Los Angeles transformed the destiny of this group.[3] Some Yalaltec men returned permanently to Yalálag and others went to work in the service sector in Los Angeles.

In the 1970s, a new generation of immigrants emerged. This was mainly composed of a few *Braceros* and young men and women, who were the sons and daughters of the *Bracero* generation. Circular migration, permanent settlement in Los Angeles, and new migratory routes within Mexico and to the United States developed. Yalaltec men who visited their families in Yalálag and decided to go back and forth between Los Angeles and Yalálag began to help their brothers, sisters, cousins, or friends immigrate with them. In this decade, men continued to dominate Yalaltec migration to Los Angeles, but a few young Yalaltec women and teenaged girls began to join the migration flow.

During this period, this migratory movement was the result of extreme poverty and socio-economic marginalisation in Yalálag. However, curiosity and adventure also motivated single men and women as well as young married couples without children to migrate. Since they saw the *Braceros* making some money in California, and as some of them had relatives or friends going to Los Angeles, and as a few men had previous experience of migration within Mexico, they decided to try their luck in *El Norte* (the United States). At this moment, these migrants were between the ages of 14 and 30 years old. Most men arrived with a middle or elementary school diploma, while the women, who were about the same age as the men, had fewer years of schooling. As many of these Yalaltecos were single and tended to socialise within their own ethnic group, they began to marry among themselves (cf. Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Massey et al. 1987).

According to Yalaltec immigrants, the early 1980s was a time when many young Yalaltec men and women came to Los Angeles from Yalálag, Oaxaca City, Veracruz, and Mexico City. At this moment, there was a high level of mobility for quite a few young Yalaltecos who migrated between Mexico and the United States, and within Mexico and the United States. Young single women increasingly participated in the international migration process with financing from relatives in the United States for their trip. This finding coincides with that of Cerrutti and Massey (2004), who point out that throughout the 1970s,

[2] After World War II, the U.S. and Mexican governments established the guest worker program, better known as the *Bracero* Program, under which Mexicans worked in agriculture and transportation and helped to maintain American railways (see Durand 2007; Hernández 2010; Stout 2008; Tienda 1989).

[3] For additional reading on Zapotec migration to the United States, see Cohen 2004; Hirabayashi 1993; Hulshof 1991; Kearney 2000; Klaver 1997; Malpica 2007; Stephen 2007.

Mexican migration to the United States to a great extent consisted of young women whose fathers, husbands, or older brothers had come to the United States illegally, with some eventually obtaining U.S. residency and sponsoring the women's trips. During the 1970s and 1980s, the trend of Yalaltec teenaged girls and single women migrating to Los Angeles and settling there grew into an established model of migration. The number of Yalaltecas who desired to economically support their parents and aspired to become independent rose significantly.

In sharp contrast to the men of the *Bracero* era who migrated temporarily, most of the Yalaltec immigrant men and women who arrived in the 1970s and early 1980s were determined to settle in the United States. One reason for this was family formation and the birth of Yalaltec children in the United States. Another reason was family reunification (Chavez 1985; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Massey et al. 1987). A third and perhaps more important reason was the 1986 amnesty for undocumented immigrants. In 1986, the U.S. Congress passed the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) to legalise the status of illegal 'aliens' and to stop the rise in undocumented migration into the United States. As part of this program, the U.S. Congress made a few changes in the annual quotas for immigrants from Cuba and Haiti and underrepresented countries. This created a law that sanctions employers who hire unauthorised immigrants. That year, it was estimated that about five million undocumented immigrants were in the United States (Ueda 1994), including many Yalaltecos who had arrived between the late 1960s and early 1980s. When the U.S. Congress launched amnesty for unauthorised immigrants, the majority of the Yalaltec immigrants I interviewed applied for the legalisation and regularisation of their migratory status.

In the late 1980s, many Yalaltec immigrants became permanent residents through the IRCA. Overall, these new U.S. residents made up two groups. The first was composed of undocumented Yalaltecos who were married and had children born in the United States when the amnesty was launched. The second group of immigrants was made up of Yalaltecos who applied within the amnesty deadline. They were single men and women and young married couples with no children or with children born in Mexico. While married Yalaltecos' main motivation was to legalise their status because of their children, single men and women also did so because they were determined to settle in the United States. They wanted to work legally and move back and forth between Mexico and the United States. In 1987, many Yalaltec immigrants regularised their migratory status, while others did not. Those who applied for amnesty were interested in becoming legal residents and met the requirements. Timing, intentions to return to Mexico, or their recent arrival influenced those who did not apply.

