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Portrait of a Revolutionary: Naglaa–“The Lion of the Midan”

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Portrait of a Revolutionary: Naglaa–“The Lion of the Midan”

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Abstract

This essay examines the (re)production of the discourses of dispossession that frame women’s issues in the Arab, Middle East and Muslim majority countries. Taking the case of revolutionary women in the Arab Uprisings as an example, the author traces the constructs of dehistoricization, disempowerment and western centric logic that underlies media coverage reports about women’s participation in public protest. The essay produces a counter narrative to the dominant coverage of the western driven media by offering an account by an Egyptian revolutionary woman, Naglaa whose lived experience encourages us to rethink how discourse reproduces the grand narrative of western postcolonialist discourse.

Keywords: women, revolution, Arad-uprising, grand western narratives, discourse, empowerment.

Retrato de una Revolucionaria: Naglaa - "El León de Midan"

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Resumen

Este ensayo examina la (re)producción de los discursos del desposeimiento que enmarcan los temas de mujer en los países árabes, el Oriente próximo y en la mayoría de los países musulmanes. Tomando como ejemplo el caso de las mujeres revolucionarias en las revueltas árabes, la autora explora las construcciones de deshistorización, desempoderamiento y la lógica centrista occidental que subyace en los informes de los medios de comunicación sobre la participación de las mujeres en las protestas públicas. El ensayo produce una narrativa en contra de la cobertura dominante de los medios de comunicación potenciados por occidente, ofreciendo el relato de una mujer revolucionaria egipcia, Naglaa cuya experiencia vivida nos anima a repensar cómo el discurso reproduce la gran narrativa del discurso poscolonialista occidental.

Palabras clave: mujer, revolución, levantamiento árabe; grandes narrativas occidentales, discurso, empoderamiento.



Figure 1. Naglaa (on the far right) protesting in front of Security Police.

Much has been written about the Arab uprisings. With a few notable exceptions¹ however, academic scholarship and the media afforded the role played by women in the revolutions a mere cursory nod.² Although a few media sources increasingly broadcasted the observation that women took to the streets “in droves,” their emphasis was placed on the marvel of a so-called unprecedented phenomenon of women’s political participation in a region described as often beset with a conservative and backward gender ideology that denies women “voice.” As reports of this “feminist” participation of Arab women proliferated, the general public were pulled into the discursive web of an age-old Orientalist pattern—one which paints all women in Muslim majority and Middle Eastern societies with one brush, dehistoricizes them, purports them to be oppressed, and sees only a feminist western trajectory for the liberation of these dispossessed others. While such hegemonic constructs are all too common in the media and often in academia, they continue to unabashedly represent and support western political interests in the region. This multiple appropriation recalls the “double colonization,” scholars such as Chandra Mohanty (2003) describe in



Figure 2. Naglaa protesting against Security Police.

their work where women in heavily politicized areas of the world are cast in the role of the dispossessed by postcolonialist, western discourses while simultaneously labeled as the inauthentic westernized other by local patriarchal discourses resulting in further complicating and undermining women's

efforts in the public sphere (Hoodfar, 2001).

With various contending parties and political trends vying for control, depictions of women's role in the revolutions that swept the Arab region in the years following 2011 often mirror the interests of multiple groups but seldom the aims and goals of these women themselves. The lived experience of millions of women who claimed the squares and streets of their metropolises and stood against the insidious tyranny of their governments, women who unhesitatingly brought along their children and their grand children despite the potential dangers that faced them to sit-ins and sleep-ins because theirs was a fight that, "was bigger than all their lives,"³ as well as the women who left the comfort of their homes, their factory stations and their rural villages to face the barrels of army guns and tanks—these women became a voiceless sea of faces that media cameras and reports failed to recognize as a heterogeneous mass of people, with unique histories, political trajectories and challenging realities that they each sought to transform. Unfailingly, both local and global power discourses frame women's sociopolitical backgrounds, aims and dreams in ways that rationalize dominance and validate injustice. The (re) production of these discourses of dispossession is the focus of the following essay that rethinks various discursive constructs that emerged to frame women's revolutionary activism in the Arab world during the uprising and to this day. By offering a portrait of a revolutionary from Egypt whose story is one among many, but who is

also one who is unique in her tenacity and determination—Naglaa who is often described by her peers as, *asad al midan*, translated as the Lion of (Tahrir) square—this article traces the various discursive tropes in knowledge production about “the other woman,” (here understood as the Third World, Arab, Middle Eastern woman). It must be noted that there are thousands of women who participated in the Arab Spring whose stories are certainly of importance and value but my choice to focus on this one case has to do with the need to provide one woman’s lived experience which reports of revolutionary women tend to overlook. The essay aims at producing a counter narrative to the dominant coverage of the western driven media as well as local official discourses about the revolution, its participants and its spectators. By offering this narrative of an ordinary yet extraordinary woman’s life one can remain open to how discourse reproduces the grand narrative of western postcolonialist discourse. In linking feminist theory to the production of ethnography, Kamala Visweswaran describes her task as, “to expose both the processes of disaffection and rupture as well as the construction of community and identity,” (1994). She highlights the complexity of ethnographers she calls “hyphenated,” who are of bi-national origins and face the challenge of writing “through” notions of identity and community but who also struggle to write “against” the hegemonic constructs of social science. This research agenda, I believe is closely intertwined with what the ethnographic process in this contemporary, global and neoliberal world contends with—an awareness that field research is ultimately intertwined with power dynamics embedded in issues of cultural representation. As such, I choose to recognize that local narratives nonetheless remain embedded in the western political project. In Dipesh Chakravarty’s often-quoted statement (1992), he calls for a narrative that, “deliberately makes visible, within the very structure of its narrative forms, its own repressive strategies and practices,” (p.344). My account of Naglaa, a revolutionary from Egypt yields to these parameters of research and the ethnographic method. This account seeks to provide through Naglaa’s story, a glimpse into the lived experience of revolutionary women in Cairo, Egypt.

The events that began with the uprising in Tunisia in December of 2010 have succumbed—as has much of Middle East and North African (MENA) historiography to the hegemonic discursive western lens. While scholars led

by Edward Said have laid out the genealogical processes of Orientalizing European knowledge production that shaped how the MENA and Muslim majority countries are viewed, a more contemporaneous analysis of these processes is still needed. This is exemplified by the disconnect that emerged between the events unfolding on the Arab ground during the uprising and their representation in news and media coverage which prompts a more serious look at the constructs of knowledge production that occur as a result of cultural translation (Hawas, 2012) and those that are nurtured by embedded discourses of Orientalism (El Mahdi, 2011).

Analysis that foreground the Orientalist history of institutional framing of the region but also more recently Euro American military interventions in the Middle East as well as neoliberal forces that sustain a rhetoric that rationalizes specific social and economic transformations, are sorely needed. Lila Abu Lughod's recent book, *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* (2013) deals with the misappropriation of women's issues in the MENA and in particular, Afghanistan to validate calls for military intervention to "rescue" the Muslim female victims from Taliban rule. In her book, she develops an in-depth critique of dominant discourses that reshape the region and in particular women and gender issues. These pervasive western discourses she argues, are directly linked to particular historicities such as the, "War on Terror" as well as transformations in geopolitical agendas and economic demands. Describing these western attitudes as, "moral crusades," Abu Lughod points to the moralistic element in liberal feminist attempts to "save" the Muslim woman from Islam. This, she points out is born out of the reductionist lens that continues to examine the issues of a diverse and global population of Muslim women whose challenges and circumstances reflect various cultural as well as historical contexts. The victimization of these women under the guise of a human rights discourse that seeks their liberation and freedom is directly linked, Abu Lughod intimates to imperial power and its machinations (Abu Lughod, 2013). Both Mohanty (2003) and Abu-Lughod (2013) task the scholar of gender in postcolonialist and Muslim majority countries in particular with the difficult job of undoing the dichotomous positioning of Muslim women vis a vis western women, of contextualizing the struggle of women everywhere but particularly in the global south, and eliding the specificity of these women to debunk homogenizing efforts that seek to lump all women of the developing world

into one large, oppressed collective. Issues of subjectivity and subject formation that are embedded within meta narratives of modernity, postcoloniality, nationalism and now, neoliberal economic shifts, are also necessary for a feminist trajectory that seeks to grapple not only with contexts and histories but also with the fluid issues of power and the impressions these leave on the subjectivities of gendered bodies. By taking the processes that shape human subjectivity and desire into consideration, the literature can be at once focused on context, cultural relativity and knowledge production as well as the formation of selves and persons whose desires and motivations lie at the nexus of these larger discourses of modern history. To begin examining these issues the next section will analyze the framing of the Arab uprisings from within a western media lens that shapes events and complex realities according to grand narratives that govern global conceptions of center and periphery. What news and events find their way into the international media and why? Who gets to be the players, the heroes and the villains? And how are women's voices heard and silenced?

Whose Revolution is it anyway?

The so-called, “Arab Spring”⁴ hot off the presses was, and continues to be represented as a predominantly young revolution. Young people dominate the visual drama of color and movement recorded by photographers and filmmakers. Despite evidence to the contrary where the participation of older generations, women and religious groups testified to an organic uprising against intolerable living conditions that affected all people, young people were often viewed as the only proponents of the uprisings (Winegar, 2012; Singerman, 2013). In Egypt, the young men and women of the April 6th movement such as Ahmed Maher and Asmaa Mahfouz occupied the imagination of millions of spectators through video clips that went viral. The media frenzy that followed the first few months of the uprisings were less a testimony to the actual events and more of a reflection of reactionary local government press releases that dismissed the revolutionaries as, “a bunch of disgruntled youth.” Observers of the uprisings soon saw the inaccuracy of these depictions, noting the diversity in population make up of the revolutions across Arab countries which the participants themselves insisted on highlighting to the world. They recognized that public social unity in

displays of religious, gender and class solidarity, was central to the ideology of the revolutions but more so, pivotal to the credibility that they sought to establish to counter dismissive official accounts of their massive efforts.

Media representations as well as scholarly accounts of the early years of the revolutions also emphasized the role played by young people for various other reasons. On one hand, the idea of revolution itself as transformation and new beginning in the Arab region relied heavily on stereotypical understanding of the region as a politically stagnant and traditionally backward conservative culture. A remnant of enduring discourses of Orientalism with reasoning that fails to take account of the impact of colonialism, western intervention and global neoliberal forces. An uprising of youth against age demonstrated as well the demise of Arab patriarchal norms where age as well as masculinity remained a defining factor distinguishing this particular brand of inequality from its western counterpart. In depicting the revolutions as “youthful,” complex political and economic demands and problems need not be addressed, neither was an understanding of the role western powers played in exacerbating these conditions. On the other hand, the idea of “rebels without a cause” was more readily palatable to a western audience where various cultural and social values embraced the notion of change as youthful and progress as the prerogative of the young.

Young people did indeed begin a mobilizing effort that not only galvanized millions of people across the Arab world but theirs were also the highest numbers in the streets and squares of Arab metropolises, jails and morgues. Yet although these may be accurate facts, the discounting of all other constituents of the revolution is not only historically distortive but reflects political and culturally centric trends in representation that undoubtedly fall back on Orientalist formulations that continue to remain lucrative as a rationale for global inequities and imperialist agendas.

Shaping Revolutionaries and Revolutions

Initially, media outlets were not heavily concerned with the women who stormed the streets of Arab countries side by side with men to call for the end of oppressive rule. The phenomenon of revolution itself as an unexpected occurrence is what the news reported about. When it became

obvious that women were indeed an essential and observable constituent in these uprisings, some media coverage was afforded them. The bulk of reporting about women in the Arab revolutions however, took place through individual postings of video clippings of women in Tahrir, Yemen, Tunisia and Syria. Eventually, the media took notice of this, though their reporting was framed by two important themes: one, that it is unexpected to see women in public squares chanting revolutionary slogans because the assumption women have engaged in no political action or participated in protests before. And, two that these women like their revolutions have awakened to western notions of liberation, i.e. feminism. “Women, long considered *second-class citizens*, say they have found an unexpected equality on the front lines of the demonstrations against President Hosni Mubarak,” writes Laura King (2011), reporter from the Los Angeles Times, assuming that class, race and education plays no role in Egyptian society. She goes on to say, “women *have proved themselves to be adept grassroots organizers*, taking up visible tasks such as carrying out identity checks and searching bags of women entering the square,” (italics my own) uninformed about the history of women’s organizing in the Arab world in their resistance against colonialists and later establishing feminist and nationalist organizations to ensure equality in society.

Protests Raise Hope for Women's Rights in Egypt

While there were attempts at reaching out to women activists and protesters, and some journals such as Ms. magazine carried out excellent reporting that problematized the meanings and specificities of political participation for women, unfortunately many reports expounded on how the revolutions were a split for Arabs from their conservative past. In an article titled, “Egypt: Why the Kiss Picture Is So Radical,” Garance Franke-Ruta (2011), who was at the time politics editor of The Atlantic online, focused on a scene captured on camera where an older woman planted a big kiss on the face of a soldier in Tahrir square. Franke-Ruta (2011) explained this by saying, “Women in Egypt don't normally hold hands in public, let alone kiss strange men. As a picture of compassion between combatants, the image of a plump Egyptian woman kissing a green-eyed soldier on the cheek during protests last week was a *powerful statement of national unity*,” (ibid, italics

added). She goes on to elaborate on the conservative nature of Egyptian women by alluding to veiling practices. Taking veiling as a marker of conservative behavior among women she elaborates, “Young Egyptian men may dress in the international style of jeans and soccer T-shirts, but they go home to families where women wear headscarves. *An estimated 90 percent of Egyptian women wear the hijab, and more deeply religious women cover not just their heads and ankles, but even their hands, wearing black gloves along with their black face veils, headscarves and abayas year round.*” The italics on statistics is added but the emphasis on veiling is the author’s alone, who deals the final concluding statement, “*In short, when it comes to women in public life, Egypt can be pretty conservative. It's not Saudi Arabia or Iran, but it's also not Lebanon,*” (ibid, italics added). Such sweeping generalizations about entire populations framed many-an-analysis about the revolutions, in this particular case, taking a kiss as a demonstration of an “unprecedented” social expression of affection never before witnessed in a conservative society where revolution has relaxed public displays of affection and removed barriers between the genders. The underlying binary construct between conservative and progressive modes of behavior (or traditional versus modern) where a public kiss by an older woman to a younger man obviously intended as a maternal and somewhat patriarchal show of affection (older woman enjoy status over younger men in Arab societies) is misread as an indicator of national unity.

Just as liberation from conservative social mores is defined in western terms so is women’s political participation. Feminism, understood as the natural progression of democracy - only because this is how it transpired in western history is another example of the kind of western centric thinking and analysis that deals with women’s issues in non western societies and cultures. In an article that foresees a Middle Eastern *feminist* revolution, Naomi Wolf (2011) claims, “*feminism is simply a logical extension of democracy*, the Middle East’s despots are facing a situation in which it will be almost impossible to force these *awakened* women to stop their fight for freedom - their own and that of their communities,” (italics added). While her reasoning that women will not stop at this revolutionary participation but will continue to participate politically since they have now experienced the power of mass protest, i.e. they have “awakened,” (though women have been protesting for centuries in the Arab world), is not without some merit the fact

that Wolf sees feminism as a logical development of democracy, however, is. Third world women have been debunking these claims since the 1970s by asserting their own culturally specific pro women discourses that do not necessarily reproduce western hegemonic forms of thought. Moreover, feminism is not a “logical” extension of democracy. The logic spoken of here is simply, a western one.

What images does this brief selection of reports conjure up? Once again, these are the stereotypical images of Arab and Muslim women that have for the last two centuries been employed to produce knowledge about their area of the world as misogynist, backward and anti progressive. Fraught with generalities and lack of attention to special and temporal contextual analysis, the assumptions that drive these reporters to write what they write are based on embedded Orientalist structures that posit the Orient as the backward antithesis of western civilization. In this binary construct the implicit hierarchy, which posits western civilization as the single most human trajectory to progress dictates how these reports, imagine the future for a democratic Arab region. Hence, women in the Arab world have “awakened” to feminist consciousness, a feminist transformation is Arab women’s “logical next stage after the revolution”. Loosened social formalities and public expressions of affection are indicators of positive change and the revolutions demonstrated that Arab women could actually succeed at political organization because they checked identities and searched purses in Tahrir. Though these are by no means the only ways women protestors in the Arab world were appropriated by international media outlets they do represent a general, almost formulaic logical structure that dominates knowledge production about this region and women’s issues in particular. They are part and parcel of a historically rooted but also very current, systematic body of knowledge that aims at producing an Arab, Muslim Middle Eastern “other” that renders these societies as pliable subject matter that can rationalize political and economic policies when needed. Homogenization, dehistoricization and essentialism as well as the unproblematic application of a western centric lens facilitates and justifies a range of actions, from appropriation of resources, geopolitical restructuring as well as the redrawing of boundaries and power alliances.

The hegemony of the images that has monopolized the pages and imaginations of the public is countered in this essay with an alternative

image —that of Naglaa, a 40 year old public worker, revolutionary, mother and daughter from Egypt’s sprawling new metropolis in the 6th of October City. As a migrant to the Caireen metropolis from the coastal city of Alexandria, Naglaa was and continues to be instrumental in her boundless activism to support the revolution and to ensure that, “the blood of those who died will never be for nothing.” Forty-year-old Naglaa joined the revolutionary April 6th group that were credited with the initial organizational work that mobilized the masses in Egypt’s Tahrir square, on the 25th of January. She was imprisoned three times by the authorities. Her friends tease her about how often she was found in the midst of struggles with the police either trying to free one of the younger activists or objecting to the violent treatment of protesters. Naglaa took two bullets to her shoulder and her leg during the protests. Though the anti protest laws in Egypt are viciously enforced, to this day, she continues to protest, from commemorating the revolution, to mourning the deaths of the young and old, to demanding the release of imprisoned revolutionaries, her list is endless.⁵

Encountering a “Lion”



Figure 3. Naglaa’s picture.

The directions she gave me were very detailed. Keep driving towards *al hay al sadis* in the 6th of October City, you will find a mall on the right then a

mosque in a square, called *al nagda* with statues of a girl and a boy, the boy is carrying a key and the girl, a rose in her hand, then turn left. I followed her instructions to the letter and found myself in front of government-subsidized housing. I parked on the side of the road. Across the street behind a brown hedge was her office. It was a prefab structure with metal roofing and makeshift walls.