Throughout the late 1980s, undocumented Yalaltec migration in Los Angeles continued to increase through the expansion of dense migrant networks. In contrast to the family stage migration model (Hondagneou-Sotelo 1994), whereby husbands migrate before their wives and children, for most Yalaltecos, the move from Mexico to the United States depended on social networks that included friendship as well as kinship relationships. The siblings of the immigrants who had arrived in the 1970s and early 1980s set out to migrate to Los Angeles by persuading their older immigrant siblings, cousins, and friends to help them. Two aspects of Yalaltec migration in the late 1980s particularly stand out. On the one hand, many married immigrant men who had left their children and wives in Yalálag returned permanently to Yalálag. On the other hand, immigrants with U.S.-born children raised in Los Angeles returned to Yalálag, Mexico City, or Oaxaca City, but then remigrated to the United States.

Between the 1990s and mid-2000s, both new and old patterns of Yalálag Zapotec migration developed. In Los Angeles, newcomers were mostly impoverished young single men and women in their teens and early twenties as well as adult women with foreign-born children, married couples with foreign-born children, and couples with no children. A great number of these migrants moved directly from Yalálag to Los Angeles; other first-time immigrant families arrived in Los Angeles from the states of Morelos

and Veracruz. The 1990s saw new changes in the migratory routes as well as a decline in emigration from Yalálag to Oaxaca City and Mexico City; Yalaltecos began to migrate mostly from Yalálag to Los Angeles. Yalaltecos born in Oaxaca City and Mexico City became involved in the international migration process, while a few Yalaltecos born in Yalálag migrated to five different cities within Mexico to work in the service and domestic sectors, and in manufacturing. In the United States, most Yalaltec immigrants lived and worked in Los Angeles, while a few moved permanently to New Jersey, Northern California, North Carolina, Texas, and Wisconsin. As mentioned above, in the 1970s and 1980s, many Yalaltecos immigrated and settled in Mexico City, where some started their families. Many Yalaltec teens in Mexico received financial support for academic pursuits from older siblings in Los Angeles. Currently, there are a few Yalaltec men and women in Mexico City and Oaxaca City who are rather successful lawyers, doctors, musicians, dentists, architects, and entrepreneurs. However, others immigrated to Los Angeles due to the lack of educational opportunities, secure and well-paid jobs, and a declining standard of living in Mexico.

In the mid-1990s, the constant decline in the peasant economy, the restructuring of agricultural production, changes in agricultural policies, and a continuing lack of state and federal investment in education, health programs, and social security in the state of Oaxaca pushed Yalaltec peasants, merchants, and housewives to immigrate internationally. The married couples who settled in the states of Morelos, Veracruz, and Mexico City in the 1980s, immigrated to Los Angeles in the early 1990s due to the negative effects of Mexico's economic crisis, set off in 1982 by a sharp rise in inflation. Likewise, due to the debt crisis and austerity measures implemented by the Mexican government (Cornelius and Bustamante 1989), many complete nuclear families migrated to Los Angeles (cf. Massey et al. 1987) at this time.

Consequently, the pattern of younger siblings following their older siblings, cousins, and friends presents three significant transformations. First, in addition to young men and women who followed their older siblings, complete families were arriving in Los Angeles from Yalálag and other urban centres in Mexico. Second, parents reuniting with family members, who were U.S. citizens, permanent U.S. residents, or in some cases undocumented migrants, moved permanently to Los Angeles. Third, a number of young women came to Los Angeles by marrying Yalaltec immigrant men through the almost extinct practice of arranged marriages.

Contemporary Yalaltec migration to the United States has progressively developed with male pioneers working on short-term contracts and returning to Yalálag; family formation, permanent settlement, and acquisition of U.S. residency and American citizenship; and the constant arrival and permanent residence of undocumented immigrants who are steadily incorporated into the U.S. labour market and American society. The arrival of newcomers has been transformed through the maintenance of dense family, friendship, and community networks with satellite communities in areas within Mexico such as Oaxaca City, Mexico City, Morelos, Veracruz, and more recently Puebla, Durango, and the state of Mexico. Unlike the first Yalaltec immigrants' experiences in the United States, contemporary immigrant men and women join their extended families in Los Angeles, participate in extended family life, and integrate into the U.S. labour market through family and friendship networks. These networks have provided information about jobs, housing, and transportation, and have made migration to the United States an imperative factor of economic life in Yalálag.

Migration and emancipation: negotiating gender change in family and community

Currently, in both Yalálag and Los Angeles, Yalaltecos say: 'Migration emancipated immigrant women.' According to this view, immigrant women have moved away from family and community control, becoming economically independent and 'more open in their way of thinking.' In contrast to non-immigrant women, they have more years of schooling and have transgressed gender norms and behaviours in their family and community. To understand how this happened

and to what extent migration has facilitated changes in gender roles and ideology for immigrant women, it is necessary to consider that Yalaltecas in Los Angeles and in Yalálag refer to changes in gender concepts in terms of differences between a sense of social control and subordination in Yalálag and a sense of emancipation and empowerment in the migratory context, and a sense of 'better social and economic opportunities' outside of Yalálag. In this section, I analyse women's perceptions of gender change in their families, marriage, and community locally in Yalálag, and transnationally between Yalálag and Los Angeles.

In Yalálag, Yalaltecas imagine the United States as a place of freedom and economic opportunity. Los Angeles is socially constructed as a context in which women can subvert patriarchal family and community values, and move up in the social and economic spheres. In this sense, Yalaltecos talk about a sense of liberation and empowerment in relation to migration because immigrant women experience less social control from their families in terms of permission to leave the house -- because according to tradition, a woman should be at home to protect the family honour and guarantee her virginity to her future husband and his family (cf. Stephen 2002: 51) -- as well as in regards to choice of a spouse and more opportunities for schooling. In Yalálag, women describe that they continue to be under the control and authority of men. Women, be they wives, daughters, or sisters, are highly monitored by their fathers, husbands, or brothers. Married women are under the supervision of their parents or parents-in-law. Most young girls who have begun to menstruate are not allowed to leave their homes unless a brother, her mother, or her father accompanies her. Those teenaged girls who never leave their homes are referred to as *las guardaditas* ('the ones who are kept at home'). These girls, who are virgins, are not supposed to be in public until they are married. During religious fiestas, mothers take them for a walk to be seen by men. Young men who may be looking for a wife are able to identify them in these walks just by the sole fact that the girls hang a white shawl on their right arm. In Los Angeles, young women or second-generation Yalaltecas are never taken for a walk to be seen by men. They have more freedom to be in public spaces and are never kept at home.

Women's work and inheritance

In Yalálag, according to the gendered division of labour, domestic work and child-rearing are women's responsibility. This work is considered secondary because women 'stay home'. Since there are few job opportunities for women, they mostly depend economically on their husbands. Some of them engage in other forms of productive labour such as weaving textiles, selling fruits, running little stores, and sewing for other women. Yalálag is a self-sustenance community. Men's work consists mainly of producing chili and maize crops. Some manufacture and sell *huaraches* (leather sandals), and a few are employed as construction workers, bakers, or mechanics. In both Yalálag and Los Angeles, Yalaltecas are considered hard workers, but the work of immigrant women is highly valued because they generate an income for their families in both places. In contrast to non-immigrant men, male immigrants mostly work as cooks. In Los Angeles, they share housework and cooking, and negotiate child-rearing with their wives. Immigrant men and women contribute to the family economy, but women do not depend on their husbands' salary as Yalaltecas in Yalálag do.

In this context, the fact that immigrant women are economically independent and share with their husband domestic and family work has changed their social location in their families and ethnic community transnationally. Currently, immigrant women are able to receive an inheritance in Yalálag because it is considered that they have succeeded socially and economically in Los Angeles. Like any Yalaltec man, immigrant women are able to raise their own families, send their children to school, pay rent in Los Angeles, buy land in Oaxaca City, and send remittances to their parents. In contrast, women in Yalálag who do important work at home and for their families are unable to receive an inheritance. As a result, in Yalálag, the distribution of economic resources and land ownership shows significant

changes in favour of immigrant women. In the *Bracero* generation and the next generation of Yalaltec immigrants, only men used to receive their parents' inheritance.

Education and women's political participation

As mentioned above, some women who have immigrated to Oaxaca City and Mexico City in search of better opportunities have more years of schooling than non-immigrant women in Yalálag and Yalaltec women in Los Angeles. While some Yalaltecas have been able to gain an education in Yalálag, Oaxaca City and Mexico City with the financial help of relatives in Los Angeles, others have not because of two facts: economic distress or lack of support from their fathers. For Yalaltecas, access to higher education is very significant. First of all, in Yalálag, it took almost 50 years to convince the *gente de costumbre* (conservative people) that schooling is a right for women. Second, in Mexico, the federal and Oaxacan state governments have made few efforts to provide education for indigenous groups. In the 1940s, the Mexican government introduced the first and only elementary school in Yalálag. In the late 1950s, Yalaltecos built a middle school and children began to pursue diplomas. In 2002, the first and only high school was opened. In the 1940s, many women were not allowed to go to elementary school because their parents considered that a woman's place was at home and early marriage was expected -- girl became available for marriage as soon as she began to menstruate (Bertely 1996). At present, many immigrant women have middle school and high school diplomas, and second-generation Yalaltecas are finishing college, obtaining B.A. and M.A degrees as a result of migration.