I asked an older man at the public service window where I could find Om Jennat (translated as the mother of “gardens of eden,” presumably her first born, a girl was called Jennat or the plural of garden of Eden), as she told me she was known at work. His face relaxed into a smile and he pointed to his left. I turned the corner into a gray office, with gray walls, gray desks and gray chairs and gray floors. Naglaa sat behind her gray desk, dressed in bright and elegantly put together clothing with a matching headscarf—the only figure of cheer among the drab government décor. “Please come in,” she said gesturing to the chair in front of her. As I sat down, her colleague across the room stood up and left. But, just as I was about to introduce myself, a heavily set man with an overpowering mustache popped his head in the doorway, “ya Om Jennat, and what about my issue? Can I just pay you now and get this over with?” “No I cannot handle money, the cashier is out to lunch, you need to wait,” was her firm response. I watched as the big man continued to try and cajole her, “but I came a long way,” he said, “as much as I like seeing you Om Jennat I really can’t come up any time soon and you know how awful those officers are. They just want any excuse to give us a hard time,” he turned to me with a smile and in a mild manner he said, “I am sorry to interrupt your meeting.” Om Jennat advised him to be patient and he nodded respectfully taking a step back from the room. It was my turn to apologize for taking her work time too, “no,” she shook her head, “I am done with my work for the day.” I sat back in my chair feeling a bit more relaxed and took out my notepad talking to her as I did so and we soon were engrossed in our own conversation about Naglaa’s memories of the first days of the revolution. People came and went, the sounds of doors opening and closing, several interruptions, her colleague returned from lunch, the conversation continued—mesmerizing. I was totally captivated by what she told me, nothing else distracted us. As she spoke, the contours of the person whose friends described as the “Lion of the Midan,” slowly came into focus, but it was nothing I expected.

“I am originally from Alexandria ... but moved to Cairo 19 years ago because of some ... problems.” That’s how Naglaa began her story. Not wanting to pry, I listened to what she chose to share with me and was grateful at that moment that she agreed to meet me at all. It was only after several persistent phone calls from me and a long exchange of text messages that I half-convincing her to finally talk to me (I say “half-convincing” because she was not completely sure that her story is exceptional in any way and that there are others who are far more important to the revolution than she is). I have been interviewing activists in Egypt since 2011 but in this summer of 2014, few activists who took part in the revolution three years ago wanted to reopen the subject. Egypt had slowly fallen into an uncomfortable numbness once more and the dust had settled for now in Tahrir Square where it all began.

A Revolutionary is Born

A few months after our first meeting in her office Naglaa told me the whole story. She began by saying, “I had nothing to do with politics prior to the revolution. I am a poet, a romantic who likes pictures of roses, blue skies and rolling waves. How did I end up in squares and street protests?” She shook her head in puzzlement at her own life.

Naglaa grew up in what she described as a “good home” and attended a local language school (semi public schools where a second language, often English is taught). Her father was a businessman who often travelled to Arab countries looking for work opportunities while her mother worked as an accountant for the *ghazl we’l nassig* (Textile) industry. She grew up learning from her mother that a woman has to perform her traditional duties in the household, that she had to be dainty, feminine. Naglaa was an avid reader and wrote romantic poetry. She dreamed of romance and finding her one true love one day. When she was 18 years old, she married a man with whom she was madly in love. He was everything she wanted in a man, tall and with a “hiba,” meaning an aura of authority, she saw in him the future she once dreamed about. Two children later and a few years into the marriage her husband announced he was leaving for Qatar to pursue work. After he left, Naglaa never heard from him again. Soon after that, Naglaa and her mother received terrible news. Her father, who was working in

Jordan at the time, had passed away. Though he often sent money home, it had dwindled down to a few hundred pounds per month and then stopped. To their chagrin, they learned he had a family in Jordan. It was they who inherited everything while Naglaa and her mother were left with more bills to pay.

Finding herself with no source of income and two children to support, Naglaa decided to head to Cairo where nobody knew her and conversations with friends and neighbors would not hint at blame for the disappearance of her husband. No significant work prospects were available for a woman with a *diblom mutawasit* (intermediate diploma) so Naglaa had to be resourceful. She sets up a stand to sell tea to micro bus drivers next to their parking lot in the 6th of October City. For a while she was able to barely make ends meet but things got complicated when her mother Nadia joined them from Alexandria. Nadia however overshot her unpaid leave from work and was eventually fired, leaving them with even less income. Determined to take care of her mother and children, Naglaa devised a new plan. With a loan from a relative, she bought various kinds of calculators and small gadgets at wholesale prices and began selling them in Ataba square where many students shop for school supplies. There, she staked her spot and set up a wooden makeshift stand with the help of her mother and daughter. The three of them took the bus every day at 4:30 am from the 6th of October City to Ataba carrying the stand and the merchandise. A few years later they had enough money to rent a storage space for their merchandize so they did not have to carry much on the bus. This new arrangement came at a good time as Naglaa's mother Nadia fell ill and lost the ability to walk, eventually becoming completely paralyzed from the waist down. Naglaa was shaken and distraught for her mother but she was undeterred. She took care of her sick mother and her two children while working at her stand in Ataba from dawn to dusk. Nadia, Naglaa's mother described those days as, "dark." In a conversation with Nadia, she confided in me that Naglaa cannot even think about these days without her eyes welling up with tears.

When this job came up she applied for it and was hired. With a computer and Internet at her fingertips she started surfing the net, joined Facebook and began reading. Naglaa states that she was never political. In fact, she described herself more as a romantic and a poet. In 2011, Naglaa came across a young woman who, on Facebook gently chided her about her poetry

as if that was a frivolous pastime. Naglaa's friend was "more involved in real things." When she was brutally beaten by local police while demonstrating outside *maglis al shaab*, (parliament), Naglaa recounts that she began to realize that there is a real fight going on. Naglaa was quite affected when she saw her friend's injuries. "How could they do this to a young woman who was only protesting? Her head was still bleeding when I saw her, her eyes swollen and caked with blood. It had just happened. I said to myself, these young people have a right to protest. They want change *al tagheer*, so I began to write against Mubarak on Facebook. I started to amass quite a following of people who read my posts and commented on them. I also read other people's posts and my circle widened. Then I received an invitation to show up in Tahrir on the 25th. My mother also shared that she heard about the 25th she was very worried that I would go to Tahrir so she took me to Alexandria under the pretense that there was a family emergency. When I discovered that she had tricked me I insisted we go down to Cairo but promised not to participate in the protests. Of course I broke my promise."

It was a struggle at first for Naglaa to be part of the movement to occupy Tahrir. Her work, her duties as a mother and a daughter stood between her and her revolutionary desire. "On the 29th of January my mother announced she was going to accompany me to work to make sure I would not go anywhere. Her mother implored her to stay home with her since she had children to take care of. But the moment work was over Naglaa took her mother home and organized a protest that marched from Mohandisseen to the 6th of October mosque. She recounts how some people wanted to burn the 6th October city police stations. She watched them set fire to the jails unable to stop them. That night she took the bus to Tahrir.

"I was totally unprepared for Tahrir. All alone and in high heels, no food or shelter I was walking around in a daze. Staring at people, talking to strangers who did not seem to be strangers at all. I completely embraced it all. I spent that night on the floor in the square."

"On the 30th of January, 2011 the Muslim Brothers began to show up among the protestors in Tahrir, there were women from the Muslim Brotherhood there too. When the police force withdrew from the streets, many people started to go down (to Tahrir). Anger at Mubarak's speeches made many people join us, but we were all afraid, because we had heard that

they were kidnapping protestors. Then the day of *mawq3at al gamal* (the day of the Camel)⁶ happened. Monday and Tuesday there was lots of violence. well. But, despite the horrific deaths, the army standing towards the museum at the end of the square were in *samn we 3asal ma3a al baltagiyaa* (lit. they were in a honeymoon with the thugs). Right in front of me and I am a witness, we would capture the thugs responsible for the mayhem and killings and deliver them to the army officers. A few minutes later, we would watch as they were released from the back entrance only to come back to Tahrir again. The “day of camel,” I saw with my own two eyes as the army opened the gates and let those goons on camelback in. It was 2pm in the afternoon.”

Naglaa pauses letting this little fact sink in, the army let the goons in? Why? I asked. “You will see,” she said. “That day, I was beaten viciously, repeatedly. I could not move from the pain. I was taken to the Omar Makram mosque to rest, but there was no rest for me. After I went back to the square I felt too weak to do anything so I went home.” The next day, Naglaa tells me she went to the radio and television building with a group of protestors; they were trying to figure out where the trend was going. Sure enough, she tells, me the army soldiers had a completely different attitude towards them. They were smiling, giving out cold water bottles to the thirsty throngs. “I said to my friends, Mubarak will step down. And we rushed back to Tahrir in time to hear his resignation speech.” Naglaa’s face lit up as she remembered those moments, “I was jumping from joy, tears were running down my face. We succeeded! We got rid of the ogre. But to be honest, as much as there was joy there was also fear. The position of the army was unclear. Some people said don’t anybody move from the *Midan*, although I had to go home myself. How could I not when I had to check on my children and my mother?”

Her whole mood changed and she slowed down. The flush was now gone from her face and her voice became very low, “I had a beautiful dream. I felt we could be better than Europe. I dreamed of people in Egypt looking beautiful, healthy... We could rebuild our country together. But, we got divided into political parties. How did this happen? That’s not how we started this.”

Naglaa thinks that the events at Mohamed Mahmood Street in front of the *dakhliyya* (Ministry of Interior)—often called the, “second revolution” were the beginning of fragmentation, “this was a great battle. We all went to

Tahrir on Friday the 18th of November 2011. Then on Saturday, I read online that they were dismantling the camps so I went running down to the square. I was not aware of it but my blood was boiling and I started shouting at the officers, “how could you remove these people?!” Ahmed Hassan a reporting photographer took a picture of me with my index finger raised in one of their faces. People still tease me about that. But, I was only aware of the right of people for peaceful protest.

In the middle of all this violence, which erupted between the protesters and the army, people were falling in the square. The tear gas was blinding. I heard voices shouting that they were shooting protesters up the street. I covered my face with a mask someone gave me and started walking fast towards where they pointed. One young man pulled me back from my clothes. “No, no stay back. I will go instead. You are an older woman. I will go!” I shook him off but he insisted, shaking his head. Another younger man, almost a teenager came up to him and said, “Let her go! She won’t find peace till she goes.” So he did. I slipped away and found myself in the middle of an inferno. I pulled a young boy who had fallen on the ground and was to be trampled under foot to safety. A man on a motorcycle came and took him to the Midan clinic. I turned around and saw from the corner of my eye a soldier raising the bottom of his shoe in the face of a group of protestors and I just lost it. I started chanting, *yasqut yasqut hukm al 3askar!* (Down with army rule). This is when I got shot in my leg and my shoulder. I didn’t care I kept going. I ended up standing with the blood oozing out of my wounds right in front of an army tank and it stopped. After that they arrested me, seized my cell phone, ID and paying no attention to my wounds the officer warned me that if I did not stop this “thuggery” they would rape me. I was taken away from the Midan with 13 other women in an army truck towards the road leading to Upper Egypt. We were let go right there in the middle of nowhere with no cell phones or any form of identification. The minister of interior was saying on television, “We delivered every lady we arrested right to her doorstep!” The next day, after treating her gun shout wounds, Naglaa and a number of the women who were arrested filed a complaint with the attorney general. The officer taking their testimony, asked them why they were there in Tahrir and what were they doing “there?” “Don’t you know? He asked me, people there do bad things?” “Which people? I asked him. “You know and I know,” he flashed back at Naglaa

with a warning look in his eyes. Then the officer said to her, “if I put my finger in the eye of the person who put his finger in *my* eye we will both be blind.” And that was his wise advice to her. She looked at me while she recounted this meeting and then said, “This world is just off kilter (*il donya haysa*). If you ask for your rights you get killed or maimed or ridiculed. We have to remain one people. Continue to surrender? No! We will get trampled if we do.”

“The Lion of the Midan”



Figure 4. Naglaa’s picture.

For some, Naglaa’s story may come as a common tale of activism and struggle—one that was forged many, many times since 2011 among those who struggle for “bread, freedom and social justice” elsewhere and in the Arab region. Yet, Naglaa brings the lived dimension of struggle as part of her daily life which even up to the moment of revolution was one of struggle for the same principles as the ones chanted over and over again by the masses in Tahrir square, “bread, freedom and social justice.” That the call for revolution resonated very deeply and quickly with Naglaa is therefore no surprise, for she was born into that struggle.

Why was Naglaa called by her friends and family, her mother and children, “the Lion of the Midan?” Because she epitomized the

quintessential fighter for justice. Her ideals, her thoughts, her reflective nature as a poet and “a dreamer” as she calls herself, helped shape a path to a revolution that perhaps engaging in direct politics may not offered many other women. In this regard, we can understand how the contours of revolutionary subjectivity get to be drawn. Naglaa describes all this of course, in a matter of fact tone. There were no real epiphanies, no aha moment for her. Hers is a life that provided the perfect storm and all it took was a friend to chide her gently about her dreaminess. Nevertheless, there was a galvanizing moment when that friend was brutally beaten by the authorities. That moment was all it took to push Naglaa to recognize what was already there. A vested interest in change and transformation but more importantly a contemplative ability to envision it, to see Egypt with its approximately 85 million people, its urban metropolises and towns living precariously on a narrow strip of green valley become, “as beautiful as Europe.”

The “Lion of the Midan” is a term that references the male gender, the king of the jungle, the lion. A large and powerful animal that does not compromise, yet the metaphor carries much more than that when it refers to Naglaa. In that regard, Naglaa’s friends and fellow protesters refer to Naglaa’s gender transformation as well. They see her as a powerful figure, who is relentless in her pursuit of justice, in her inability to remain silent in the face of state violence and army complacency. In those instances in which Naglaa pushes through the masses in Tahrir despite the tear gas and flying gunshots she exemplifies the physical as well as the unleashed power of the lion. As the Lion of the Midan, Naglaa is not simply male, she is degendered, she transcends the boundaries of heteronormativity. Her mother, Nadia, speaks of Naglaa, as “a woman worth a hundred men.” She refers to Naglaa’s transformational ability. In the mother’s eyes, her daughter is a warrior—one who defies gender boundaries and norms. And, that is what the woman whose story captured here achieves. She breaks problematic and confining molds imposed both by local patriarchal political constructs as well as historically Orientalist narratives that impose silence, submissiveness and disempowerment on women like her. Naglaa’s narrative is a counter narrative on multiple levels.

Notes

¹ Articles include: Al Ali, 2012; El Sadda, 2011; Hatem, 2011; Hafez, 2012; Singerman, 2013 and others, as well as a special issue edited by Andrea Khalil 2014 in the Journal of North African Studies also published as a volume. Books on the other hand are only a handful, including El Said, Meari and Pratt 2015.

² As an example, in an extensive bibliographic list published by: *Project on Middle East Political Science*, only 16 articles referred to gender in their titles and 26 referred to women with a total of 42 entries out of 888 articles thus equaling approximately 0.2114 percent. <http://pomeps.org/category/academic-works/arabuprisings/>. I take this one example as a relative indicator of scholarly articles that deal with women and gender related issues to reflect on the marginal importance given to these topics in the Arab uprisings.

³ From an interview with an activist in Tahrir during the first few days of the Egyptian revolution of January 25th.

⁴ The term “Arab Spring” is itself a reflection of the temporal awakening of Arabs as if their past was lived in a slumber only to be reawakened through revolution to the delightful desires of democracy. This of course is a fallacy since the Arab world shares a long history of revolution and revolt against colonialism and oppression. In Egypt alone, the history of revolution spans centuries, the 1919 revolution against the British, followed by the 1952 revolution are just two examples. Other examples include: Algeria in 1954, Lebanon in 2005, Palestine 1936-’39 then 1987 followed by 2008.

⁵ My interviews with Naglaa are part of a larger more extensive study that seeks to situate women’s struggles as political actors in the events following the January 25th revolution in Egypt.

⁶ This pivotal day during the first days of the revolution was named as such because armed thugs on camel back entered the square and began attacking the protestors. The protestors assumed this was the regime retaliating against them for occupying Tahrir. To this day, the data is inconclusive about who the real perpetrators behind this incident were.

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Once a Criminal Always a Criminal? A 15-Year Analysis of Recidivism among Female Prisoners in Massachusetts

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Once a Criminal Always a Criminal? A 15-Year Analysis of Recidivism Among Female Prisoners in Massachusetts

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Abstract

The study of prisoner recidivism has long captured the interest of criminal justice researchers. Recidivism studies attempt to answer a variety of questions ranging from what are the characteristics of those who reoffend, what factors predict offender recidivism, and how long does a recidivist remain in the community before finding themselves in conflict with the law again. Unlike many studies that examine recidivism over a relatively short term – three to five years, this study investigates recidivism over a 15-year period among a group of female offenders released from a Massachusetts prison in 1995. Findings point to three propositions moving forward. First, correctional programming geared specifically toward youthful offenders might be necessary to promote desistance over the life course. Second, offender monitoring and accountability up to 36 months after release from incarceration may reduce the risk of re-offending. Third, studies with a follow-up period of ten years would be a valuable addition to the recidivism literature to advance our understanding of chronic offending among women.

Keywords: female offenders, recidivism, offender reentry

¿Una Vez Se Es Criminal Siempre Se Es? Un Análisis de 15 Años sobre la Reincidencia de Mujeres Prisioneras en Massachusetts

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Resumen

El estudio de la reincidencia de los presos ha captado el interés de los investigadores de justicia penal durante mucho tiempo. Estudios sobre reincidencia intentan responder una serie de preguntas que van desde lo que son las características de los que reinciden, qué factores predicen la reincidencia del delincuente, y cuánto tiempo una persona reincidente permanece en la comunidad antes de que se encuentre en conflicto con la ley de nuevo. A diferencia de muchos estudios que examinan la reincidencia en un plazo relativamente corto - tres a cinco años-, este estudio investiga la reincidencia en un período de 15 años entre un grupo de mujeres delincuentes liberadas de una prisión de Massachusetts en 1995. Los hallazgos apuntan a tres proposiciones. En primer lugar, podría ser necesaria la programación correccional orientada específicamente hacia las delincuentes juveniles para promover el desistimiento a largo de la vida. En segundo lugar, la supervisión y rendición de cuentas hasta 36 meses después de su liberación de la cárcel pueden reducir el riesgo de reincidencia. En tercer lugar, los estudios con un período de seguimiento de diez años, serían una valiosa aportación a la literatura sobre reincidencia para avanzar en nuestra comprensión de la delincuencia crónica entre las mujeres.

Palabras clave: mujeres delincuentes, reincidencia, reentrada delincuente

Crime and punishment policy in the United States took a decidedly punitive turn in the early 1980's (Austin & Irwin, 2011). The country's War on Drugs, first declared by President Nixon in 1971, and the ensuing installation of "drug czars," all but guaranteed an explosive growth in the country's correctional population (Gomila & Hanser, 2012). Despite having only 5% of the world's population, the United States now incarcerates 25% of those who are imprisoned worldwide (American Civil Liberties Union, 2011). Over 1.6 million persons are currently incarcerated in American state and federal prisons, by far the world's highest imprisonment rate for both males and females (Carson & Sabol, 2012; Walmsley, 2012; Walmsley, 2013). State spending on corrections has quadrupled over the past two decades, soaring to an estimated \$51.4 billion in 2012 (National Association of State Budget Officers, 2013).