Despite the fact that today a few families in Yalálag continue to favour marriage over education, there are others that favour education over marriage. In 2003, during my fieldwork in Yalálag, I learned that all girls in the village finish elementary school. Those who finish middle school may marry by choice or by their parents' will. They may stay in the village for middle school and high school, or emigrate to Oaxaca City or Mexico City to complete high school or obtain a BA degree. Single teenaged girls who decide not to study beyond middle school may go to Los Angeles. According to the middle school principal, at present, getting a middle school diploma is a passport to migrate to Los Angeles for teenaged boys and girls.

Yalálag is a village community that organises its social, cultural, and political life on the basis of a system of public posts, known as the traditional government or *sistema de usos y costumbres* (Aquino M. 2002; De la Fuente 1949). According to Gutiérrez Najera (2007), until the 1970s, only a few women participated in public posts. Men, who represented the head of their households, were responsible for fulfilling a series of public posts in their community during their lifetime. Since men did not consider women political actors, they even denied women the right to participate in politics. Women gained the right to vote in Yalálag in 1974. At present, in both Yalálag and Los Angeles, women participate in this system of public posts, but in Los Angeles, immigrant women hold 50% of the community posts (Cruz-Manjarrez 2006). It is important to mention that in the first half of the twentieth century, political, religious, and social work in the traditional government was considered men's work, and women were believed to be unfit for men's roles. In fact, between the 1970s and 1980s, women who did 'men's work' or wanted to do it, were not only considered to be *marimachas* (behaving like men, but not looking like men), but invaders of men's social and political spaces. Currently, in Los Angeles, the community service of immigrant women reflects significant changes in gender ideology in both places and the importance of women's work transnationally.

Immigration intersects with marriage and divorce

Since the late 1960s, migration has intersected with significant transformations in marriage practices among Yalaltecos. The first generation of immigrants to Los Angeles or within Mexico (mid-1940s to 1969) included married Yalaltec women who migrated with their husbands. These women did not choose their partners and did not engage in any sort of relationship prior to

marriage. The next generation (1970-1989) was composed of some single women who migrated to Los Angeles and then married a Yalaltec man either in Yalálag or in Los Angeles without family intervention. In the subsequent generation of immigrants to Los Angeles (1990-2005), there were married Yalaltec women arriving with their husbands, and a few young immigrant men who still contacted their parents in Yalálag and asked them to look for a wife in the home community. Despite immigrant women's increasing opposition to marrying in accordance with the tradition of arranged marriages and the gradual disappearance of arranged marriages in the Yalálag Zapotec community, a few immigrant men and families continue to sustain and promote this practice.

Marriage and family are two social and economic institutions that have significant implications in the shaping and reproduction of gender concepts across generations and localities (Hirsch 2003). The sociologist Pierrete Hondagneu-Sotelo points out that 'gender informs different sets of social relations that organize immigration and social institutions (e.g., family, labor markets, marriage) in both immigrants' place of origin and place of destination' (2003: 6). In this section, I discuss how migration intersects with changes in gender roles as it impacts marriage and family relations across three generations of Yalaltec women and two localities: Los Angeles and Yalálag.

In both Yalálag and Los Angeles, Yalaltecos are highly endogamous and have a long tradition of arranged marriages.[4] In the first half of the twentieth century, as older women recall, marriages were arranged between the parents of a young single man and a teenaged girl. Currently, in Yalálag, older women between the ages of 60 and 70 describe that in their generation, women were not allowed to refuse such arranged marriages or even question them. They had to obey their parents and integrate into their husband's family. In Los Angeles, an immigrant woman told me that in 1956, she was 13 years old when her parents wed her to a man who was 10 years her senior. Her husband's parents talked to her parents about their son's interest in marrying her. Both families set the day for the wedding and organised all ritual activities. On the day of the religious wedding, she met her husband for the first time. She recalled that when the priest asked her if she accepted that man as her husband, she only wanted to escape. However, because she had to accept the marriage and remain submissive to her father, she said yes. During my interview with this woman, she added, 'If I had had money and the village had had public transportation, as it has today, I would have run away from my family and marriage.' In 1956, Yalaltecos had to ride a mule or walk at least 10 hours to take a bus to reach Oaxaca City. At present, one reaches Oaxaca City in 2.5 hours by car.

Gender scholars suggest that gender is about power and usually about unequal power relations between men and women (Andersen and Hysock 2009). As I found in my interviews with the daughters and granddaughters of the *Braceros*, many Yalaltec women have not only been forced to marry men chosen by their parents, but their husbands have also made them immigrate to the United States against their will. An immigrant woman said to me that at the age of 14, in 1984, she was forced to marry and to migrate with her husband and mother in-law to the state of Morelos. She was told that she had to work to make her own contributions to the family expenses. In January 1985, she was taken to Los Angeles against her will. Because of her opposition, her mother in-law told her that she did not have any right to complain and ask her parents for help. As she recalled: 'My mother-in law said to me that I belong to her family. I do not mean anything to my family. They sold me.'[5] In addition to this difficulty, she was smuggled across the U.S.-Mexican border.

When I asked this woman what it means that her family sold her, she replied: 'This is the way in which some women are still married.' Women are

[4] It is important to mention that the practice of arranged marriage in this Zapotec community is almost extinct.

[5] Velasco has made the same kind of argument for Mixtec immigrant women in Tijuana (2007: 349).

'sold' because marriage takes place within a system of exchange between families. After a teenaged girl's and a young man's families arrange a marriage, the girl's family asks the groom's family to provide a certain amount of food supplies that will be cooked the day before the wedding celebration. When the food is served among the girl's relatives and family friends in the bride's house, the guests pay an amount of money for the food they will consume. This means that the money that is raised from the sale of the food will be given to the new couple to begin their new family. The amount of money that each family member gives to the new couple is up to them, and the quantity is written down in a notebook. The logic behind these transactions is that in the future, it is expected that this new couple will pay back the same amount of money when requested. Although this system of family support is based on the ideas of reciprocity[6] and the insertion of the new couple into a set of new family and friendship relations, Yalaltecas complain about their lack of power to make their own life decisions and about their subordinated position within their own families. When I asked why it is so important for some families to marry their daughters within the practice of arranged marriage, I found that families do so 'to give their daughters a family'. Within this system of moral, economic, and cultural values, young women 'gain' a family and are integrated within a network of families.

As I have argued, Yalaltecas see things changing in Yalálag, however, a few women are still denied the right to make their own decisions. Over the past 50 years, migration has intersected with changes to gender concepts as it relates to women's inclusion in the migration process and transformations in marriage practices. Since the 1950s, Yalaltecas have opposed and openly criticised the practice of arranged marriage. Between 1980 and 1990, many Yalaltec teenaged girls and young women arrived in Los Angeles by marrying immigrant men. Currently, all immigrant women I talked to celebrate the fact that their daughters were not born in Yalálag, which means they do not have to comply with this tradition. However, despite women's opposition, a few immigrant men continue to ask their parents or relatives via telephone to look for a wife in the town in Mexico. Once the wife or potential candidates are selected, the immigrant man returns to Yalálag and chooses his spouse. Usually, he pays for the wedding celebration and for a smuggler to bring her to the United States. In Yalálag, there is still constant and heavy emigration by young men. Consequently, some young women in Yalálag are either 'available' for marriage or left out of the marriage market (cf. Brettell 2003).

Marriage practices have not changed in an even manner or in one single direction. Yalaltecas between the ages of 50 and 70 do not talk about love as a factor for marriage. Instead, they talk about being forced to marry a man. In the first half of the twentieth century, families believed that in a new marriage, love would come with the passing of time. It was not necessary to get to know or date your spouse before marriage. Nowadays, Yalaltec men and women have incorporated the idea of romantic love as a main element in marriage. Also, dating and courtship have become part of the long-term ideal of a married relationship. The more men and women know each other before marriage, the more they feel they have a relationship based on love, closeness, and friendship. One example of this ideal is the relationship of two grandchildren of *Braceros* who married in Yalálag in 2004. They grew up together in Yalálag, but dated in Oaxaca City when they went there to attend high school. There, they decided to marry. While the young man went to Los Angeles to make money for the wedding and build a house in Yalálag, he and his girlfriend made the arrangements for the wedding with his family and the bride's family. During the wedding, no sale of food occurred in the bride's family because the bride and the groom disagree with this tradition. The groom paid for both the fiesta that took place in the bride's home and the wedding ceremony that happened at his parents' house. The groom and bride decided together to migrate to Los Ange-

[6] This system is known among Zapotecs as *Guelaguetza* (Aquino Moreschi 2002; Cohen 2004; Cruz-Manjarrez 2006; Fox and Rivera-Salgado 2004; Stephen 2007).

les. Currently, this couple is raising two U.S.-born children. Working in Yalálag, Gutiérrez Najera (2007) describes how a few local women escaped from home when their parents denied them the right to wed men of their choice. Her analysis of gender and migration also shows that immigrant women who fall in love with local men return to Yalálag to marry them without family intervention, 'set the terms of the bride price' (2007: 253) themselves, and cover the cost of the wedding ceremony and migration of their spouses.

In Yalálag, in previous times, divorce did not exist. Women had to endure their marriages and be loyal to their husbands and families. At present, in Los Angeles, some immigrant women divorce or separate for various reasons: domestic violence, the husband's alcoholism, a lack of economic support from the husband, polygamy, and a lack of communication and love. During my interviews, some mothers said to me that they have a better relationship with their children following divorce. They value the fact that their children pushed them to leave their fathers, especially if the man left them for another woman or hit them while intoxicated. Divorced women told me that they have become the main providers for their children after divorce. Some divorced women described that they found support from other women who experienced similar situations. Some of them say that it has been difficult to think of another relationship because they see men as betrayers. Other women said that if they found another man who fits their emotional needs, they would like to marry again.