Of the 1.6 million incarcerated individuals, 6.7% are female. While accounting for only a fraction of the total prison population, the number of female prisoners is growing at a faster rate than their male counterparts. State and federal prisons house over 113,000 women -- a 769% percent increase from 1980 (Carson & Golinelli, 2013). Only 13.9% of the women under Federal jurisdiction and 36.6% of those in state facilities are serving sentences for a violent crime. The remainder is imprisoned primarily for drug and property offenses (Carson & Sabol, 2012).

The stated goals of federal, state, and local prison systems include protection of the community and the re-integration of offenders as productive, law-abiding citizens.¹ Over 600,000 prisoners were released in 2012 from the nation's state and federal prisons (Carson & Golinelli, 2013), with the hope that they have been properly rehabilitated and will refrain from future criminal activity. However, it is unclear given the increasing length of sentences, crowded prison conditions, and decreases in funding for prisoner re-entry programs if rehabilitation and public safety are merely rhetorical assertions. Approximately 45% of prisoners re-offend within the first three years of their release (Pew Center on the States, 2011), providing strong evidence that the system is not accomplishing its' rehabilitative goals (Johnson, 2011; Selman & Leighton, 2010). As states continue to face expanding prison costs, determining effectiveness of American criminal justice policies is essential for policy makers.

Previous Research

Female Recidivism

Much of the literature on recidivism focuses on men or compares male and female recidivists. (Deschenes et al., 2007; Cobbina, 2010; Stuart & Brice-Baker, 2004; Uggen & Kruttshnitt, 1998). Research focusing on women tends to have smaller samples (Maruna, 2001; Harm & Phillips, 2001) and is often based on in-depth, qualitative analysis (Byrne & Trew, 2008). Many of these studies have produced valuable insights but are limited in their ability to examine recidivism for a single cohort over time and to statistically analyze demographic factors associated with this group (Huebner et al., 2010). Recidivism is best viewed over longer periods of time, as it is a dynamic ongoing process (Bushway et al., 2001). Some releases will never exit the criminal world, others will conform to normative social standards, and a portion will engage in criminality sporadically. As noted by Huebner et al. (2010), “It is important to differentiate offenders who fail in short and long term and those who do not fail at all” (p. 233). The great majority of the current recidivism research analyzes recidivism over a relatively short term (1-5 years), considering the length of an individual’s life span. One of the earliest studies to examine female recidivism was Sheldon and Eleanor Gluecks’ classic 1930’s research study, *500 Delinquent Women*. They followed women imprisoned in the Massachusetts Reformatory for Women in Framingham for five years after their release. The researchers found a relationship between age, marital status, ethnicity, economic disadvantage, and criminal history (Glueck & Glueck, 1934). The longest existing large-scale longitudinal analysis of females post-incarceration was an 8 year follow-up study on parolees conducted by Huebner et al. (2010). They found that women characterized by drug dependence, extensive criminal histories, lack of education, and residing in a disadvantaged community were at greater risk to fail under parole supervision. The current study aims to identify predictive demographic variables associated with female prisoners released in Massachusetts over a substantially longer period of time – 15 years. Additionally, it fills a gap in the literature with regard to how long recidivism follow up periods should be in terms of assessing periods of desistance.

Demographic Variables Related to Recidivism

Regarding age, female offenders are similar to their male counterparts. For instance, both men and women are less likely to reoffend as they get older (Deschenes et al., 2007; McIvor et al. 2011). Alternatively, youthfulness, in terms of age of the offender and age at first incarceration increase the likelihood of recidivism (Kruttschnitt & Gartner, 2003; Stuart & Brice-Baker, 2004). Age has been shown to be in a robust inverse relationship with criminal behavior (Sweeten et al. 2013).

Less clear is the role that marriage and other pro-social bonds play as a predictive factor in female offender recidivism. There is a strong body of literature pointing to the inoculating effect that marriage has on criminal reoffending recidivism (Beaver et al., 2008; Giordano et al., 2002; Sampson & Laub, 1993; Somers et al., 1994; Uggen & Kruttschnitt, 1998). However, other researchers conclude that marriage and social relationships and networks have a complex relationship to recidivism and desistance. Forrest (2007), for example, finds that while marriage has a positive effect on desistance, cohabitation does not. It appears the effects of marriage on crime are mediated by the social orientation of the spouse as well as the quality of the relationship between the woman and her spouse.

The literature on race and recidivism is mixed. Deschenes et al.'s (2007) secondary analysis of the 2002 Bureau of Justice Statistics' three-year follow-up of post released female inmates from 15 states, found a variety of negative outcomes. More than half (57.6%) were re-arrested, approximately 40% were re-convicted and almost a third (30.2%) returned to prison with or without a new offense. African American women were the most likely to be re-arrested (63%), re-convicted (43.8%) and re-incarcerated (34%). In a one year study of women released in 2010, Rautenberg and Matthews (2013) concluded that White/Caucasian women had the highest recidivism rate (19%), followed by Hispanic women (16%) and African American women (13%), but found no significant relationship between race and female recidivism. In their meta-analysis of violent recidivism using demographics as predictors in 31 studies, Piquero, et al. (2015) found that age (young), sex (male) and race (white) were significantly related to violent reoffending. In Benda's (2005) 5-year follow up on male and female boot camp graduates, race was an insignificant predictor of male and female recidivism. Likewise, Huebner et al. (2010) in their 8-year study of 506 women released from

prison in 1998 found that race did not reach a level of predictive significance relative to reoffending.

Researchers have found that offenders with a lengthy criminal history were more likely to re-offend (Kruttschnitt & Gartner, 2003). Being young, lacking a pro-social network, failing to obtain meaningful employment, having an extensive criminal history, and abusing substances correlate to a high risk of recidivism (Huebner & Berg, 2011; Laub & Sampson, 2001; Tripodi, 2007; Tripodi et al., 2010). Huebner et al. (2010) concluded that women who have more serious criminal histories, are addicted to drugs, or are less educated are more likely to recidivate.

These previous findings on female offenders will be treated as testable hypotheses in the present study. Thus, the goals of the current study are to:

1. Describe the sample characteristics.
2. Examine recidivism in the fifteen years after release in 1995.
3. Identify characteristics significantly associated and predictive of recidivism.
4. Discuss optimal length of follow-up period in the analysis of recidivism.

Methodology

This research analyzed data describing 816 women released from MCI-Framingham, the only committing institution for female offenders in Massachusetts. State and most county sentenced offenders and those awaiting trial are housed at this institution.² All sentenced women released between January 1, 1995 and December 31, 1995 were included in the data set, resulting in a sample of 901 cases. Variables were limited to age, race, marital status, residential address, facility, and type of release. Recidivism was defined as the first commitment to a state or county correctional facility for a criminal offense or technical violation of probation or parole over a 15-year follow up period.

After deleting duplications, the sample size was reduced to 839 women. Criminal history data were retrieved from the Massachusetts' Department of Criminal Justice Information Services. Due to the inability to access every "rap sheet," the resulting sample was reduced by 23, resulting in a total of 816 case records. After the two data bases were merged, a code was assigned to each case and personal identifying information was deleted. Approval to

access human subjects records was gained from Suffolk University’s I.R.B. and the Massachusetts Department of Correction. The investigators conducted descriptive, bivariate, and multivariate analyses using SPSS v.19.

Statistical Analysis and Findings

Univariate analysis was conducted to describe the characteristics of the sample of 816 women.

Table 1
Characteristics of the sample (N = 816)

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Race		
White/Caucasian	563	69.0
African American	132	16.2
Hispanic	115	14.1
Other	6	.7
Marital Status		
Single	585	71.1
Ever Married	231	28.3
Town Type		
Urban	618	77.8
Suburban	144	18.1
Rural	32	4.0
Gateway City Residents	405	49.6
Worcester	125	15.3
Lynn	71	8.7
Boston	62	7.6
Lowell	57	7.0
Brockton	46	5.6
Lawrence	44	5.4

The women released in 1995 ranged in age from 17 to 70, with a median age of 32 years. Sixty-nine percent of the women were White/Caucasian, 16% African American, 14% Hispanic, and 0.7% other. Seventy-one percent of the women were single. Most of the women resided in urban areas. Fifty percent of the women came from one of six towns, which have been labelled

“gateway cities” (Gateway Cities Innovation Institute, 2007). These six cities have a low per capita income, a high percent of people living below the poverty line, and a large percent of non-white and foreign born citizens when compared to the state average (U.S. Census).³ Although Boston’s unemployment rate is only 5.9%, the women in this sample came disproportionately from neighbourhoods of concentrated poverty.

The criminal history descriptors of the study sample show a largely non-violent population.

Table 2

Criminal history of the sample (N = 816)

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<i>Institution of Release</i>		
Framingham	663	81.3
Other	153	18.8
<i>Parole</i>		
Yes	213	26.1
No	603	73.9
<i>Crime Committed</i>		
Drugs	199	24.4
Morals	157	19.2
Motor Vehicle	115	14.1
Other	20	2.5
Person	103	12.6
Property	216	26.5
Sex	2	.2
Weapon	4	.5
	<i>Median</i>	<i>Age Range</i>
Age at First Arraignment	21	14-67
Age at First Incarceration	24	14-69
Age at First Conviction	29	17-69

Property offenses (27%) and drug violations (24%) accounted for more than half of the women’s governing offenses; while only 12% were convicted of violent crimes. Four fifths of the women were released from Framingham State Prison (81%). The remaining 19% exited one of

Massachusetts' pre-release or minimum security facilities. Of these totals, only 26% were released on parole. The parole statistic is somewhat unexpected given the non-violent nature of the offending. The median age of first arraignment was 21, first conviction 24, and first incarceration 29. Ages of first involvement ranged from 14-67 years (first arraignment), 14-69 years (first conviction) and 17-69 years (first incarceration). Women were equally likely to have a minor/moderate (48%) or serious/repetitive (52%) criminal histories according to the Massachusetts Criminal History Scale. This instrument categorizes criminal history by using two factors -- severity of offense levels ranging from 1 to 9, and number of offenses. For example, a Level 9 offense would be murder and a Level 1 offense would be vandalism. A moderate record would consist of six or more prior convictions for a Level 1 or 2 offense.

Of the sample of 816 women, more than half (52.8%) returned to prison at least once before 2010. Return to prison occurred soon after release. Of the 431 who were re-incarcerated, 220 (53%) were re-committed within the first 2 years after release. By the 4th year, 70% had been re-incarcerated. The median number of days before re-incarceration for a County sentenced woman was 688 while State sentenced women remained in the community 1301 days. Taken together, there are several interesting findings here. The first three years after release are clearly the most at-risk period for criminal reoffending. More than 2/3 of the women in the sample were re-incarcerated within 36 months. Secondly, a substantial number of women continued their criminal offending up to ten years post release. By year 11, the numbers drop off into the single digits. This finding suggests that researchers might consider using a follow-up period of 10 years when studying recidivism to better understand the factors that contribute to recidivism so far out from release. The finding begs the question – are the offenders who are quick to reoffend different than those who are not and if so, how and why.

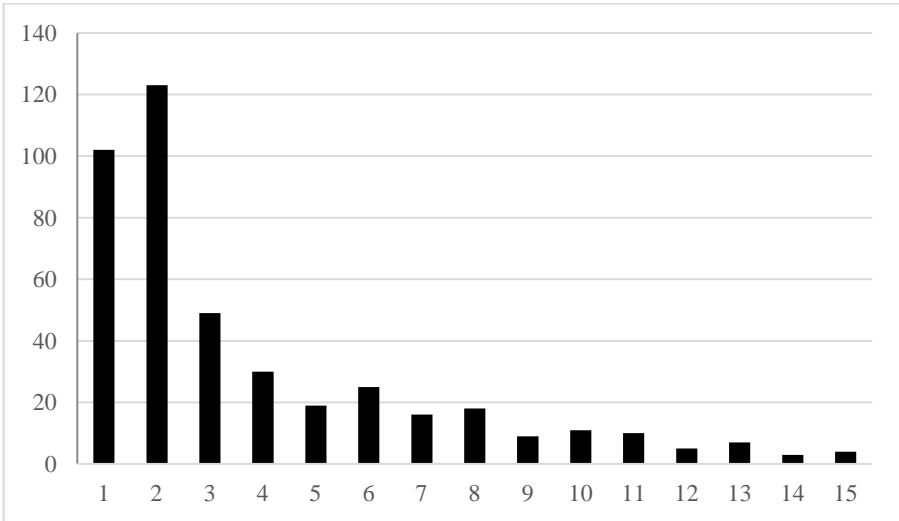


Figure 1. Number of Women Re-Incarcerated by Year Post-Release 1995 n=431

The majority of those who were re-incarcerated (414 out of 431) received a county sentence (i.e. 2.5 years or less). Only 17 received a state prison sentence, indicative of a conviction of a serious crime or criminal record. Taking a conservative analytic approach, given the small number of women sentenced to state prison could alter the representativeness of the sample, this group was excluded from the bivariate analysis.

Bivariate Analysis

Bivariate analysis was used to determine the relationship between the dependent variable, recidivism, and nine independent variables to determine if the study sample was reflective of national trends. Recidivism was coded as 0 (*not re-incarcerated*) and 1 (*re-incarcerated*). Because the following variables have been identified in the literature as having a relationship to recidivism they were used as independent variables in this analysis: age, race, marital status, city type, type of release, institution of release, offense type, and age of first involvement in the criminal justice system. Recidivists and non-recidivists were similar in the following categories – marital status, i.e. single/never married, resident of an urban community, and race.

Table 3

Demographic characteristics: Re-incarcerated house of corrections v. not re-incarcerated

	Re-incarcerated HOC N=414		Not Re-incarcerated N=385	
	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Race				
White/Caucasian	291	70.6 (52.2)	266	69.8 (47.2)
African American	67	16.3 (54.0)	57	15.0 (43.2)
Hispanic	54	13.1 (48.2)	58	15.2 (50.4)
Marital Status				
Single	299	72.2	272	70.6
Ever married	115	27.8	113	29.4
Town Type				
Urban/City	315	77.2	289	78.3
Suburban	75	18.4	67	18.2
Rural	18	4.4	13	3.5
Gateway City				
Yes	200	48.3	198	51.4
No	214	51.7	187	48.6
Median Age***				
	31		34	

*p<.01 **p<.001 ***p<.000

The governing offenses for both recidivists and non-recidivists are similar with one exception. Recidivists were more likely to have been serving time for a morals offenses (e.g. common night walking, lewd behaviour, sex for a fee, and solicitation). This finding is not unusual given the typology of the street prostitute – someone who sells sexual services often in support of an illicit drug addiction (Romero-Daza, et al. 2010). Similarly, when examining the crimes the recidivists committed that resulted in their reincarceration, 27% were drug, 26% were morals, and 21% were property offenses. Less than 10% of the reincarcerative governing offenses were related to violence, weapons, or sex.

Table 4

Subsequent criminal offenses of recidivists

	Frequency	Percent
Morals	112	27.1
Drug	108	26.1
Property	86	20.8
Motor Vehicle	46	11.1
Person	35	8.5
Other	24	5.8
Sex	2	.5
Weapon	1	.2
Total	414	100.0

Statistically Significant Findings

As Kruttschnitt and Gartner (2003) had previously found, younger women were significantly more likely to be re-incarcerated ($p < .001$). This held true in the present study. Of women 17 to 30 years of age, 44% were re-incarcerated, while only 36% in that same age range were re-committed to prison. The difference between the age of the women rose to the level of significance ($p < .001$). The median age for re-incarceration was 31 compared to 34 for those who stayed out of prison.

As seen in Table 6, age of first arraignment, first conviction and first incarceration were significantly associated ($p < .001$) with re-incarceration. Of the women who were 19 years or younger at arraignment, 46% were re-incarcerated compared to 30% not re-incarcerated. This relationship was similar for age at first conviction 19 years or less (27% vs. 14%) and first incarceration 19 years or younger (11% vs. 4%). Median age of first arraignment was 20, first conviction age 23 and first incarceration age 27 compared to 23, 27 and 31 years for those who did not return to prison after release. As previously reported by Huebner et al. (2010), extensive involvement with the criminal justice system was significantly associated with re-incarceration. As the number of lifetime arraignments, convictions and incarcerations increased, the percent of women who were re-incarcerated also increased ($p < .001$). This relationship can also be observed using the Massachusetts Department of Correction categorization

of criminal history, which ranks criminal behaviour history on a scale of 1 to 6. Fifty-seven percent of the women who were assessed as having a serious/repetitive criminal history returned to prison ($p < .001$).

Table 5

Criminal history: Re-incarcerated house of corrections v. not re-incarcerated

	Re-incarcerated HOC N=414		Not Re-incarcerated N=385	
	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Institution of Release***				
Framingham	357	86.2	290	75.3
Other	57	13.8	95	24.7
Parole at Release*				
Yes	91	22.0	115	29.9
No	323	78.0	270	70.1
Offense Original				
Drug	93	22.5	101	26.2
Morals	92	22.2	64	16.6
Motor Vehicle	47	11.4	67	17.4
Other	12	2.9	7	1.8
Person	52	12.6	48	12.5
Property	117	28.3	94	24.4
Sex	0	0	1	.3
Weapon	1	.2	3	.8
Offense Re-incarceration				
Drug	108	26.1		
Morals	112	27.1		
Motor Vehicle	46	17.4		
Other	24	5.8		
Person	35	8.5		
Property	86	20.8		
Sex	2	.5		
Weapon	1	.2		
	Re-incarcerated HOC		Not Re-incarcerated	

	N=414		N=385	
	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Criminal History**				
None/minor/moderate	177	42.8	212	55.1
Serious/violent/repetitive	237	57.2	173	44.9
Age at 1st				
Arraignment***				
19 or less	191	46.1	114	29.6
20-29	179	43.2	175	45.5
30+	44	10.6	96	24.9
Age at 1st				
Conviction***				
19 or less	112	27.1	55	14.3
20-29	225	54.3	180	46.8
30+	77	18.6	150	39.0
Age at 1st				
Incarceration***				
19 or less	45	10.9	17	4.4
20-29	217	52.4	145	37.7
30+	152	36.7	223	57.9

*p<.01 **p<.001

***P<.000

Re-incarceration was strongly associated with the institution of release ($p < .001$). Only 14% of the re-incarcerated women had been released from a pre-release facility compared to almost double the percent of women who were not re-incarcerated (24%).

Release on parole was significantly associated with not being re-incarcerated ($p < .01$). Thirty percent of those who were not re-incarcerated were released on parole compared to 22% of women who were re-incarcerated were not on parole at the time of discharge.

Multivariate Analysis

A logistic regression analysis was conducted to predict recidivism in the 15 year post release period. Purposeful selection of variables for the logistic regression model was based on the Pearson’s Chi Square test indicating significant association. Independent variables that attained a significance level of $p < .05$ were included in the model. Therefore, the variables listed in Table 7 were selected to test their predictive power. As previously noted, the dependent variable, recidivism, was coded 0 (*not re-incarcerated*) and 1 (*re-incarcerated*).

Table 6
Independent variables in the logistic regression model

	0	1
Criminal history	None, minor, moderate	Serious, violent, repetitive
Age 1st arraignment	Twenty years plus	19 years or younger
Release institution	Not Framingham	Framingham
Age at release	Continuous	

A test of the full model against a constant found that release institution, criminal history, age of first arraignment and age at release made a significant contribution to prediction of recidivism. A woman released from Framingham, compared to release from a minimum security facility or parole, was 1.9 times more likely to be re-incarcerated. Post-release women with a serious/repetitive criminal history were 1.6 times more likely to return to prison during the 15 years post incarceration. Released women who had their first arraignment before the age of 19 were also 1.6 times more likely to be recidivists. Finally, for every year increase in age, the re-incarceration rate decreased by 3.9% as seen in Table 8.

Table 7

Statistically significant variables

	B	Significance	Exp(B)
Release Institution	.665(.270)*	.001	1.945
Criminal History	.520(.159)*	.001	1.682
Age 1st	.499(.166)*	.002	1.647
Arraignment			
Age at release	-.039(.012)*	.003	.962
-2 Log likelihood	1050.583		
Model chi sq	5.234		

*standard error

Discussion

This study provides additional evidence to the literature that race of the offender is not significantly associated with female recidivism. Furthermore, female offender racial disparities are decreasing in the rates of incarceration both in Massachusetts and nationally. According to the Massachusetts Department of Correction Inmate Statistics, in 1997 the female prison population as of January 1st was 53% White/Caucasian, 22% African American and 24% Hispanic (Sampson et al., 1999). The racial breakdown was vastly different in 2009, with White/Caucasian women showing a 10% increase to 64% and African American and Hispanic women dropping to 16% and 15% respectively (Research and Planning Division, 2009). As the racial proportions change, differences would lessen so that significant racial disparities would be less detectable. Nationally, a similar pattern is emerging. Between 2000 and 2009, the rate of incarceration for African American women declined by 31% while increasing 47% for White/Caucasian women and 23% for Hispanic women (Mauer, 2013).

Unexpectedly, a women's residential address did not rise to the level of statistical significance. Researchers have argued that people from socially marginalized and disadvantaged neighbourhoods are more likely to be involved in crime thus more likely to find themselves incarcerated (Sampson & Raudenbush, 2001; Kubrin & Steward, 2006). Urban versus suburban post-release women in this study were equally likely to be re-incarcerated. Additionally, women living in "Gateway Cities" (those locations with

concentrated low employment, high poverty rates and racially/ethnically diverse populations), might be expected to be involved in long-term criminal behaviour. In fact, the study found women from these neighbourhoods were slightly less likely to recidivate. Without additional contextual data it is difficult to surmise why this might be the case.

Previous studies have indicated that age at release predicts recidivism (Deschenes et al., 2007; Stuart & Brice- Baker, 2004; Kruttschnitt & Gartner, 2003). As women age, recidivism rates decline. This study is in accord with the age/crime curve, which indicates that criminal involvement increases throughout the adolescent years and then declines as one ages (Shulman et al., 2013; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). By 18 years of age, 25.6% of the women in this study had been arraigned, 12.9% had at least one conviction and 4.9% had been incarcerated. Those who become involved at a very young age are likely to accumulate numerous arraignments, convictions and incarcerations over their lifetime. For some young offenders, early involvement may indicate delinquent tendencies that are immutable. For others, it may be that juveniles who are socialized in a correctional environment may find it difficult to comply with normative, prosocial standard (Stuart & Brice-Baker, 2004). Age of the offender continues to remain a predictive risk factor. The consistency of the relationship between age and crime argues for the development of correctional programming geared specifically toward the youthful offender who, in the eyes of the criminal justice system, is an adult but developmentally still very much a child in need of structure, mentoring, and the acquisition of basic life skills.

The most severe risk period for women's recidivism occurs shortly after release. Those on parole were significantly less likely to be re-committed, suggesting that community support and monitoring might be useful during this vulnerable period. Parole release increases the likelihood of return to prison due to technical violations, but when parole violations are excluded from the analysis it appears that requiring accountability for one's behaviour for a period of time may be warranted. Due to the high cost of incarceration, many states have reconsidered regulations that routinely commit parole violators. Louisiana restricts the amount of time for which a person can be re-incarcerated for a parole violation. Oregon, Nevada, California and West Virginia are examples of states that offer staggered sanctions that may

include community service options. Colorado and Tennessee have created specialized violator facilities in lieu of returning some parole violators to prison (Lawrence, 2008).

If mandated parole or increased parole rates are not an option, pre-release facilities and community-based programs should be made more available. We found women released from a pre-release facility were significantly less likely to be re-incarcerated. Studies have indicated that preparation for re-integration into mainstream society reduces recidivism as return to society can present major familial, financial and emotional hurdles (Griffin & Armstrong, 2003; Petersilia, 2003; Shand, 1996; Travis, 2005). Easing these transitional challenges through pre-release programs might increase the likelihood that a woman will stay out of the criminal justice system altogether or for a longer period of time.

Lastly, this study advances the proposition that recidivism follow up periods of three to five are short-sighted. In this sample of female prisoners, 70% recidivated after four years. While the literature tells us why some offenders are vulnerable shortly after release -- returning to impoverished, crime-ridden neighbourhoods (Sampson & Raudenbush, 2001; Kubrin & Steward, 2006); relapsing after a period of imposed sobriety; leaving facilities without adequate re-entry plans), what might propel a woman into becoming a recidivist if she has been living crime free for 8, 10, or 15 years? Studies that examine this phenomenon will fill an important gap in our knowledge of criminal re-offending.

Study Limitations

This study is not without its limitations. First, the researchers were constrained by the lack of accessibility to contextual prisoner data, such as family bonds, employment and educational history, and substance use. Information about the criminal history and demographics of the sample provided us only a narrow examination of recidivism that was largely descriptive. Without rich detail into the familial and psycho-social lives of the women in this sample, we can only speculate about their pathways into and more importantly, out of crime.

Secondly, this study could deeply benefit from an analysis of multiple reentries into the justice system. We know that some women in the sample

recidivated more than once over the 15-year follow up period, but due to time and budgetary constraints of the project, this analysis was not possible. Tracking this movement could add to our knowledge about repetitive recidivism and the characteristics of the female habitual offender.

Third, our findings cannot be generalized beyond the female offender population in Massachusetts. Our sample was comprised of a cohort of women who were released from a Massachusetts prison in 1995.

Notes

¹ “It is the mission of the Federal Bureau of Prisons to protect society by confining offenders in the controlled environments of prisons and community-based facilities that are safe, humane, cost-efficient, and appropriately secure, and that provide work and other self-improvement opportunities to assist offenders in becoming law-abiding citizens” (<http://www.bop.gov/about/mission.jsp>). MA DOC Mission Statement: “Our mission is to promote public safety by managing offenders while providing care and appropriate programming in preparation for successful reentry into the community” (<http://www.mass.gov/eopss/agencies/doc/>).

² Massachusetts operates a bifurcated correctional system. Houses of Correction are managed by elected Sheriffs, are county-based, and house detainees awaiting trial and prisoners with sentences of 2.5 years or less. However, only 3 out of 14 county systems have facilities that house women. As a result, most county-sentences female prisoners serve time at the state institution for women.

³ With the exception of Boston and Lynn these cities were identified as “Gateway Cities” in 2008. These “gateway cities” traditionally have been populated by foreign workers as jobs were available in the once economically vibrant manufacturing sector. As America has moved to a knowledge based economy job opportunities for unskilled immigrant labor declined leaving many individuals with few legitimate employment options (Forman et al, 2007). Fewer jobs means less taxable income which impacts social agencies, structural repairs, and community maintenance often leading to a general state of decline.

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H2 Visas in the Mississippi Catfish Industry: Transnationalism and Gender from the Middle

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H2 Visas in the Mississippi Catfish Industry: Transnationalism and Gender from the Middle

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Abstract

This article builds on global ethnography, transnational feminist sociology, and gendered organizations to examine the processes and practices required to obtain H2 visas, temporary work permits for non-U.S. citizens seeking employment in agriculture and non-agricultural sectors. The article is based on ethnographic observation at a U.S. Consulate in Mexico with a focus on observing the process experienced by a group of Mexican workers seeking H2-A Visas to work on a catfish farm in Mississippi. I argue that by more carefully examining the roles and perspectives of the catfish farm manager and a U.S. Consulate Director in the process of obtaining the H2-A visas, we can move beyond “globalization from above” or “globalization from below” perspectives to a more nuanced understanding of what transnationalism looks like from the middle. In addition, by applying a gendered organizations framework to understanding the H2 visa process at an interactional level, I demonstrate how the definition of the “good worker” is gendered.

Keywords: transnationalism, work, gender, H2 Visas

Visados H2 en la Industria del Siluro en Mississippi: Transnacionalismo y Género desde el Centro

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Resumen

Este artículo se basa en la etnografía global, la sociología feminista transnacional, y las organizaciones de género para examinar los procesos y prácticas necesarias para obtener visados H2 o permisos de trabajo temporales para los ciudadanos no estadounidenses que buscan empleo en la agricultura y los sectores no agrícolas. El artículo parte de la observación etnográfica realizada en un Consulado de Estados Unidos en México para analizar el proceso vivido por un grupo de trabajadores mexicanos que buscan visas H2-A para trabajar en una granja de siluros en Mississippi. Sostengo que al examinar más detenidamente las funciones y perspectivas del administrador de la granja de siluros y del director del Consulado de Estados Unidos en el proceso de obtención de los visados H2-A, podemos ir más allá de las perspectivas de "globalización desde arriba" o "globalización desde abajo" hacia una comprensión más matizada de lo que el transnacionalismo es desde el centro. Además, aplicando una perspectiva de género al proceso de obtención del visado H2 a nivel interaccional, demuestro cómo el género influye en la definición del "buen trabajador".

Palabras clave: transnacionalismo, trabajo, género, H2 Visas

During my first visit to Nation’s Best Catfish I missed the turn off to the office and found myself driving on the levees of the catfish ponds. I came upon a feed truck and got out to ask the driver for directions. I quickly said that I was looking for the main offices. Assuming that he hadn’t heard me over the loud equipment, I repeated myself with a little more volume. Suddenly, I realized that this worker spoke Spanish. I attempted a few words in broken Spanish and finally made some progress when I said the last name of the person I was looking for: “Jimenez?” The man in the truck said, “OK” and motioned for me to follow him. When I got to the offices, a simple, single level concrete structure, the signs on the front directing me to “Use the Other Door” and inside the lobby “Please Ring the Bell for Help” were written in both English and Spanish. In the middle of the Mississippi Delta, I had entered a world of Spanish-speaking catfish workers.

David Jimenez is a Mexican American aquaculturist originally from Southern California. His background and work experience raising caged fish and his excellent fluency in both English and Spanish made him an attractive candidate for the farm manager job at Nation’s Best Catfish, one of the largest commercially owned catfish farms in the Mississippi Delta. David accepted the job of farm manager and moved his wife and children to live in a modern, brick house on the edge of the farm. The house is provided by the company and serves as one of the benefits of the job. David explains that this is a demanding job with a high potential for burnout. Farm managers are responsible for managing the farm workers who maintain the grounds, mow the levees, feed and harvest the fish. He keeps meticulous records on over 600 ponds to keep track of things such as amount of feed needed, treatments for disease, bird predation strategies, oxygen levels, and needed repairs. He spends many hours in his truck driving around the farm to check the work being done.

During the months from May-September a farm manager can be expected to be on call almost 24 hours a day. One of the greatest risks of catfish farming is the challenge of low oxygen levels which can kill an entire pond in a matter of minutes. The farm manager is ultimately in charge if a pond is lost, so workers are sure to call at the first sign that the fish are “coming up” to the surface for air. David is also responsible for managing the apartments that the workers live in on the farm. He tells me

that he is often called on to mediate disagreements or misunderstandings between English speaking and Spanish speaking workers in the processing plant. He is a jack-of-all-trades.

In early October 2005, I spent the morning hanging out with David to learn more about what he did on a day-to-day basis. As I sat across the desk from him in his small office, it became apparent that much of the work he was doing that morning had to do with his preparation to go to a U.S. Consulate in Mexico the next week to bring back “his Winter crew.” He made a phone call to the Consulate and spoke to people in both English and Spanish to ask whether he could pay the H2 visa expenses with a cashier’s check. He called over to the processing plant to remind the supervisor to post a sign notifying all H2 B visa workers that they had to leave by October 14th. He complained that this should not be part of his job because he is in charge of the farm, not the processing plant, but he said she would forget to do it.

This was my first glimpse into the transnational space in which David Jimenez managed his Mississippi catfish farm through the hiring of Mexican migrant workers via the H2 visa process. There has been little research on the H2 guest worker program, *per se*¹. There is even less research on the specific dynamics inherent in the process of obtaining the H2 visas themselves. I am primarily interested in how transnational processes and practices defined as “occupations and activities that require regular and sustained social contracts over time across national borders for their implementation” (Portes, Guarnizo, & Landolt, 1999, p. 219) manifest themselves in local places, spaces, and interactions. In so doing, I also explore how gender shapes these processes. Moving beyond “globalization from above” vs. “globalization from below” models, this article explores the mid-level managers and bureaucratic workers whose work constitutes the day-to-day construction of transnational work processes and globalization itself.

Background and Theoretical Context

Scholars have been debating the meaning and significance of transnationalism. Some have used the term to refer to a new and enduring state of immigrant and migrant personal, work, and political life which

exists across nation-state borders, with a focus on the limited usefulness of traditional frameworks such as assimilation for understanding allegiances and identities as either with a sending country or receiving country (Portes, Guarnizo, & Landolt, 1999; Levitt, 2001a; Levitt, 2001b). Others have questioned whether the connections migrants have established are any more than highly particularized relationships within local communities in the receiving country and whether any of these transnational labor flows are really all that new when taking historical and comparative cases into account (Waldinger & Fitzgerald, 2004). Feminist scholars have noted that when globalization is discussed in the literature it is “rendered into a grand discourse about a purportedly homogenizing capitalist world system” (Kim-Puri, 2005, p.140). And while much theoretical and empirical research has demonstrated that gender is a system of inequality requiring an analysis of what Tilly (1984) calls “big structures, large processes, and huge comparisons,” a discussion of gender dynamics related to transnationalism or globalization is often missing (Poster, 2002). Since the 1990’s feminist scholars have set out to explore the ways that gender and sexuality are implicated in shaping the meanings and consequences of transnational practices, institutions, flows, and relationships for men and women (Patil, 2011). In a special issue in *Gender & Society*, sociologists Kim-Puri, outline their rationale for constructing a transnational feminist sociology and claim their goal is to “rethink and reframe the ways the state, nation, gender, and sexuality are mutually constituted.” (Kim-Puri, 2005, p. 139).

These theoretical discussions have led to conversations about the most effective methods for studying transnational phenomena. In *Global Ethnography*, Michael Burawoy suggests that “what we understand to be global is itself constituted within the local; it emanates from the very specific agencies, institutions, and organizations whose processes can be observed first-hand” (as cited in Poster, 2002, p. 127). In a critical analysis that joins feminist and global ethnography literatures, Winifred Poster (2002) notes that feminist work, although not always explicitly defined as global ethnography, has long been expanding the “range of sites where one can study global dynamics of work...” and focusing on “transnational connections” in their studies of the workplace (p. 129). There is now a vast literature on how gender shapes transnational work relationships. These include demographic analyses of how gender and race shape flows of labor

between various nation states (Pyle, 2006), literature on the day to day work experiences of migrants and immigrants in a range of occupations (Garcia-Lopez, 2008; Hondagneu Sotelo, 1995, 2001; Hossfeld, 1990; Parnas, 2000), the nature of transnational masculinities (Bartolomei, 2010; Beasley, 2008; Connell, 1998; Connell & Wood, 2005; Ramirez, 2011) and gender dynamics in organizations that are affected by local, cultural assumptions about the appropriate displays of femininity, sexuality, and the body (Muñoz, 2008; Lee, 1998; Salzinger, 1997; Yelvington, 1995).

This article builds on global ethnography and transnational feminist sociology to understand one example of transnational phenomenon--“H-World”—the H2 Visa unit in a U.S. consulate in Mexico at one point in time. H2 visas are temporary work permits for non-U.S. citizens seeking employment in agriculture and non-agricultural sectors (Muñoz, 2008). The goal of this paper is to explore some of the transnational gendered practices that may be at play in the U.S. catfish industry by highlighting the dynamics of this understudied space using a gendered organizations perspective, a framework that acknowledges the ways that gender and sexuality themselves are constructed at various organizational levels including identity, interaction, culture, and structure (Acker, 1990; Britton, 2000; Britton & Logan, 2008; Williams, Muller, & Kilanski, 2012). In particular, by focusing on the relationship between hired farm manager and the temporary Mexican workers he hires, I focus on expanding our understanding of transnational hegemonic masculinities. Here we are able to see the relationship between hegemonic masculinities (a form of transnational business masculinity) related to the farm manager’s role and the bureaucratic processes in the U.S. Consulate (Connell & Wood, 2005) and marginalized masculinities as lived by immigrant workers (Beasley, 2008).

What follows is a brief discussion of research methods and an overview of H2 Visas and the catfish industry in Mississippi. The findings section explores H-world from the perspectives of a farm manager and a Consulate Director and identifies the gendered aspects of this process that become obvious from these points of view. The conclusion outlines what we might learn through more in-depth study of the process of obtaining H2 Visas and the gendering of other underexplored transnational work spaces with more attention to the “middle” of these bureaucratic processes.

Research Methods

From 2004-2007, I conducted a study of the catfish industry using tape-recorded in-depth interviews and ethnographic observation. I formally interviewed 7 farmers (2 women and 5 men) and 12 individuals in research and development (7 men and 5 women) involved in running or supporting the U.S. catfish industry in Mississippi (11) and Arkansas (8). Eighteen respondents identified as white and one identified as Hispanic. They ranged in age from 26 to 90. I also attended four national and regional catfish farming conferences, observed day to day operations on several catfish farms, observed the H2 Visa process at a U.S. Consulate in Mexico, and attended cultural events celebrating the catfish industry in Mississippi. All of the names for people and business used in this paper are pseudonyms.

During my first entrée into the field as a guest on an industry tour, I met a farm manager who guided us around the catfish ponds. Before he exited the bus, I asked him for his business card and told him I was doing research on the industry. He said he wouldn't mind if I called him for an interview. He turned out to be a key contact, David Jimenez, mentioned in the introduction. He set aside time for me to interview him, he let me shadow him for a few hours on the farm one day, I ran into him at several conferences where we had the chance to have meals together and talk. Rather early in our association, when I called to schedule a time to tour the farm in October, he told me that he was going to be out of the country because he had to bring back the "Winter Crew" from Mexico. When I visited the farm, he had explained that his crew was made of almost entirely of H2 visa workers from Mexico. In the moment, I mustered the courage to ask whether I might go along to Mexico to see the H2 Visa process at work. To my great surprise, he said yes.