Yalaltecos state that divorce is possible for immigrant women because they are away from their families and community and because U.S. law allows them to do so. Unlike non-immigrant women, immigrant women have the option of divorce instead of remaining in an unhappy and troubled marriage. For immigrant women, divorce may be experienced as emotionally stressful and financially risky, but their experience of migration and of being the main providers for their families in Yalálag and in Los Angeles made them see their future as being under control. Being a single mother or woman is experienced by Yalaltecas in the U.S. as a positive option. Following divorce, some women have remarried. Of six divorced women I met, two remarried outside of their group, while one remarried within her group. These women continue to socialise with their families and provide financial help for their sisters, friends, or cousins in Yalálag to immigrate to Los Angeles if the latter are experiencing any kind of domestic violence.

Conclusions

In this article, I examined how, why, and when, over the last 50 years, Yalaltec women have participated in the international process of migration. Furthermore, I analysed how migration has intersected with changes in gender ideology as it relates to family, marriage, and ethnic community across time and space. I showed that Yalaltec men initiated the migration process in the mid-1940s when they went to work as agricultural workers in Northern California. Yalaltecas became involved in this migration stream in the late 1960s as teenaged girls, single women, and wives. They began to migrate from Yalálag to Los Angeles, and then from different regions within Mexico to Los Angeles through family and friendship networks. Since then, Yalaltecas have worked in low-paid jobs such as domestic work, childcare, and the manufacturing industry. Despite Yalaltecas' restricted socio-economic mobility, they have financed their children and younger siblings' education in Los Angeles and in Mexico. Also, many own property in Yalálag or Oaxaca City, and some in Los Angeles.

In the migration context, Yalaltecas have circumvented patriarchal structures within their families and community. As the control exerted over them by their parents and community has lessened through their presence in the U.S., they have had to learn to negotiate gender roles and expectations with their husbands in the host country or with their male relatives in Yalálag. Additionally, as Yalaltecas abroad have gained more participation in family decision-making, they have acquired equal status with men within their family networks. Yet, while Yalaltecas have achieved more participation in the religious, economic, and political structures in the Yalálag Zapotec community in Los Angeles, non-immi-

grant women in Yalálag have been gradually integrated in these social and political spaces.

In Los Angeles, Yalaltec women have been able to articulate and realise a sense of liberation. As I have argued, immigrant women have more control over their lives and desires. They have a say in their marital decisions and enjoy more egalitarian marriages. Over the past five decades, Yalaltec immigrants have moved toward a more western-oriented direction in marriage. The fact that second-generation Yalaltecas are not marrying within the practice of arranged marriage shows a complete change in marital practices, gender ideology, the life cycle for women, and the place of women within their families, marriages, and community, both locally in Los Angeles and transnationally in Yalálag. In this context, it is important to note two things. First, Yalaltecas across three generations and two localities have manifested their opposition to the system of arranged marriage. Second, although a shift in marriage customs is taking place in both Yalálag and Los Angeles, in Los Angeles, a few immigrant men and some families continue to be in favour of the practice of arranged marriage. This fact demonstrates, on the one hand, how gender continues to be embedded within unequal power relations (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2003) between Yalaltec men and women. On the other hand, it shows how the Yalálag community and families are going through a process of change in gender culture and community values. As in other immigrant communities (Charseley 2010; Zaidi and Shuraydi 2002), Yalaltec women and men in the migration context have developed a more individualistic idea about love marriages without breaking the community boundaries. Change in gender roles is still taking place within the transnational Yalálag Zapotec community in both Yalálag and Los Angeles, and immigrant men are beginning to marry second-generation Yalaltecas. Yalaltec immigrant women in the United States have changed, and they encourage and help non-immigrant women to immigrate when the latter experience any kind of domestic violence. Immigrant women continue to challenge traditional views of gender relations and ideology, as Juanita, a 70-year-old woman, told me in Yalálag:

> Here [in Yalálag], there have been quite a few changes for women. Many years ago, the machismo was terrible. Now things have changed a lot. Before, men used to beat up women, and I say to you, I am happy that today our girls go to school, get a degree, and have their own money… Furthermore, the roads are open and we have public transportation. Currently, if a man beats his wife, she takes a bus and leaves. In my time, we could not. We did not know how to write and read… there were no roads. Women were not protected. If I went to ask for help from my parents because my husband beat me, they said, 'Go back to your husband, take care of him, that's your duty.' Our parents forced us to marry. But today, young girls choose their husbands. In Los Angeles, women have their own houses and money. They are the main providers for their children and mothers and leave their husbands if necessary. Migration emancipated immigrant women.