This paper is part of a larger project on work dynamics in the catfish industry. I focus on my interviews and field notes related to a three-day trip to a U.S. consulate in Mexico in Fall 2005 where I observed the transnational process of obtaining H2-A visa workers. This paper is based on the themes that emerged from open and focused coding of field notes from the trip to Mexico, an interview with a U.S. Consulate worker in the H2 Visa area, and interviews and field notes with David who allowed me to accompany him on his trip. This analysis by no means attempts to

definitively describe the H2 visa process for all workers, but instead, challenges future researchers to further explore interactions within Consulates as important elements of the transnational work process. As companies continue to utilize H2 Visas to hire laborers, the fact that this process “forms an integral part of the individual’s habitual life,” “is undertaken on a regular basis” and is “patterned and therefore somewhat predictable” may suggest that it is a practice related to “core transnationalism” (Guarnizo, 2000) that needs further analysis. What follows is an exploratory analysis of the H2 visa process with an emphasis on the day-to-day process that companies and workers follow to get temporary work visas. I highlight the role of key players in the “middle” of this process: the company representative (in this case, a catfish farm manager) and a U.S. Consulate Director. These agents have very different positions of power in this process and expose varying, and important angles on the ways that globalization and gender manifest themselves in everyday life.

H2 Visas and Workers in the Catfish Industry

H2-A Visas are a form of temporary work visa granted by the U.S. government to individuals from foreign countries who “perform agricultural labor or services of a temporary or seasonal nature” (U.S. Department of Labor, 2010). U.S. employers must demonstrate that they have tried to employ U.S. workers, but could not. As a whole, in FY 2012 there were 65,345 H2-A visas issued by the U.S. to all 59 eligible countries (Wilson, 2013). Most H2-A visas were granted for the category “general farm worker,” (18.5%) and the top crops for H2-A workers were tobacco (9.6%), oranges (6.5%), cotton (5.1%), and onions (4.8%). 65% of all H2-A workers were requested in ten states, mostly in the Southeast (Wilson, 2013).

Workers in the sending country must apply for and receive the H2-A visas granted to a U.S. employer. Once workers receive the visa they must enter the United States within 10 days. The visa does not guarantee entry into the United States, however. A Consulate Director I interviewed described the visa as “permission to knock at the door.” The worker might be turned back at the border if the U.S. border patrol or Immigration and Naturalization Services officers find a reason to deny entry.

Once immigrant workers receive an H2 visa, time spent in the United States is generally no longer than 10 months (U.S. Department of Labor, 2010). Each visa has its own set of requirements for the worker and the U.S. employer. H2-A visas, for example, require that the workers are paid at least minimum wage, must be offered at least $\frac{3}{4}$ of the hours stipulated in the work contract, and can refuse extra hours. The employer must provide safe housing at the work site and transportation to and from the sending country and the work site. Three meals a day at costs established by the U.S. Department of Labor or free cooking facilities must also be provided.

After the official time designated on the visa has expired (up to one year, renewable to three years), workers must return to their country of origin. During my interview with the U.S. Consulate Director, she mentioned a recent policy that required a selection of all workers to return to the U.S. consulate in the sending country to obtain a “reentry” stamp on their passport. This policy is designed to discourage people overstaying the visa.

While it might seem odd that U.S. employers in states with high poverty and unemployment rates would not have enough workers to fill their open positions, I found that the catfish industry in Mississippi was beginning to use H2 visas workers on some large catfish ponds. The Mississippi Delta suffers from high unemployment rates and is one of the poorest regions of the country with the average percent of citizens in the state living below poverty at 22.3% between 2008-2012 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). In Delta county regions poverty rates can be as high as 30-50% (Housing Assistance Council, 2012). This region has also been described as having a “plantation culture,” a holdover from slavery that is reflected in the unequal relationship between white landowners and poor African American and immigrant and migrant workers (see for example Cimini, 1991). Most media descriptions of this area leave the impression that it is one of the most rural, insular, “Southern” places on earth (Cobb, 1992). Yet the reliance on migrant workers has been going on for many years in the rest of the U.S. South in other industries (Peacock, Watson, & Matthews, 2005; Odem & Lacy, 2009; Zuniga & Hernandez-Leon, 2005), and it is time to explore the more recent dynamics of immigrant or migrant labor in the catfish industry.

The largest number of catfish farms in the U.S. is found in the Mississippi Delta. The catfish industry began in the 1950s in Arkansas and Mississippi and was vertically integrated by the 1970s. Many of the catfish farms are built on land that was once used to grow crops such as cotton or soybeans. Initially, “a farmer might have had one or two ponds he fed by walking along the levee, carrying a pail full of feed and broadcasting it out on the water by hand. By 1990, catfish had become a sophisticated megabucks aquabusiness” (Schweid, 1992, p. 6), and today, catfish is the leading aquacultural product produced in the United States (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, 2011). The dramatic growth of the industry in the 1980s and 90s reflects the boom time for Mississippi Delta raised catfish with the height of production in this top-producing state reaching over 350 million pounds from 420 farm operations covering a total of 105,000 water acres in 1999 (Hanson & Sites, 2006). The value of sales in Mississippi was at its height in 1998 at \$307 million (Hanson & Sites, 2006). Between 2002 and 2013, however, the U.S. has seen a 55% drop in both catfish acreage and catfish processed with a significant negative economic impact on the state of Mississippi due to increased oil prices and foreign competition from Vietnam and China (Avery, Hanson, & Steeby, 2013).

Findings

H2 Visas and a Farm Manager’s Perspective

David Jimenez, the farm manager of a large catfish farm in Mississippi, does H2 visa related work that includes handling a vast amount of paperwork and money and traveling to Mexico and back to facilitate the Visa process. The paperwork includes those documents necessary to secure an appointment at a U.S. Consulate in Mexico and to prove his authority to act as the representative of the company and the forms and applications to be filled out by the H2 visa workers themselves. A company seeking H2 visa workers must go through several steps. First, a company must be certified by the Department of Labor. They must indicate why they need temporary or seasonal labor, whether that labor is agricultural or non-agricultural, and that they attempted to find U.S. workers, but could not. Second, an I-129 Petition must be filed with the Department of Homeland

Security which includes information on the company and income to be paid to workers. The third step is for the company to make an appointment at the U.S. Consulate at least ninety days before the visit. The company must send a letter verifying an individual's authorization to serve as the representative. The representative can be the owner of the company, an employee, or one of the workers applying for a visa (U.S. Department of Labor, 2010). Forty eight hours in advance, the Consulate must have an official list of the workers who will be coming for the appointment.

On the appointment day, a representative will drop off the workers' passports and application fees at the Consulate early in the morning. They must be batched together in the order of the list of workers sent to the Consulate 48 hours prior. Some substitute names are allowed if last minute changes must be made (with the exception of H2R visas). The representative returns to the Consulate at 2pm to pick up the documents.

On the second day at the start of business (7:30 am), the representative meets his or her workers on the U.S. Consulate grounds and makes sure the workers are lined up in the order on the list. The workers enter the Consulate (through a metal detector) and stand in line to be interviewed by Consulate workers. The workers first approach the windows to be fingerprinted, both left and right index fingers. They then return to line to await their interviews. Groups of up to 10 workers are called to the window where a Consulate worker on the other side of a clear plexi-glass window asks each person to place their right or their left index finger back on the fingerprint reader to insure their identity. They then ask questions of each worker (or the group, because they are working for the same employer): Where are you going? What will you be earning? How long will your job last? Have you ever been in the U.S. illegally? The Consulate worker checks the workers answers against various data bases of information they have about illegal immigration looking for any "hits" on FBI or Department of Homeland Security data bases. They also pay attention to how the workers present themselves and if they know the answers to the questions without hesitation. After the interview, the workers leave the Consulate and the Consulate workers decide who will obtain a visa and who will not. The representative is asked to return to the Consulate the next day at 2pm and they are handed the stack of passports, visas, and a list of who did not receive a visa. Workers who are denied visas do have the opportunity to

petition for another interview, but they must pay the application fee again. If they receive a visa, they leave for the U.S. on a company provided van or bus or through some other travel arrangement.

David carries a silver, metal brief case to Mexico to transport these papers, a portable printer to fix any mistakes on forms, and the money he needs to pay for the workers' visas, their travel, their lodging, and loans for spending money for the trip to Mississippi. My field notes indicate how much money it took to bring a crew of 25 back from Mexico in Fall 2005:

He showed me the figures he sketched out to try to calculate how much money to bring with him. Last fall's figures had the following items: 25X 100 for visas, 25X 125 for transportation, 1700? Or so for "loans" (money given to workers so they could make it before their first pay check), \$100 for a man who did a lot of calling around down there, \$500 for Sonia who does a lot of the paper work down there, and costs for David's hotel expenses, food, etc. The fall total added up to about \$8650. In the spring when he needs 70 people for the farm, and 40 for the processing plant, he estimates needing more like \$15,000 in cash. He decided to take traveler's checks this time in increments of \$500 after the Consulate workers told him he couldn't use a cashier's check. He tried to use his credit card, but there are limits on it, and one time the machine didn't work in Mexico. The first time he took \$100 bills and he was required to write down every single serial number on each one. Now he takes \$50s.

The paperwork and the money seemed to be stressful. David expressed anxiety about traveling out of the country with this amount of money and worried about being stopped and questioned by officials at Customs. Before he left, he spent time organizing application forms and, once we got to Mexico, he said he spent time in his hotel room making sure the workers' documents were in the exact order required by the Consulate. He told me stories of capricious Consulate workers who had denied access to the Consulate if one form was out of order or folded in an incorrect manner. David says that these rules change depending on who the director of the Consulate is at the time. As an illustration, he pointed to the fact that he had been allowed to bring a cashier's check last time, but was told it would not be accepted this time.

The afternoon we arrived at our destination in Mexico, I accompanied David to a hotel a few blocks away from ours. It was much smaller than our large hotel that catered to the city's many international business travelers. David reserved rooms in the smaller hotel to house the workers during the H2 visa consulate interviews. Usually this takes three days: day one--drop off of passports, day two--worker interviews, and day three--pick up of passports and visas. During my trip, however, there was a glitch in the computer system in the U.S. and while the workers were supposed to receive their visas on Thursday, they did not actually receive them until Monday. This required an extra four-day stay for the workers which greatly increased the workers' and company's expenses.

To get the paperwork in order for the first Consulate visit, David arranged for a place for he and his workers to meet to complete the process of filling out the application forms. He explained that last time, he just arranged for the men to meet him in his hotel lobby. The management of this large, international business hotel didn't approve of having these working-class men in their lobby and not so subtly told David to find another place to meet. As a result, this fall, David inquired about renting a conference room in the worker's hotel where he (and some hired assistants from Mexico: Sonia and her daughter) would double check the workers' application forms and identification. The representative and the workers are responsible for making sure that no misinformation is included on the forms so there was a level of tension in the room as Sonia and David read each form carefully and consulted with the workers about missing information or issues that might cause problems at the Consulate. Past visits to the U.S. (especially if they are illegal) were cause for debate about how a worker's form should be filled out. One man didn't have documentation of his military service and Sonia worked quickly to contact his wife so that she could fax this information. I sat in the room throughout this several hour process and helped place "Nation's Best Catfish" company stickers across the front of the workers' Mexican passports. The session concluded with Sonia and David calling all of the men into the room for a coaching session about the interviews the next day. Sonia told them to arrive on time, to dress neatly, and not to be drunk. She explained the fingerprinting process and suggested they wipe their finger dry on their clothes if they found that they were sweating. Most of this conversation was in Spanish, and David

translated some of it for me. The gist of the advice was to be polite and honest in your answers.

David's role at the Consulate seemed to be much like a courier. He arrived early the first day with his paperwork in his briefcase ready to hand off and then he returned at an appointed time to pick it up again. On the first day, we sat together on a cement block wall outside of the Consulate and waited in the early morning darkness as various lines began to form. Other company representatives gathered around the area where we were waiting, while people seeking tourist visas lined up along the wall of an adjacent hotel. As the sun rose, the security guards told the growing crowd of representatives to back away from the sidewalk to keep it clear. David kept his eye on the side door of the Consulate waiting for any sign of the worker calling for H2 visa representatives. When he saw him, he told me to get one of the white slips he was handing out and follow him into the building. I happened to have a black bag slung around my shoulders and David later told me that I looked like a representative. Apparently all representatives carry bags that hold the workers' passports and other paper work. David started pointing out the "regulars" and saying hi to the people he recognized. He complained when he saw a man walking out with a huge box over his head indicating that he received his passports earlier than the other representatives and that he was receiving special treatment. I talked to a young man from Colorado and asked him what he was doing there. He owned a construction company in Colorado and he was coming down to get workers. He said he had been doing it for a few years now. Some representatives are owners or managers of companies and others are hired by U.S. companies to do the work of getting the workers.

Once inside the building, we waited briefly in line and David handed off his documents. He was instructed to come back to the Consulate in the afternoon around 2pm to pick up the visa applications and passports. On the second day, David insured that his workers are lined up in the order he was handed their documents. He then waited outside while the workers entered the Consulate to be interviewed. Typically, on the third day, David returns to the Consulate in the afternoon and is handed the workers' passports and visas. He distributes them to the workers and then hands out "loan" money that will tide the workers over during their trip across the border and their

drive to Mississippi. Sonia is in charge of driving the van of workers to Mississippi. David takes a flight back to Jackson, Mississippi.

This brief overview highlights David's role as transnational labor flow facilitator. He is a part of globalization from the middle in several ways--negotiating and nurturing relationships with his own employer as well as his future workers and working the bureaucratic channels necessary for guest workers to cross national borders. He makes sure the paper work and the money is in order and he navigates the sometimes confusing bureaucratic requirements at the U.S. Consulate. While he knows the routine and is fairly confident navigating it, there is a lot at stake if anything goes wrong. If workers are delayed in getting the visa, the farm in Mississippi is left without workers temporarily. If workers are denied a visa outright, David will be shorthanded on the farm for the entire upcoming season.

In addition to these concerns, David is also dealing with the day-to-day needs of the workers, including lodging, travel, and money for food and management of their day-to-day work on the farm back in Mississippi. He works hard to establish a rapport with these men as he will be their boss, but he will also become involved in parts of their personal lives as he mediates conflicts between people in the apartments on the farm, problems with injuries and illness, and as he and his family are invited to join the occasional picnic or celebration on time off with the workers. He reinforces notions about an appropriate gendered division of labor in his job as well. He hires men to work on the catfish farms. A few women are hired to work in the processing plants. When asked why, David explains that men are well suited for the outdoor labor required on the farm while women are better at the detailed work needed in preparing catfish on the line. There is a wage gap built into this division of labor. Farm laborers on the H2 A visa make \$7.80 an hour and usually work 70 hours a week. The H2 B visa does not require a set rate of pay and therefore workers are paid the going rate at the processing plant (about \$6 an hour). They also work fewer hours. This means that women make far less than men in the H2 Visa arrangements.

David's gendered role encompasses a form of "transnational business masculinity" as he is moving in the same international social spaces as the transnational business class—largely comprised of men (Connell & Wood, 2005). But he also takes on the role of a kind of patriarch on the farm back

in Mississippi as there is a thin wall between work and home in a context where he lives in a house with his family on the farm and he supervises the housing and daily lives of the H2 Visa workers. David reinforces notions about gender and labor as he manages living arrangements on the farm. He expresses his dislike of hiring families or women because of the difficulties of housing them. He can put more men into one apartment with three to a room, while he feels he needs to put fewer women together, at most two to a room, “because they don’t get along as well as the men.” He also explains that housing a family also reduces the number of laborers he can fit into an apartment. A family of four, including a husband, wife, and two children takes up one apartment for just two laborers. If the same apartment were used for men, he could house six workers. This logic defines temporarily unattached men as the “real workers.” As David is the only person on the farm that speaks fluent English and Spanish, he is the lifeline for both workers and management in the H2 visa process. While this would suggest a position of great power, his place as a Mexican American farm manager places him in between in many ways (between white and black in Mississippi, between English speaking U.S. owners and Spanish-speaking Mexican workers, between work and home).

H2 Visas and a Consulate Director’s Perspective

When I first asked to accompany David to Mexico, he said that he saw no problem. He explained that much of his time at the Consulate was spent waiting around and that he would be glad to have the company. His only hesitation was that I might not be able to obtain entry to the Consulate. Representatives are not allowed in the interview area and spend most of their time waiting outside of the Consulate. It turned out that I was able to obtain permission to observe the interview process for two days and even to interview the consulate Director. By observing the recruiting and hiring of these workers from the Consulate interviewers’ points of view, we have a glimpse into the role that the interviewers play in including or excluding various groups and individuals from the socially constructed category of the “good worker.” As we will see, gender plays a large role in this process.

On my first day accompanying David into the Consulate to drop off the workers’ passports, he helped me ask one of the workers how I could meet up with Tracy Parker, the current director of the Consulate. I had contacted

her by email and she knew I was coming, but the details of how and exactly where we would meet were a bit vague. The woman who had gathered the passports from the representatives walked to the other side of the room to inquire about my appointment with Tracy Parker. My field notes from this day describe the basic set up of the room and my level of discomfort being connected to this process of surveillance:

...The woman taking passports (bi-lingual, Mexican) asked me to sit in a chair and wait. She asked whether I had an appointment with Tracy and explained that she would be doing interviews with the workers and couldn't talk to me. I said she knew and I wanted to observe the interview process. This was all in English, lucky for me. A few minutes later a white woman with dirty blonde curly hair came walking up. She was wearing a tan sweater set and she had on a blue US Population Bureau ID tag around her neck. She said that I probably realized that the catfish farm workers wouldn't be interviewed until tomorrow because David just dropped off his forms/ passports. I said I'd like to observe the interview process anyway. I also asked to observe again on Thursday. and she said that would be fine. As we walked through 2 groups of lines Tracy pointed out that the tourist visas were to the left and the H2 visas were to the right. She explained that this is the low season so there were only about 100 people in line for H2 visas. During the high season (Dec/Jan) about 1200 workers come each day.

Tracy is very direct and straightforward and doesn't seem concerned by my presence. When we reached the end of the room, she introduced me to a guard and said I had her permission to observe. He questioned whether I needed something (a pass?) and she explained that I wouldn't be going inside the Consulate, but just observing here. She said I could sit in the blue plastic chairs and observe the process by standing up to listen to what is said in the group interviews. The men (and women) are called by group ranging from 1 to as many as 8-9 people. As we stood talking in front of the chairs, I felt uncomfortable as if she were holding forth without concern for all of the people waiting for a crucial decision about their livelihoods. With all of the men lined up and waiting to be interviewed behind me, I felt tense. She described that the position is on a 6-month rotation and that she was deputy director

and is now director of a team of 4. They bring in 2 more (local?) staff members to interview during the heavy season. Tracy told me a bit about the new H2R visa that allows for an easier return of workers, but has managed to complicate the paper work they're dealing with somehow.

Tracy disappeared behind a door with a combination press button box lock on it (Later, I came to understand that this was what they all referred to as "H World"—the offices where all of the H2A and B visas workers do their jobs). It seemed like 10 minutes or more before anyone came out. I sat there jotting notes about the conversation I had just had with Tracy, but fully conscious of the men standing in line waiting to be interviewed. I felt like "us vs. them"—with me being part of the surveillance apparatus. "The man."

As I first observed the interview process it seemed that there were several distinct stages. The workers enter the Consulate through the side door and go through the metal detector. They then stand in line until they are called to the windows to give their fingerprints, both right and left hand. They then go back to stand in line and wait to be called for "the interview." The Consulate workers emerge from behind the locked door in "H world" and sit behind glass-partitioned windows. My field notes give my first impression of the "the script" for the interview:

Interviewer motions men to step forward from behind a yellow line where they are waiting. (They have been directed several other times by a guard. Often the men start to move into the "wrong" line and then are corrected by the guard). Group moves forward and stands 2 deep in a narrow space between 2 partition walls that stick out about 2 feet from the glass window with a hole in it. All walls are cream colored and the floor is a grey painted cement. Once forward, Tracy asked where they are going to work in the US and their company. Sometimes they know the state, but they may not know the company's name. (She explained later that these questions have to do with the legitimacy of the company. Is the employer legitimate?) They may know a boss' name only. She then asked if it is their first time there (*primera vez?*) Today she said it was unusual because most of the workers were returnees. This

apparently makes the interview process easier. She then calls each man/or woman forward to place their finger (izquierda o derecha—left or right) specified by the consular behind the window. The small tan rectangular box has a red place where one places his finger. One man was given a towel to wipe his finger—might have been wet? The observer behind the glass motioned with gestures and a facial expression for him to rub it vigorously.

I noticed that during the part of the interview when the Consulate workers ask about whether the workers have ever been in the United States illegally or whether they have ever had any trouble with “la migra,” they use a louder voice, and a condescending tone. (The condescending tone I am interpreting may actually have more to do with the heavy American accent and slow pace of speaking I was hearing from several of the Consulate workers whose native language was obviously not Spanish). The questions were usually supplemented with a warning about the consequences of lying. Tracy explained that having had illegal time in the United States will not prevent you from getting a visa, but lying about having had illegal time there will. When I asked Tracy about this portion of the interview the next day, she confirmed that she likes to make sure that other workers waiting in line to be interviewed hear what she is saying. She thinks it is a warning to workers who might think about misrepresenting themselves.

During my interview with Tracy she explained a policy that drives the work of the Consulate workers. When people line up for their interviews at the glass partitioned windows in the Consulate, the interviewers behind the glass are asking questions and looking at documentation and records to make sure that the visa seeker overcomes what is known as “Presumption 214b.” This is the presumption that those seeking temporary work visas intend to stay in the U.S. In my notes from the interview with the Consulate director, strong economic and social ties in Mexico are seen as evidence that a temporary worker will come back to Mexico. As those seeking H2 visas usually do not have strong economic capital, family ties in Mexico help overcome the presumption that workers want to stay in the U.S.²

Young single men who have “weak” ties in Mexico and are seeking an H2 visa are presumed to want to cross and stay. One of the men intending

to work at the catfish pond was denied because he had relatives in Houston and the interviewer felt he had the risk of staying.

The Consular workers have a great deal of discretion in granting temporary visas. It is enough if they “doubt the motive” of the person seeking entry to the U.S. At one point, I asked the director why two women were sent to a row of chairs after their initial window interview. She explained that “Nothing was vibing with me” about their story. They were 28-30, never married, no kids, seeking domestic employment. They didn’t know where they were going in the U.S. so they were denied entry.

Interviewers often use presentation of self including dress and demeanor to determine whether a person is likely to return to Mexico. Tracy says they look for clothes or body presentation not typical of Mexico. When I asked for an example, she said, knuckle tattoos (which might indicate illegal gang ties in U.S.) or “stylin’ Houston Astros or Saints t-shirts” (which might indicate an “Amcit” (American Citizen) wife or relative in Houston or New Orleans sending clothes). These things might signal weak ties in Mexico and strong ties in the U.S. Even speech and body language is used as a way of determining intent to overstay the visa. The director mentioned a man who “walked like an American” and said, “Companeá” without the “Spanish n” indicating that he had lived in the U.S. illegally before.

Overall, the director explained that “women have a harder time” getting H2 visas: If married, they are presumed to want to join their husband in the U.S. She mentioned that it is seen as more “culturally strange” for a woman to be seeking work as they are more likely to stay at home in Mexico. Single women are assumed to be crossing to become “camp followers,” exotic dancers, or prostitutes. Tracy says the Consulate interviewers watch for dressy clothes and heels, signs that these women are not going to do agricultural work.

The Consulate director’s role in the H2 visa process is another part of the bureaucratic middle. She is part of the team that decides who gets “permission to knock at the door.” The glass partition and locked doors inside the consulate physically separate the migrant workers from the consulate workers, signalling a formal, distanced relationship. They become part of the hurdle that must be crossed during a guest workers’ transnational journey to work on the other side.

Tracy and other Consulate directors are responsible to U.S. law. Decisions about who is granted a visa and who is not are guided by specific policies and procedures. These guidelines, such as Presumption 214 B, put the consulate interviewers in the position of scrutinizing the applicants with the assumption that they have something to hide and that they are trying to “beat the system.” Presumption 214B is not gender-neutral. It is based on assumptions about the appropriate gender of workers, so that married men who have family ties in Mexico are more readily seen as likely to return than single men or women. The large number of people seeking H2 visas every day requires that the face-to-face interviews be brief, perfunctory, and impersonal. In addition, the director’s job is assigned on a rotating basis with the express purpose of preventing favoritism between consulate interviewers/directors and certain companies or representatives seeking visas. But it is clear that human beings interpret policies and procedures and they must make sense of these fast-paced interactions using shorthand techniques and subjective interpretations of the situation. Tracy Parker’s description of the ways interviewers are trained to “read” body language and presentation of self as clues to whether workers are telling the truth is indicative of this. We need to know more about how consulate workers make sense of who is a “good worker” through gendered lenses. She also explained that various directors have different philosophies about the H2 visa program. She noted that a former director took a very “hard-line” approach to the interview process and required that workers know the full name of the company owner and the company they were going to work for. If they stumbled on either one, he denied them a visa. Tracy identifies herself as a bit more empathetic with the Mexican workers’ desire to earn a living for their families. She saw herself as facilitating a mutually beneficial labor exchange between countries, as long as the workers met the legal requirements. It would be informative to know whether either of these philosophies is embraced more frequently by men or women or whether certain types of (gendered) workplace cultures foster different approaches to the H2 Visa interviews.

Conclusion

The flow of workers across national borders creates a new transnational existence for many. But most work on transnationalism has focused on the experiences of migrant workers with less attention to the perspectives of those with mid-range power. How does transnationalism look from the “middle?” In this study, we see that the farm manager negotiates national regulations for acquiring labor from another country and ensuring that the workers return on time. He travels to Mexico twice a year to bring back winter and summer crews, each time transporting money, passports, and documents necessary to complete the process. Back on the farm, David deals with the day-to-day reality of managing Spanish-speaking workers, mediating conflicts in their working and living arrangements. At Nation’s Best, he is the key facilitator of global labor flows. The owner and other managers in the company are not bi-lingual. David wonders what would happen if he left. He suggested that if he were in the owner’s position, he would make an effort to learn Spanish so that he would have some way of communicating with his laborers.

The Consulate director and other consulate workers spend their working days making life-altering decisions about which migrant workers will receive an H2 visa and which will not. The role of the Consulate worker is as a gatekeeper. They have the power to determine whether H2 workers really intend to return to Mexico. On days when interviewers talk to more than 1200 people, these kinds of quick judgments make the job exhausting and stressful. But the Director’s job is a temporary one as well. Due to concerns about favoritism, these posts at the Consulate rotate every couple of years. Tracy Parker said that after her stint in H-world, she would move from her current location and be assigned to another division.

Attention to the everyday interactions that sustain transnational labor relations tells us a complex story about gender. It highlights how gender is built into the very structure of these transnational arrangements. The Consulate workers’ job of interpreting whether workers overcome Presumption 214B—the assumption that they really intend to stay long-term in the United States—requires these workers to make assessments about who is a “legitimate worker” based on interview questions about social ties in Mexico and their “reading” of an individual’s presentation of

self. For the H2 A and B visas, married men fit the category of legitimate worker most readily because they are assumed to be the primary breadwinner in Mexican society and suited to do agricultural labor and other heavy labor. Women are assumed to be wives following husbands or single women crossing the border to engage in sex work of some kind. At the level of the H2 visa interview, women are much less likely to be granted a work visa than men.

This article has suggested how the dynamics of transnationalism and gender interface with people's everyday lives in one particular regional U.S. industry. It appears that the two sets of actors I have examined, the farm manager and the Consulate director see benefits in continuing this transnational labor flow. Working as a gatekeeper, the Consulate director sees her job as allowing deserving, hardworking men the opportunity to earn a better living for their families and screening out the "undeserving," for example, those who have spent time illegally in the United States. The farm manager finds the H2 visa workers to be reliable workers. The non-Spanish speaking owners of the company rely heavily on him to communicate with the workers in Spanish, manage their work and housing, and to accomplish all of the paperwork and travel necessary to bring back winter and summer crews. While David does not make the final decision about whether to hire local or Mexican labor, it seems that the company wants him to continue (and increase) his reliance on H2 Visa workers. The migrant workers have worked at the catfish farms for several years in a row which indicates a desire, on their parts, to continue this employment relationship.

As this set of transnational relationships endures, sociologists and other scholars should continue to study how people experience them in their everyday lives and how the processes themselves disrupt and/or maintain systems of inequality. This preliminary glimpse into H-world suggests that a more extensive analysis of the H2 visa process and other guest worker programs from a transnational feminist perspective and gendered organizations perspective is necessary. While we benefit tremendously from theoretical and empirical analyses of the role of transnational capitalist systems (at the most macro level) and the experiences of workers who accommodate and resist these systems (at the most micro level), I believe we need more attention to the organizational practices and processes that

maintain and have the possibility of disrupting inequality in the middle. The process of applying for and receiving H2 visas is a prime example of a practice and set of policies underpinning transnational labor relations that is ripe for further analysis. Attention to the ways that workers are defined as “desirable” or not requires that we attend to the role that gender, race, class, sexuality age, and national origin play in constructing the “good worker” within a transnational space.

Notes

¹See for exceptions a focus on the tree planning industry in Alabama (McDaniel & Casanova, 2003; Casanova & McDaniel, 2005) and North Carolina H2A guest workers (Smith-Nonini, 2005, 2009).

²Tourist visas, on the other hand, are granted by asking about the kind of economic capital the individual has in Mexico. The people in the H2 visa line and those in the tourist visa line are assumed to have very different class backgrounds. The Consulate director suggested that she liked working in “H-world” better than in the tourist line because she didn’t have to deal with the sense of “entitlement” those in the tourist line would convey.

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Contribuciones de la Mujer Gitana a la Ciencia, a las Políticas y a la Mejora Social

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Contributions of Romaní Women to Science, Policies and Social Improvement

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Abstract

The triple exclusion suffered by many Romaní women in Europe (on grounds of gender, ethnicity and, in many cases, low academic level) did not impede that they become today the engine for the transformation to improve their people's life conditions. This article is based on a documental review on the impact of communicative methodology of research on public policies addressed to the Romani people and also on the improvement of their life conditions. Our analysis focuses specially on the role of Romani women throughout the whole process, in which they have been protagonists and end users at the same. Their communities and society as a whole also took benefit of Romani women's contributions.

Keywords: Romaní women, communicative methodology of research, science, social impact.

Contribuciones de la Mujer Gitana a la Ciencia, a las Políticas y a la Mejora Social

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Resumen

La triple exclusión (por razón de género, de origen étnico y por presentar, en la mayoría de los casos, bajo nivel formativo) que sufren muchas mujeres gitanas en toda Europa no ha impedido que se constituyan hoy como un motor de transformación para la mejora de las condiciones de vida de su propio pueblo. Este artículo nace de una revisión documental sobre el impacto de la metodología comunicativa de investigación en las políticas públicas dirigidas al pueblo gitano y también en las mejoras de sus condiciones de vida. El foco del análisis se centra especialmente en el papel de las mujeres gitanas en todo este proceso, del que han sido al mismo tiempo protagonistas y beneficiarias junto a sus comunidades y la sociedad en su conjunto.

Palabras clave: mujer gitana, metodología comunicativa de investigación, ciencia, impacto social

Este artículo recoge una parte del estado de la cuestión de un trabajo de análisis más amplio sobre el impacto que la investigación europea desarrollada de acuerdo con la metodología comunicativa está teniendo en la definición de políticas públicas sobre el pueblo gitano y el impacto que, a su vez, estas políticas están teniendo en las vidas de muchos gitanos y gitanas. En particular, este artículo pretende aportar conocimiento sobre las contribuciones que han hecho las mujeres gitanas a la ciencia y a la sociedad, como sujetos activos de la misma.

Las mujeres gitanas, al igual que todas aquellas que no han respondido al perfil de mujer blanca, occidental y académica, han permanecido tradicionalmente al margen del discurso feminista hasta la aparición del feminismo dialógico (Puigvert, 2001), que por primera vez incluyó las voces de estas otras mujeres. Desde esta perspectiva, todas las mujeres, desde su diferencia, tienen aportaciones a hacer a la promoción de mayor igualdad para ellas mismas, para el conjunto de las mujeres y para el resto de la sociedad. De la misma manera, hasta el desarrollo de investigaciones sobre el pueblo gitano de acuerdo con la metodología comunicativa, las mujeres gitanas también estaban al margen de la creación de conocimiento científico sobre su propio pueblo.

Las aportaciones que aquí se presentan son fruto de la revisión documental de artículos científicos, proyectos de investigación, legislación y planes de gobierno relacionados con el pueblo gitano. El análisis de toda esta literatura se centra en el papel fundamental de la mujer gitana para el avance del conocimiento científico sobre la comunidad gitana, la transferencia de este conocimiento a las políticas públicas y para que este conocimiento y estas políticas tengan un impacto social real, es decir, que sirvan para mejorar las condiciones de vida de las personas gitanas.

En el primer apartado se expondrá a grandes rasgos la situación de la mujer gitana hoy en Europa a partir de los datos extraídos de varios de los informes y estudios europeos más relevantes al respecto. En el segundo, se hace un recorrido por algunas de las principales transformaciones que está generando ya el movimiento asociativo de mujeres gitanas. En el tercero, se presenta un análisis crítico de la investigación que tradicionalmente se ha hecho sobre el pueblo gitano, junto con las reivindicaciones gitanas de investigaciones útiles y de calidad. En el cuarto apartado se introduce la metodología comunicativa crítica y el proyecto WORKALÓ (CREA, 2001-

2004), que supusieron un gran avance respecto a lo anterior. Finalmente, en el quinto apartado se analiza el impacto político y social de WORKALÓ (CREA, 2001-2004), con especial énfasis en el papel de diferentes mujeres gitanas en estos procesos.

Situación de la Mujer Gitana

Las mujeres gitanas sufren una situación de desigualdad que ha sido evidenciada en numerosos estudios e informes (European Roma Rights Center, 2004; European Commission (Directorate General for Employment and Social Affairs), 2004; European Commission, 2011a) y que lleva en muchos casos a la exclusión social. De hecho, algunas autoras como Domínguez, Flecha y Fernández (2004) apuntan a la triple exclusión a la que se ven abocadas muchas mujeres gitanas por razón de género, de origen étnico y por presentar, en la mayoría de los casos, bajo nivel formativo.

Según datos del Banco Mundial, las tasas de empleo de la población gitana, especialmente de las mujeres, están muy por debajo de los de la mayoría no romaní (Ringold, Orenstein, & Wilkens, 2005). En España, un 49% de las mujeres gitanas están desempleadas, un 29% trabajan por cuenta ajena y un 40% está plenamente dedicada al trabajo doméstico (European Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), 2012).

En el informe sobre la situación del pueblo gitano en Europa central y del Este, la comparativa de los datos socioeconómicos obtenidos de una encuesta respondida por 5.034 personas gitanas en Bulgaria, República Checa, Hungría, Rumanía y Eslovaquia revela que el índice de mortalidad de los niños gitanos es entre dos y seis veces superiores a los de la población en general, dependiendo del país. Tal disparidad refleja las desigualdades sanitarias generales entre los gitanos y los demás, que se relaciona con sus malas condiciones de vida, la falta de campañas de información específicas, un acceso limitado a una sanidad de calidad y una mayor exposición a riesgos sanitarios (UNDP, 2002). El informe de la European Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) (2012) destaca que la percepción de las mujeres gitanas de su propio estado de salud es frecuentemente malo o muy malo. El porcentaje en el caso español no es tan alto como en otros países de la Unión, pero aún existe un 47% de las

mujeres gitanas mayores de 50 años que consideran que su estado de salud es malo o muy malo.

Respecto a la educación, el mismo informe revela que un 19% de las mujeres gitanas encuestadas de 16 años o más, no había acudido nunca a la escuela, un 58% de las mujeres del mismo período había abandonado la escuela antes de los 16 años (edad en la que acaba la escolarización obligatoria en varios países). El porcentaje en el caso de España corresponde a un 1% de las mujeres gitanas que nunca han acudido a la escuela y un 63% de las mujeres que abandonaron antes de los 16 años. En el caso de los hombres gitanos de entre 16 y 24 años la encuesta fija en un 0% los que nunca han acudido a la escuela y un 38% los que abandonaron prematuramente (*European Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), 2012*)

La situación de la mujer gitana que se vislumbra tras estos datos fue calificada por el Parlamento europeo ya en 2005 como “inaceptable” en una resolución donde denuncia los niveles extremos de discriminación, discriminación múltiple o compuesta que presentan las mujeres romaníes en Europa (*European Parliament, 2006*). El citado texto reconoce además que las mujeres gitanas constituyen uno de los grupos más amenazados de los estados miembros y que la brecha existente entre el nivel educativo de las mujeres gitanas y el de las no gitanas es inaceptablemente grande. Por ello, instaba a las autoridades públicas a investigar abusos de los derechos humanos, sobre todo los vinculados a la protección de la salud reproductiva y sexual de las mujeres gitanas.