References

Andersen, M. and D. Hysock. 2009. "The social construction of gender." In M. Andersen and D. Hysock, eds., *Thinking about Women*. *Sociological Perspectives on Sex and Gender*. London: Allyn & Bacon.

Aquino Moreschi, A. 2002. "Acción Colectiva, Autonomía, y Conflicto: La Reinvención de la Identidad entre los Zapotcas de la Sierra Juárez." MA, Sociología, Instituto de Investigaciones, Dr. José Luis Mora, Mexico City.

Bertely Busquets, M. 1996. *Aproximación Historica al Estudio Etnografico de las Relacion Indigenas Migrantes y Procesos Escolares: Familias Yalaltecas Asentadas en la Periferia Metropolitana*. Edited by S. A. d. I. N. 5: Instituto Superior de la Educacion del Estado de Mexico.

Brettell, C. 2003. *Anthropology and Migration. Essays in Transnationalism, Ethnicity, and Identity*. New York and Oxford: Altamira Press.

Cerrutti, M. and D.S. Massey. 2004. "Trends in Mexican migration to the United States, 1965 to 1995." In J. Durand and D.S. Massey, eds., *Crossing the Border. Research from the Mexican Migration Project*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Charseley, K. 2010. "Risk, trust, gender and transnational cousin marriage among British Pakistanis."

In S. Vertovec, ed., *Anthropology of Migration and Multiculturalism. New Directions*. London and New York: Routledge.

Chavez, L.R. 1985. "Households, migration and labor market participation: the Adaptation of Mexicans to life in the United States." *Urban Anthropology* (14): 301-346.

Cohen, J. 2004. *The Culture of Migration in Southern Oaxaca*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

—. 2004. "Studying migration in Oaxaca's central valleys." In *The Culture of Migration in Southern Oaxaca.* Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Cornelius, W.A. and J.A. Bustamante. 1989. *Mexican Migration to the United States: Origins, Consequences, and Policy Options.* San Diego: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California.

Cruz-Manjarrez, A. 2006. "Transnational Identities and the Performance of Zapotec Culture." Dissertation, World Arts and Cultures, UCLA, Los Angeles.

—. 2008. "Danzas Chuscas: performing migration in a Zapotec community." *Dance Research Journal* 40 (2 Winter): 3-22.

De la Fuente, J. 1949. *Yalálag. Una Villa Zapoteca Serrana*, *Serie Científica*. México: Museo Nacional de Antropología.

Durand, J. 2007. *Braceros. Las Miradas Mexicana y Estadounidense. Antología (1945-1964)*. Mexico: Miguel Ángel Porrúa.

Espiritu, Y.L. 1997. "Labor, laws, and love." In *Asian American Women and Men. Labor, Laws, and Love*. Thousand Oaks, London and New Dehli: Sage Publications.

Foner, N. 1986. "Sex roles and sensibilities: Jamaican women in New York City." In R.J. Simon and C. Brettel, eds., *International Migration: The Female Experience*. Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Allanheld.

Fox, J. and G. Rivera-Salgado. 2004. *Indigenous Mexican Migrants in the United States*. La Jolla, CA: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, UCSD & Center for Comparative Immigration Studies.

Glick Schiller, N., L. Basch and C. Blanc-Szanton. 1992. "Transnationalism: A new analytic framework for understanding migration." In Towards a transnational perspective on migration: race, class, ethnicity and nationalism reconsidered. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 645 (1): 1-24. New York: New York Academy of Sciences.

Goldring, L. 1998. "The power of status in transnational social fields." In M.P. Smith and L.E. Guarnizo, eds., *Transnationalism from Below*. New Brunswick (U.S.A.) and London (U.K.): Transaction Publishers.

—. 2001. "Disaggregating transnational social spaces: gender, place, and citizenship in Mexico-US transnational spaces." In L. Pries, ed., *New Transnational Social Spaces. International Migration and Transnational Companies in the Early Twenty-First Century*. London and New York: Routledge.

González-López, G. 2003. "De madres a hijas: gendered lessons on virginity across generations of Mexican immigrant women." In P. Hondagneu-Sotelo, ed., *Gender and U.S. Migration. Contemporary Trends*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.

Gutiérrez Nájera, L. 2007. "Yalálag is No Longer Just Yalálag: Circulating Conflict and Contesting Community in a Zapotec Transnational Circuit." Dissertation, Social Work and Anthropology, University of Michigan, Michigan.

Hernández, K.L. 2010. *Migra! A History of the Border Patrol*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.

Hirabayashi, Lane Ryo. 1993. *Cultural Capital. Mountain Zapotec Migrant Associations in Mexico City*, PROFMEX. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

Hirsch, J.S. 2003. *A Courtship after Marriage. Sexuality and Love in Mexican Transnational Families*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.