Esta situación se hizo patente también en la *4ª Conferencia Internacional de Mujer Gitana* celebrada en Helsinki en septiembre de 2013. En su informe final se denuncian las diversas y complejas formas de discriminación hacia las niñas y mujeres gitanas en Europa, desde la obstaculización del acceso a la educación hasta la segregación de las niñas romaníes en escuelas especiales para alumnado con discapacidad intelectual. Como resultado de la Conferencia de Helsinki, se elaboró la *Estrategia para el progreso de las mujeres y niñas gitanas (2014-2020)*, que reconoce la tradicional exclusión de las mujeres romaníes en los procesos de toma de decisiones de las leyes, políticas y programas, incluyendo aquellos específicamente diseñados para abordar su propia situación (*Phenjalipe, 2014*).

Asociacionismo Gitano de Mujeres

El movimiento gitano de mujeres está promoviendo importantes transformaciones sociales que nacen del diálogo entre las propias mujeres y cuentan con el apoyo de hombres gitanos y no gitanos que están a favor de una sociedad más igualitaria. Así se recoge esta realidad en las Conclusiones del *I Congreso Internacional de Mujeres Gitanas: Las Otras Mujeres*:

En este congreso se ha insistido en la solidaridad que ha habido y que ha de haber en el futuro. Y también se ha reconocido la solidaridad con la que se ha trabajado hasta el momento actual, tanto de algunas mujeres no gitanas, como de hombres gitanos activistas que han trabajado con las mujeres gitanas para conseguir la igualdad (Drom Kotar Mestipen, 2011, p. 4)

Este congreso, celebrado en Barcelona en octubre de 2010, atrajo a más de quinientas mujeres de diversos países de Europa, la mayoría de ellas “gitanas de base”, sin tradición asociativa, que encontraron espacios de participación y debate en los que nunca antes habían estado presentes. Durante tres días, mujeres de muy diversos perfiles debatieron sobre actuaciones de éxito en los ámbitos de trabajo, educación y feminismo gitano. El evento tuvo una gran repercusión mediática¹ y obtuvo el reconocimiento de los principales organismos europeos. Algunas de las conclusiones más importantes de este congreso giraron en torno a la participación decisoria en las escuelas de sus hijos e hijas, la promoción de encuentros de estudiantes gitanas y el fomento de las políticas de acción afirmativa. En el ámbito de trabajo, concluyeron que era muy importante potenciar las políticas de acreditación de competencias y experiencia previa (políticas APEL), el fomento de las cooperativas y empresas gestionadas por mujeres gitanas y la formación instrumental para todas las mujeres. En el ámbito de feminismo, acordaron caminar en la línea de un feminismo inclusivo, destacando la solidaridad entre las propias mujeres y también, de algunos hombres gitanos que trabajan a la par con ellas (Drom Kotar Mestipen, 2011). Esta posición supera los cuestionamientos que surgen desde algunas voces académicas no gitanas y que atribuyen a los hombres gitanos ciertas reticencias a la participación social de las mujeres:

No puedo evitar el pensar el desasosiego de las asociaciones gitanas masculinas ante la actividad de las asociaciones independientes de mujeres gitanas y su interés solapado en controlarlas (o crearlas) a través de sus hijas o esposas, responde a que no solo compiten con ellos, sino que tienen capacidad para competir mucho más enérgicamente. Y a veces pueden ganar; pero si ganan no sólo les ganan una partida en recursos económicos, sino en recursos culturales relativos al poder masculino a la autonomía femenina (San Román, 2001).

El nacimiento en 1990 de la Asociación de Mujeres Gitanas Romí² de Granada supuso el inicio de un camino al que se sumarían muchas más mujeres en los años posteriores, desde diferentes puntos del estado. Ellas visibilizaron por primera vez a la mujer gitana en los espacios de participación social. Otras entidades de mujeres pudieron recoger el fruto de su trabajo y promover el surgimiento de una red de mujeres gitanas que hoy se extiende por toda Europa. Actualmente existen más de una veintena de asociaciones de mujeres gitanas en el estado español. Entre las que tienen un papel más activo en la reivindicación de los derechos de las mujeres gitanas cabe señalar a la Federación Fakali³, la Federación Kamira⁴, y la Asociación Gitana de mujeres Drom Kotar Mestipen⁵.

Esta última entidad, fruto del diálogo entre mujeres gitanas y no gitanas, está implementando en Cataluña algunas acciones como los *Encuentros de Estudiantes Gitanas* y el *Curso de Monitoras en Tiempo Libre con Especialidad de Comedor*. Los *Encuentros*, que ya cuentan con dieciséis ediciones, reúnen a más de 200 estudiantes gitanas y mujeres de su entorno, en cada edición. Se realizan siempre en sábado por la tarde, en un centro educativo con importante presencia de alumnado gitano. El éxito de participación es muy alto, a pesar de que muchas de las mujeres y niñas que asisten serían consideradas por algunos estudios como personas no preocupadas por la educación. La clave de estos encuentros radica en que todo lo que en ellos ocurre lo deciden entre todas las mujeres, desde aspectos de funcionamiento como el día, la hora y el espacio en el que se realiza, como los temas que se abordarán en los grupos de trabajo y quiénes serán las mujeres invitadas a la mesa de referentes.

El *Curso de Monitoras*, por su parte, es una formación homologada por la Generalitat de Catalunya que está contribuyendo, por un lado, a la inserción laboral de las mujeres gitanas (en ediciones anteriores consiguió una ocupación del 70% en plena crisis económica) y, por otro lado, a la incorporación de referentes gitanos en las escuelas. En este sentido, la figura de la mujer gitana de la comunidad implicada en el comedor escolar y las actividades extraescolares es un elemento muy positivo en la identificación del centro como propio por parte de las familias gitanas. Además, la escuela transmite el mensaje de que la identidad y los códigos culturales gitanos se incluyen en los espacios educativos y contribuyen, así, al proceso de formación de los niños y niñas.

Investigación sobre Pueblo Gitano. Reivindicación Gitana de Investigaciones Útiles y de Calidad

El éxito de participación de estas actividades y el positivo impacto en la vida de las mujeres gitanas y sus comunidades contrasta con el modo en que tradicionalmente se ha hecho investigación sobre el pueblo gitano, que ha sido objeto de estudio en diferentes disciplinas científicas desde hace mucho tiempo. Decimos “objeto de estudio” porque, en la mayoría de ocasiones, se ha utilizado a las personas gitanas sólo para recoger información, que posteriormente era analizada e interpretada por investigadores o investigadoras desde su posición de expertas. Así, las voces gitanas han sido tradicionalmente usadas para la producción de conocimiento sobre el propio pueblo gitano, pero las personas gitanas han quedado al margen de este proceso. No es de extrañar entonces que en la revisión de literatura científica sobre el pueblo gitano encontremos pasajes como el que sigue:

La supervivencia de los individuos del grupo depende de unas pocas actividades legales (...) y de muchas ilegales y parasitarias, como los hurtos, la prostitución y la mendicidad. Esta última se ha convertido en una actividad especializada que incluye el alquiler de niños, exhibidos por sus supuestas madres para ablandar el corazón de los viandantes y pedirles una limosna. ¿Debemos tolerar, e incluso proteger, una cultura de ladrones y pordioseros? Pero ¿qué

otra cosa pueden hacer? (Cavalli Sforza y Cavalli Sforza, 1994, p. 266).

Los mismos autores lanzan, desde su particular visión, la siguiente propuesta para disminuir el absentismo del alumnado gitano:

(...) como en el caso de los gitanos, no causaran tantos problemas a las sociedades en la que quieren vivir, con su comportamiento antisocial. Quizá la única forma de modificar la situación de los gitanos sea inducirles –con estímulos económicos, por ejemplo- a que dejen que sus niños pasen períodos adecuados escolarizados, aunque sólo fueran tres o seis meses al año, creando para tal fin escuelas especiales (Cavalli- Sforza y Cavalli-Sforza, 1994: 266-267).

Estas citas exponen argumentos que parten del etnocentrismo propio del racismo moderno (Flecha y Gómez, 1995), según el cual se considera que hay etnias inferiores a otras. Sin embargo, en la literatura científica aparecen otros argumentos igualmente racistas, pero que se apoyan en el relativismo propio del racismo postmoderno (Flecha y Gómez, 1995). De acuerdo con esta perspectiva, el respeto a las diferencias étnicas y culturales justifica la reproducción de las desigualdades y también de la exclusión social, tal y como se recoge en la siguiente cita:

El analfabetismo de las personas gitanas, lejos de ser un hándicap inevitable, es en muchos aspectos un elemento de libertad (Okely, 1997, p. 78).

En la misma línea, el estudio comparativo entre la comunidad gitana de un municipio de Barcelona y la comunidad Rom de Bogotá lleva a Bereményi (2007) a la siguiente conclusión:

A pesar de las oportunidades dadas en el sistema educativo catalán-español y colombiano, los gitanos/rom, como grupo (y no los individuos) actúan de manera más lenta y conservadora que otros grupos étnicos en ambos contextos (Bereményi, 2007, p. 21).

Ante este tipo de trabajos, la propia comunidad científica alerta sobre la exclusión que generan aquellas investigaciones en las que se obvian las voces de las personas estudiadas y cuyos resultados finales aumentan la exclusión social del grupo investigado (Touraine, Wieviorka, & Flecha, 2004; Munté, Serradell, & Sordé, 2011). Este tipo de investigaciones han sido rechazadas también por el pueblo gitano, por considerar que ofrecen una visión superficial y sesgada, a través de autores y autoras gitanas como Ian Hancock o Romani Rose o de asociaciones como la Unión Romaní, la Fundación Secretariado Gitano o la Asociación Gitana de Mujeres Drom Kotar Mestipen (Macías y Redondo, 2012).

Así, tanto las más altas instancias académicas y científicas como el propio pueblo gitano representado en sus organizaciones civiles coinciden en reivindicar una ciencia socialmente útil, tal y como se hizo patente en la rueda de prensa celebrada en Barcelona el 8 de marzo de 2013 conjuntamente por la Asociación gitana de mujeres Drom Kotar Mestipen, el Centro de Estudios Gitanos de la Universitat de Barcelona y el sociólogo Michael Burawoy, presidente de la Asociación Internacional de Sociología (ISA)⁶. Este evento sirvió para difundir a través de los medios de comunicación su posición y denuncia conjunta sobre el tratamiento del pueblo gitano en los medios de comunicación y en algunas investigaciones llevadas a cabo con esta comunidad. Burawoy incluso calificó como “no sociología” a aquella que se lleva a cabo sin el consentimiento de los grupos a los que los investigadores e investigadoras están estudiando.

Macías y Redondo (2012) destacan la importante contribución que puede hacer la investigación científica en la superación de la exclusión social de grupos y colectivos, como el pueblo gitano o, por el contrario, la incidencia que puede tener para perpetuar su situación de exclusión a lo largo del tiempo. Así, establecen una clara distinción entre “investigaciones para excluir” e “investigaciones para transformar”.

Un argumento tradicionalmente utilizado en las primeras para apartar a los sujetos investigados de la interpretación de la información obtenida y de la creación de conocimiento es que la investigación debe ser neutral. Freire (1970) ya realizó en los años 60 importantes contribuciones que superaban este debate:

El riesgo de la investigación no radica en que los supuestos investigados se descubran investigadores y, de este modo,

“corrompan” los resultados del análisis. El riesgo radica exactamente en lo contrario. En dislocar del centro de la investigación, desde la temática significativa, que es el objeto del análisis, a los hombres considerados objetos de la investigación (Freire, 1970, p. 91)

Recogiendo las citadas reivindicaciones desde la ciencia y la sociedad, el Programa Marco de investigación europea y la propia Comisión Europea se han pronunciado en contra de este enfoque -sobre todo en el caso de grupos vulnerables- (European Commission, 2011b) que excluye las voces de las personas y grupos investigados de los procesos de toma de decisión en las investigaciones.

Este tipo de “investigaciones para excluir”, que resultan ya obsoletas en el contexto científico europeo e internacional han contribuido también a reproducir estereotipos sexistas y machistas vinculados al pueblo gitano, tal y como se refleja en la siguiente cita:

Los niños y niñas payos aceptan con facilidad la autoridad de una mujer, y la escuela logra sin demasiadas dificultades llevarlos a diferenciar entre el papel y su ocupante, o sea, a no hacer depender su actitud respecto de aquél de su reacción afectiva ante éste. Los niños varones gitanos ofrecen obvias resistencias a lo primero (no así las niñas gitanas, claro está), la autoridad de la mujer, y tanto ellos como las niñas gitanas tienen serias dificultades para lo segundo, la objetivación del papel (Fernández Enguita, 1999, p. 127).

La relación directa entre pertenencia a una cultura y sexismo que plantea este autor no está fundamentada en ninguna evidencia empírica sólida aportada ni por el propio autor ni por otras investigaciones previas. Aun así, en espacios de debate público donde acude como “experto”, el mismo autor difunde este prejuicio e incluso advierte al profesorado de que los niños gitanos no respetan la autoridad de las profesoras ni de sus madres⁷.

Sin embargo, investigaciones que sí tienen relevancia dentro de la comunidad científica han evidenciado que la mujer gitana es considerada dentro de su comunidad como un elemento crucial para el desarrollo de su cultura, sus costumbres y para el cambio de las situaciones de exclusión que vive parte de su comunidad (Sordé, 2006).

La autora gitana Romani Rose (1983) alerta sobre las consecuencias que tienen para su pueblo las investigaciones cuyos resultados alejan a los gitanos y a las gitanas de la promoción educativa cuando se afirma que el analfabetismo es inherente a la identidad cultural gitana:

Algunos investigadores tratan de legitimar nuestro analfabetismo forzado declarando que el analfabetismo es parte de nuestra identidad cultural (Rose, 1983, p. 23).

En la misma línea, el lingüista gitano Ian Hancock (1988) alude a la responsabilidad de los investigadores cuando identifican a los “verdaderos gitanos” con aquellos que no han accedido a las mismas oportunidades educativas y sociales que el resto de la sociedad:

Los que conocéis mi trabajo, sabéis que he luchado intensamente contra la actitud de los investigadores payos que estudian a nuestro pueblo y quieren cerrarnos en una -cápsula del tiempo- para que seamos -verdaderos gitanos-, analfabetos, nómadas y primitivos, como quería Himmler. Estas personas piensan que somos incapaces de unirnos y de tener una conciencia política, y escoger a nuestros líderes (Hancock, 1988, p. 14).

En la revisión de la literatura científica hallamos también diversos ejemplos de “investigaciones para transformar”, según la distinción de Macías y Redondo (2012), que tienen como objetivo mejorar la inclusión social del pueblo gitano. Así, encontramos trabajos como *The education of gypsy childhood in Europe* (Giménez, 2000-2003), el estudio *Evaluación de la normalización educativa de las alumnas y los alumnos gitanos en la etapa de Educación Primaria* de la (Fundación Secretariado General Gitano, 2010) y el trabajo sobre las *Trayectorias de éxito escolar de gitanos y gitanas en España* (Abajo y Carrasco, 2004). Cabe señalar también la investigación de Laparra (2011), que analiza la situación de la comunidad gitana en España en los ámbitos de salud, vivienda, empleo y educación a partir de los datos de la primera encuesta sociológica a hogares de la población gitana (CIS, 2006).

Estos estudios responden a la demanda de resultados útiles que el pueblo gitano hace a las investigaciones que se realizan sobre él (Gómez y Vargas,

2003). En este sentido, el consejo asesor del Centro de Estudios Gitanos (CEG) de la Universitat de Barcelona, integrado por representantes de las principales organizaciones gitanas de Cataluña y gitanos y gitanas de diferentes ámbitos aprobó en una de sus reuniones el *Código de conducta del investigador/a que estudia el pueblo gitano* (Centro de Estudios Gitanos (CEG), 2010), elaborado a partir de las recomendaciones de la *Carta europea del investigador. Código de conducta para la contratación de investigadores* (European Commission. Directorate-General for Research, 2005). Este documento, dirigido a personas evaluadoras de proyectos, a los y las investigadoras y a la sociedad civil en su conjunto, plantea una serie de principios éticos que deberían cumplirse en la definición e implementación de proyectos de investigación: (1) utilidad y compromiso social, (2) integridad, (3) responsabilidad científica y profesional, (4) difusión y explotación de resultados, (5) diálogo y rendición de cuentas, (6) equipos de investigación multiculturales y acción afirmativa, (7) no discriminación, (8) no reproducción de estereotipos y prejuicios racistas, (9) objetivo de la investigación (que debe partir de las necesidades sociales de la comunidad y ser acordado previamente), (10) existencia de un Consejo Asesor, (11) confidencialidad y (12) consentimiento (es decir, debe contarse con el consentimiento informado de las personas investigadas).

Este *Código de Conducta* se alinea con las orientaciones de la Comisión Europea y el Consejo de Europa, que instan a que se garantice la participación activa e informada de representantes de la cultura gitana en las investigaciones e intervenciones cuyos resultados les afectan (Council of the European Union, 2011; European Commission, 2011a; European Commission, 2011b). En este sentido, la Dirección General para el Empleo, Asuntos Sociales e Igualdad de Oportunidades de la Comisión Europea (2010) publicó un informe cuyo objetivo era la mejora de las herramientas para la inclusión social y la no discriminación del pueblo gitano en Europa. Para realizarlo analizaron las diferentes políticas llevadas a cabo en el continente europeo. De acuerdo con las conclusiones del documento, uno de los elementos clave para generar las mejores condiciones para la implementación de políticas de éxito (*Successful Policy Conditions*) es la participación gitana:

The inadequacy of Roma participation in public affairs underscores problems in the democratic process, historic discrimination in

education and employment and recruitment procedures. Effective participation of Roma in public affairs in general as well as in the design and implementation of policies on Roma inclusion, is a core principle, acknowledged by the EU and the Member States. (European Commission (Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities), 2010, p. 5)

WORKALÓ y la Metodología Comunicativa de Investigación: Mujeres Gitanas Contribuyendo a la Ciencia

El proyecto *WORKALÓ*, *The creation of new occupational patterns for cultural minorities. The gypsy case* (CREA, 2001-2004) surgió de la necesidad de analizar las razones por las que la inserción laboral del pueblo gitano está por debajo de la media europea. Perteneciente al V Programa Marco de Investigación de la Comisión Europea, fue la primera investigación de tal envergadura dedicada a analizar la situación de la población gitana en Europa.

WORKALÓ fue coordinado por CREA (Community of Researchers on Excellence for All) y contó con un equipo interdisciplinar, cuyos integrantes provenían de diversas áreas de conocimiento, como la antropología, la sociología, las ciencias políticas, la educación, la economía y la sociología. CREA había coordinado previamente otros proyectos de investigación sobre la comunidad gitana que fueron definiendo una nueva manera de desarrollar la investigación y una sólida metodología investigadora con esta población, como *Brudilla Callí: las mujeres gitanas contra la exclusión. Superación del absentismo y fracaso escolar de las niñas y adolescentes gitanas* (CREA, 2000-2003) o *Callí Butipen: mujer gitana y mercado laboral* (CREA, 2003-2004). En ambos casos las mujeres gitanas tuvieron un importante papel en todo el proceso de investigación, tanto en el diseño y el trabajo de campo como en la interpretación de los resultados.

La metodología comunicativa de investigación con que se desarrolló WORKALÓ (CREA, 2001-2004) supuso y promovió un gran cambio en la manera de llevar a cabo la investigación científica en las ciencias sociales en general y con el pueblo gitano en particular. La revista *Qualitative Inquiry* (la primera sobre investigación cualitativa indexada en *Journal Citation Report*) dedicó en 2011 un monográfico a la metodología

comunicativa. En uno de sus artículos, *From Research to Policy: Roma Participation Through Communicative Organization* (Munté, Serradell, & Sordé, 2011), se aborda de manera específica la investigación comunicativa con el pueblo gitano. De acuerdo con esta metodología, los investigadores e investigadoras ponen el conocimiento científico al servicio del diálogo con las personas participantes en la investigación y éstas, por su parte, como miembros de la comunidad, aportan el conocimiento que tienen en primera persona sobre la situación que se pretende analizar. Todas las personas participantes realizan sus contribuciones acerca de las barreras o causas que generan la situación social que se desea transformar (componentes exclusores) y sobre las posibles vías de mejora de la situación estudiada (componentes transformadores). Es a través de ese diálogo intersubjetivo como se construye el conocimiento científico.

La metodología comunicativa responde así al giro dialógico de las sociedades (Gómez, Racionero y Sordé, 2010), según el cual el diálogo va progresivamente ocupando más espacios que antes eran patrimonio de las autoridades tradicionales. En este caso, la tradicional autoridad intelectual de las personas académicas es sustituida por el diálogo igualitario con las personas participantes en virtud de la capacidad de argumentación y comunicación que tienen todos los sujetos, en un proceso que Beck denominó *desmonopolización del conocimiento experto* (Beck, Giddens y Lash, 1994) y que insta a abandonar la idea de que las administraciones o las personas expertas conocen mejor que los demás lo que es mejor para todos y todas. La transferencia de este giro dialógico al ámbito de la investigación social conduce a *investigar con*, en lugar de *investigar a* (Flecha y Gómez, 2004), de manera que se supera así el *desnivel metodológicamente relevante* (Habermas, 1987), en el que el sujeto investigado está en una posición de desventaja respecto a la persona que interpreta su realidad. El diálogo intersubjetivo a partir de argumentos de validez supera las tradicionales limitaciones de la investigación científica, tal y como ilustra el siguiente ejemplo.

En marzo de 2004, en el marco de WORKALÓ (CREA, 2001-2004), se llevó a cabo el seminario *Voces de las minorías culturales en la investigación científica* en la École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) en París, concretamente, en el CADIS, un importante centro de investigación en el ámbito de las migraciones que fue fundado por Alain

Touraine y, que en aquel momento, estaba dirigido por Michel Wieviorka. Ambos autores participaron en el seminario como ponentes, junto a Ramón Flecha, investigador principal de WORKALÓ (CREA, 2001-2004), y Julio Vargas, investigador gitano del proyecto. Wieviorka introdujo en su ponencia el concepto de “identidades culturales mixtas” y utilizó para ilustrarlo el siguiente ejemplo: *“como resultado de la migración árabe en Francia, las identidades mixtas están emergiendo: hay personas 50% argelinas y 50% francesas”*. Una joven mujer gitana que asistía al seminario tomó la palabra y dijo: *“yo no soy 50% francesa y 50% gitana. Yo soy 100% francesa y también, 100% gitana. Tengo los mismos derechos y obligaciones que cualquier otra persona francesa, y también soy 100% gitana”*. Se estableció un diálogo entre el autor y la joven, y éste afirmó que revisaría su concepto de “identidades culturales mixtas”.

La combinación dialógica de las contribuciones de todas las personas implicadas en la investigación está permitiendo superar líneas de investigación de base excluyente que, a pesar de llevar décadas de estudio, no han devuelto a la sociedad elementos relevantes que le permitan avanzar hacia una mayor igualdad. No afirmamos aquí que la orientación comunicativa de la investigación puede eliminar el sesgo en su totalidad, pero sí nos permite avanzar hacia una investigación de mayor calidad porque somete todas las afirmaciones a un proceso de argumentación y garantiza una conexión permanente entre la ciencia y la realidad que está estudiando.

En esta misma línea metodológica, Denzin y Giardina (2007) recomiendan la configuración de equipos de investigación diversos en pro de una mayor calidad de la investigación. WORKALÓ (CREA, 2001-2004) fue llevado a cabo por un equipo de investigación compuesto por personas gitanas y no gitanas. Al mismo tiempo, se constituyó un Consejo Asesor, uno de los elementos clave de esta metodología. Dicho consejo estaba integrado por personas gitanas de perfil muy diverso en cuanto género, situación social, nivel formativo, edad, entre otras características. El contenido y la metodología de trabajo en el proyecto fueron validados por este consejo, que velaba por respetar los criterios éticos en todo el proceso y porque la investigación tuviera utilidad para el grupo investigado, una vez concluido el trabajo.

Para que el Consejo Asesor tenga validez es de vital importancia que la configuración del mismo responda a la realidad investigada. No basta con incluir un Consejo Asesor en el proyecto de investigación, ha de ser el consejo más ideal posible (Munté, Serradell y Sordé, 2011). Por ejemplo, si estamos analizando la participación de las familias gitanas en las escuelas, es muy importante que estén representadas las familias (*end users*) y no poner, en su lugar, profesorado o trabajadores gitanos del barrio (mediadores), etc. Deben ser los propios sujetos los que realicen sus aportaciones a la investigación. Ninguna otra figura puede representar ni sustituir su testimonio y su conocimiento, por muy estrecha que sea la relación profesional o personal que les una.

Las mismas personas que participan en el diálogo, tendrán un importante papel de revisión de las interpretaciones que se realizan, posteriormente, en los informes de resultados de la investigación. Los informes de resultados deberán ser validados por las personas que constituyen el Consejo antes de ser publicados o enviados a organismos oficiales.

Impacto Político y Social de Workaló: El Papel de las Mujeres Gitanas en la Definición de Políticas Públicas y Mejoras Sociales

Aiello y Joanpere (2014) exponen, a partir de las contribuciones de Flecha (2014), cuatro parámetros para medir el grado de implicación de un investigador o investigadora en un proyecto y las mejoras sociales que éste genera: *difusión*, *transferencia*, *impacto* y *creación social*. En primer lugar, la *difusión* se refiere a dar a conocer los resultados de las investigaciones científicas, lo cual no implica que sus resultados se hayan implementado. Si, por el contrario, estos resultados se implementan, por ejemplo, como base de políticas o intervenciones sociales, se puede hablar de *transferencia*. Sin embargo, transferir los resultados de la investigación científica a la realidad social no implica necesariamente mejorarla, a veces incluso puede empeorarla. Así, el concepto de *impacto social* se aplica sólo en aquellos casos en que la aplicación de los resultados de la investigación en una realidad social consigue una mejora social, es decir, cuando se contribuye a alcanzar a alguno de los objetivos sociales. Por ejemplo, en nuestro contexto europeo, disminuir la tasa de paro por debajo de los 20 millones o el abandono escolar a menos del 10%. El concepto de *creación*

social va todavía un paso más allá, pues se refiere a realidades sociales que tienen impacto social (es decir, generan mejoras en el entorno donde se implementan) y en cuya creación el científico o científica social además ha colaborado.

La organización comunicativa del proyecto WORKALÓ (CREA, 2001-2004) no sólo garantizaba la aprobación por parte de la comunidad gitana, sino que hizo posible no sólo que el proyecto tuviera difusión, como la mayoría de las investigaciones, sino también transferencia a las políticas e impacto social. Así, una de sus principales recomendaciones (que el pueblo gitano fuera reconocido como tal por las administraciones públicas) fue aprobada por unanimidad, tanto por el parlamento europeo (European Parliament, 2005) como por el parlamento español (Congreso de los Diputados, 2005).

El 29 de septiembre de 2004 se celebró la conferencia final del proyecto WORKALÓ (CREA, 2001-2004) en la sede del parlamento europeo en Bruselas. La conferencia final fue un reflejo de la metodología que había llevado a cabo el consorcio del proyecto durante los cuatro años de trabajo. En la presentación de los resultados se contó con la participación de investigadores/as y con miembros de la sociedad civil gitana. Expusieron, conjuntamente, los principales hallazgos de la investigación a todas las personas asistentes, entre los que se encontraban eurodiputados/as, comisionados y miembros de la comunidad científica.

En la sala se encontraba Livia Jaroka, eurodiputada gitana, que en los días posteriores presentó una propuesta de resolución para el reconocimiento del pueblo gitano en Europa que culminó, en abril del siguiente año, en la *Resolution of the situation of the Romani People in the European Union* (2005), por la que el parlamento europeo reconocía al pueblo gitano como una minoría en Europa.

Durante la misma sesión, una abuela gitana, miembro del movimiento asociativo de mujeres gitanas en Cataluña, explicó al eurodiputado Josep Andreu algunos resultados del proyecto y dialogaron un largo rato sobre la situación del pueblo gitano. El 27 de septiembre de 2005 el grupo parlamentario al que pertenecía Josep Andreu presentó una *Proposición no de ley relativa al reconocimiento de los derechos del pueblo gitano* (Congreso de los Diputados, 2005) en el parlamento español. Esta era la

primera vez que se abordaba el reconocimiento del pueblo gitano en Las Cortes españolas.

En el mismo momento, el gobierno catalán estaba definiendo su *I Plan Integral del Pueblo Gitano de Cataluña* (2005-2008) (Departament de Benestar i Família, 2006). En este caso el impacto político de los resultados del proyecto WORKALÓ (CREA, 2001-2004) se materializó en diferentes elementos de la configuración de dicho plan, como la participación decisoria de la comunidad gitana, la configuración de equipos multiculturales de trabajo, la definición de las políticas a partir de evidencias científicas, el trabajo orientado a resultados en vez de a procesos o las altas expectativas de mejora (buscando la equiparación de la población gitana con la sociedad de la cual forman parte). Las posteriores ediciones del plan han mantenido estas orientaciones, tal y como se refleja en estas palabras de la consejera de Bienestar Social y Familia en la presentación institucional del *III Plan Integral del Pueblo Gitano de Cataluña*:

La implicación y participación decisiva del pueblo gitano en el diseño, implementación y evaluación de las políticas que les afectan es imprescindible en nuestra estructura y en nuestro funcionamiento. El diálogo permanente y en condiciones de igualdad es un principio ético y metodológico fundamental para este Plan y para el conjunto de las acciones que realizamos, desde nuestro departamento, con la población gitana (Departament de Benestar Social i Família, 2014, p.5).

La implementación de este *Plan Integral* permite también evidenciar no sólo la transferencia de los resultados de WORKALÓ (CREA, 2001-2004) a la política (impacto político), sino también su impacto social. Puesto que nos vamos a centrar aquí exclusivamente en el impacto social obtenido gracias a las medidas de acción afirmativa implementadas en las universidades catalanas y el importante papel que, de nuevo, una mujer gitana ha tenido y tiene en este proceso.

Se trata de una joven licenciada en derecho, asistente editorial de la revista *International Sociology*⁸ y profesora asociada en una universidad catalana. Además, desarrolla una importante labor investigadora en proyectos europeos vinculados a la inclusión y promoción de su pueblo. Por su labor profesional e investigadora, asiste a congresos especializados por

toda Europa a presentar sus comunicaciones. Pertenece a una familia trabajadora en la que no hay ni un solo miembro con estudios universitarios, por lo que su éxito académico es motivo de gran orgullo en su comunidad. Por todo ello, su perfil fue clave para acceder al puesto de profesora de inglés del grupo de acceso a mayores de 25 años del Plan Integral, ya que es un importantísimo referente en Cataluña para los chicos y, sobre todo, para las chicas gitanas.

Igualmente, la voz de esta joven académica gitana fue determinante en el *Grupo de acción afirmativa y acceso a la universidad para estudiantes gitanos y gitanas* constituido por el *Plan Integral*, que, entre otras medidas, está desarrollando un programa de becas para las y los estudiantes universitarios gitanos. Esta medida, junto con la continuidad de la formación para el acceso a la Universidad para mayores de 25 años que el Plan Integral ya lleva desarrollando desde hace cuatro años, ha permitido que en este curso 2015-2016 haya ya ocho nuevos estudiantes gitanos y gitanas en las universidades catalanas. La mejora que este hecho aporta a sus vidas, a la de sus familias y al conjunto de la comunidad es una realidad constatada en el trabajo de investigación a través de diversos testimonios en primera persona.

Conclusiones

Las aportaciones de las mujeres gitanas al conocimiento científico y a la sociedad en su conjunto han sido históricamente silenciadas. La revisión de la literatura científica y el análisis documental nos permite constatar la exclusión de sus voces en lo referente a los estudios gitanos. La nueva investigación europea sobre el pueblo gitano, con la metodología comunicativa como elemento clave, recoge las aportaciones de las mujeres gitanas al avance de la investigación científica sobre la superación de la desigualdad del pueblo gitano en Europa. La metodología comunicativa pone al servicio del diálogo el conocimiento acumulado por la comunidad científica y, al mismo tiempo, las aportaciones del conocimiento adquirido a través de la experiencia de los sujetos investigados. Su contribución supone una mejora de la calidad y excelencia de las investigaciones y, por ende, un mayor impacto social de las mismas, como ilustra el caso de una joven gitana académica que, siendo la primera universitaria de su extensa

familia, está incidiendo de manera muy relevante en la creación e implementación de nuevas políticas públicas en Cataluña dirigidas a su pueblo.

El trabajo aporta elementos para nuevas vías de investigación y nuevos retos en el ámbito de la investigación social europea, y de los estudios gitanos, en particular. ¿Cómo generar mecanismos que garanticen que las aportaciones de las mujeres gitanas sean escuchadas en los procesos de participación y decisión en los que se definan políticas que les afectan?, ¿cómo transferir la metodología comunicativa de investigación implementada en WORKALÓ (CREA, 2001-2004) a otros contextos y otros colectivos que también han sido excluidos en la investigación tradicional? El reto está en seguir avanzando conjuntamente hacia una mejor y más excelente investigación social europea. Los gitanos y las gitanas ya conocen esta nueva línea de investigación y reivindican su continuidad a lo largo del tiempo.

Notas

¹Para más información, consultar: http://dromkotar.org/es/?page_id=80.

²Para más información, consultar

<http://mujeresgitanasromi.blogspot.com.es/search/label/asociacion>

³Para más información, consultar <http://www.fakali.org/fakali>

⁴Para más información, consultar <http://www.federacionkamira.org.es/>

⁵Para más información, consultar <http://dromkotar.org/es/>

⁶Puede consultarse la rueda de prensa en el siguiente enlace <https://vimeo.com/62497329>

⁷Veáse el vídeo de la charla de Fernández Enguita desde el punto 1:22:54:

<https://elblogdejuanjo.wordpress.com/2009/05/29/carta/>

⁸Para más información, véase: <http://iss.sagepub.com/>

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El nuevo ideal del amor en adolescentes digitales. El control obsesivo dentro y fuera del mundo digital.

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Review

Rodríguez, N. (2015). *El nuevo ideal del amor en adolescentes digitales. El control obsesivo dentro y fuera del mundo digital*. Bilbao: Desclée De Brouwer. ISBN: 9788433027740.

En el libro recientemente publicado *El nuevo ideal del amor en adolescentes digitales. El control obsesivo dentro y fuera del mundo digital*, su autora, Nora Rodríguez, intenta ofrecer una perspectiva global acerca de las relaciones afectivo-sexuales que se establecen entre chicos y chicas adolescentes en la actualidad, focalizándolas en las interacciones a través del ciberespacio.

La autora postula el enamoramiento como un acto de consumo más dentro de la sociedad del siglo XXI, donde el cuerpo de la mujer es cosificado. Expone como la construcción social del amor en los últimos años está caracterizada por el sufrimiento y la indiferencia, percibidos ambos como elementos de excitación llevando a las chicas a un papel pasivo en las relaciones. Esta situación contribuye a que tanto chicos como chicas, se sientan héroes y heroínas ante historias de amor consideradas difíciles, y a definir la relación de noviazgo y compromiso a partir de los celos. Puntualiza que los efectos del maltrato pueden persistir más allá del período de la adolescencia, alcanzando la vida adulta.

Por otro lado, explica como los chicos malos parecen más divertidos, interesantes y excitantes y presenta un perfil de chico deseado caracterizado por ser consumista y caprichoso, inalcanzable, ejercer poder emocional, presentar falta de empatía, ser seguros y capaces de dar un estatus a la chica con la que esté, y tener un buen físico. De otro lado, comenta como las chicas ejercen el poder a través de su sexualidad.

De las relaciones afectivo-sexuales actuales destaca el hecho de que chicos y chicas adolescentes utilicen el número de whatsapp recibidos y la inmediatez con que lo reciben como medidas de pasión e interés definiendo, a partir de las mismas, si se trata de un amor verdadero o de un pasatiempo. Además, destaca como la afectividad en esta situación queda relegada, entendiéndose las emociones de un modo diferente al que se había hecho hasta ahora, promoviendo estados amorosos que oscilan con rapidez.

Atribuye la casuística de la violencia de género por un lado al medio social, que presenta las relaciones como mercancía, y por otro a diversas disfunciones en la familia de origen, como los vínculos débiles entre ella, dificultades de apego o los modelos que los padres representan para los chicos y las madres para las chicas. En concreto, en el caso de las chicas, destaca como situaciones anteriores tales como haber sido víctimas anteriormente, testigo de situaciones violentas en la familia o la justificación de la violencia como derecho de los chicos hace que permanezcan este tipo de relaciones.

En determinados apartados del libro, la autora se centra en la descripción de sintomatologías psicológicas explicando, por ejemplo, como la presencia de síntomas depresivos relacionados con la percepción del propio cuerpo y la baja autoestima puede ser un foco de riesgo de relaciones de amistades y pareja abusivas. Por otro lado, relaciona las conductas machistas y el trastorno disocial.

A lo largo del libro se van presentando fragmentos de entrevistas realizadas a chicas jóvenes que ejemplifican las explicaciones. Se ofrece, entre otras, listas de señales que demuestran que una chica está en situación de riesgo, las creencias que sostienen el machismo entre chicos y chicas adolescentes o las manipulaciones más comunes hoy en día. Señala además como tema pendiente de estudio el por qué las chicas aceptan ser cosificadas por sus parejas.

Un elemento característico de todo el libro es la apelación a la necesidad de la implicación de familias, escuela y entidades dedicadas a la infancia, en la educación, que suponga un cambio pedagógico redirigido a la reflexión, la aceptación del propio cuerpo, que mejore la comprensión de las causas de las relaciones violentas y que ayude a construir un amor

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inteligente. Además, puntualiza como desafío prioritario la educación afectiva, proponiendo estrategias de cómo realizarla.

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