Hirsch, J.S. 2007. " 'En el Norte manda la Mujer': gender, generation, and geography in a Mexican transnational community." In D.A. Segura, P. Zavela, W.D. Mignolo and I. Silverblatt, eds., *Women and Migration in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands: A Reader*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Hondagneu-Sotelo, P. 1994. *Gendered Transitions: Mexican Experiences of Immigration*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

—. 2003. "Gender and immigration. A retrospective and introduction." In P. Hondagneu-Sotelo, ed., *Gender and U.S. Migration. Contemporary Trends.* Berkekey: Univesity of California Press.

Hulshof, Marije. 1991. *Zapotec Moves. Networks and remittances of U.S.-bounds migrants from*

Oaxaca, Mexico. Amsterdam: Koninklijk Nederlands Aardrijkskundig Genootschap.

Kearney, Michael. 2000. Transnational Oaxacan Indigenous Identity: The Case of Mixtecs and Zapotecs. *Identities* 7 (2):173-195.

Klaver, Jeanine. 1997. *From the Land of the Sun to the City of Angels. The Migration Process of Zapoec Indians from Oaxaca, Mexico to Los Angeles, California*. Utrecht: Dutch Geographical Society, Amsterdam. Department of Human Geography, University of Amsterdam.

Levitt, Peggy. 2001. *The Transnational Villagers*. Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press.

Mahler, S.J. 2003. "Engendering transnational migration. A case study of Salvadoreans." In P. Hondagneu-Sotelo, ed., *Gender and U.S. Immigration. Contemporary Trends*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press.

Malkin, V. 2007. "Reproduction of gender relations in the Mexican migrant community of New Rochelle, New York." In D.A. Segura, P. Zavela, W.D. Mignolo and I. Silverblatt, eds., *Women and Migration in the U.S. Borderlands. A Reader.* Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Malpica, Daniel. 2008. Indigenous Mexican immigrants in the City of Los Angeles: social networks and social capital among Zapotec workers. Ph.D dissertation, Socioloy, University of California Los Angeles.

Massey, D.S., R. Alarcón, J. Durand, and H. González. 1987. *Return to Aztlán: The Social Process of International Migration from Western Mexico*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Menjivar, C. 2003. "The intersection of work and gender. Central American immigrant women and employment in California." In P. Hondagneu-Sotelo, ed., *Gender and U.S. Migration. Contemporary Trends.* Berkeley: Univesity of California Press.

París Pombo, M.D. 2006. *La historia de Marta. Vida de una mujer indígena por los largos caminos de la Mixteca a California*. Mexico: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana. Unidad Xochimilco. División de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades.

Stephen, L. 2002. "Sexualities and genders in Zapotec Oaxaca." *Latin American Perspectives* 29 (2) "Gender and Sexualitiesm and Same-Sex Desire in Latin America": 41-58.

—. 2007. "Women's transborder lives. Gender relations in work and families." In *Transborder Lives. Indigenous Oaxacans in Mexico, California, and Oregon*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Stout, R.J. 2008. *Why Immigrants Come to America. Braceros, Indocumentados, and the Migra*. Westport, CT and London: Praeger.

Tienda, M. 1989. "Looking to the 1990s: Mexican immigration in sociological perspective." In W. A. Cornelius and J. A. Bustamante, eds., *Mexican Migration to the United States. Origins, Consequences, and Policy Options*. California: University of California San Diego, Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, Bilateral Comission on the Future of United States-Mexican Relations.

Ueda, R. 1994. *Postwar Immigrant America. A Social History*. Boston and New York: Bedford and St. Martin's.

Velasco, L. 2007. "Women, migration, and household survival strategies: Mixtec women in Tijuana." In D.A. Segura, P. Zavela, W.D. Mignolo and I. Silverblatt, eds., *Women and Migration in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands: A Reader*. Durham, NC: Duke University.

Wimmer, A. 2002. "Nationalism and Ethnic Mobilization in Mexico." In *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict. Shadows of Modernity*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.

Zaidi, A.U. and M. Shuraydi. 2002. "Perceptions of arranged marriage by young Pakistani Muslim women living in a Western society." *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 22 (Autumn): 495-514.

Zavella, P. 1991. "Mujeres in factories: race and class perspectives on women, work, and family. In M. di Leonardo, ed., *Gender at the Crossroads of Knowledge*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Note on the Author
Adriana CRUZ-MANJARREZ is a research professor at the University of Colima, Mexico. She has a Ph.D. in Culture and Performance Studies from the University of California Los Angeles (2006). Adriana's interdisciplinary work specializes in the study of indigenous Mexican migration to the United States with a focus on transnationalism, community formation, identity, gender, and change in cultural practices.
adricrumz@gmail.com