GENDER AND MIGRATION IN U.S. PLANNING:

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GENDER AND MIGRATION

Increasing attention to the topic is due in part to the growing percent of women relative to men migrating across state, regional, and national borders.

Photo Credit: http://www.migrationinformation.org/usfocus/display.cfm?ID=931
GENDER AND MIGRATION

Yet, since the 1960s,
the number of foreign-born females of all ages
recorded as living in the United States
(having entered at any time)
has been equal to or slightly greater than
the number of foreign-born males of all ages.*

http://www.migrationinformation.org/datahub/charts/final.malesfemales.shtml

Photo credit: Jane Henrici, 2000
GENDER AND MIGRATION

Research finds that both women and men who choose to migrate might do so in order to:

1. further their education,
2. find work to support themselves and their families—wherever they are and however they’re related,
3. escape political turmoil,
4. achieve greater social and political independence, and
5. leave a situation of gendered restrictions or of domestic violence

For some women and men, migration is involuntary—through displacement or trafficking.
GENDER AND MIGRATION

- For women who choose to migrate, not all do so to follow men or to have babies in a new home.
- Despite stereotypes, not all immigrant women are mothers.
- However, many women are mothers, and relative to immigrant men disproportionately are the primary caregivers for their family’s children and elderly.
GENDER AND MIGRATION

- Women report experiences with migration of discrimination, harassment, and violence.
- Men too, and report their experiences include feeling pressures and inabilities to protect women.
GENDER AND MIGRATION

- Women reportedly are more likely than men to experience domestic and workplace gender-based or sexual harassment and violence in their new communities and sites.
- Research suggests that men are more likely to be deported than women, because of women’s presumed (even where not actual) relatively greater caregiving role.
GENDER, KEY POINTS FOR PLANNERS

- “Gender” as a concept should be explicitly defined and used throughout all stages of planning
- Gender refers to societal expectations regarding opportunities, levels of power, and behaviors, or roles, associated with those of different sexes
GENDER, KEY POINTS FOR PLANNERS

- Specific forms of gender are socially-defined; that is, each society has its own definitions of what constitutes the feminine and the masculine.

- Therefore, gender varies – among societies, generations, and even neighborhoods – and, like any part of culture, might change among individuals and their communities over time.

- Recently, “gender” and “sex” have become conflated in use so that gender categories can include, besides feminine and masculine, women/female and men/male, and “other.”
GENDER, KEY POINTS FOR PLANNERS

- Just as people ≠ men, gender ≠ women
- Gender is a useful concept only as long as it can be used to compare the respective opportunities, levels of power, and roles of men with those of women, or among different groups of women and men by race and other characteristics
Gender—including among immigrants—*intersects* with other features of identity and possible discrimination, notably:

1. Generation and age;
2. Race or ethnic group and ancestry;
3. National origin and citizenship;
4. Health or mobility and disability status; and
5. Socio-economic class and income level
LOW-INCOME AND LOW ASSET GENDER AND MIGRATION

One gender and sex stereotype concerns low-income foreign-born women as mothers who take advantage of U.S. social benefits;

however, even where eligible, and despite safety concerns, many migrants and immigrants have under-used publicly available supports, services, and sites

although this has been changing among native-born children of immigrants in recent years;

at the same time, diverse community members often have conflicting views about what is “fair” or “just” use.
LOW-INCOME AND LOW ASSET GENDER AND MIGRATION

- Segregation has risen during the last two decades for immigrant communities in the United States.
- Recent research on the topic shows that: Integration levels vary: by gender, race, national origin, income & wealth level, and occupation, even when controlling for ESOL and other skills.
- And, integration levels vary: by rates of affordable housing stock and by levels of public transit.
LOW-INCOME AND LOW ASSET GENDER AND MIGRATION

Not all poorer immigrant women are *residentially* segregated, yet they might be segregated otherwise. In addition, poorer women tend to stay longer in place once migrated/displaced than men:

- one theory says the key factor to these conditions is that the domestic and care work in which many immigrant women are employed is relatively more regular than construction;
- other research suggests a key factor could be, along with discrimination, relatively less mobility (economic, social, and transportation) among foreign-born women.
LOW-INCOME AND LOW ASSET GENDER AND MIGRATION

IWPR’s research found that, even when employed and paid for their labor, foreign-born women:
- typically experience lower wages, higher poverty rates,
- and greater health and safety risks relative to U.S.-born women and to U.S.-born men—and to their male foreign-born counterparts.
Related to low pay are low skills:

- Recent research shows that foreign-born adults in the United States on average have lower skill preparation than native-born adults; *current forms of integration do not change this*

- Both foreign- and native-born adults need skill development and fare poorly in comparison with those of other nations; the United States shows "below average performance and large social disparities" (p. 30)

- At the same time, sex discrimination continues: gender gaps in employment and wages do not correspond to narrowing skill gaps
RECOMMENDED PLANNING ESPECIALLY FOR LOW-INCOME FOREIGN-BORN WOMEN

Provide a combination of accessible, affordable, reliable, and safe:

- English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classroom sites and/or high-speed internet access for online instruction
- Workers centers for women as well as men (for sharing information and waiting for day labor employers)
- Bilingual child care centers located along or in transportation hubs
- Housing and transportation
- Educational and job training facilities that partner with employers
- Relevant and bilingual communication strategies for announcing information about immigrant, worker, and women’s rights
- Methods for women’s civic engagement and participation—for example, in planning for neighborhood development
RECOMMENDED PLANNING ESPECIALLY FOR LOW-INCOME FOREIGN-BORN WOMEN

Provide affordable and accessible high-speed internet access for:

- Digital record-keeping that can allow signatures and certificates from employers, trainers, and supervisors in order to track labor hours for pay and (future) citizenship

- Educational and career information and development including, but not limited to, ESOL
RECOMMENDED PLANNING ESPECIALLY FOR LOW-INCOME FOREIGN-BORN WOMEN

✓ Provide facilities, technologies, and access to improve immigrant women’s health in preventative and curative, as well as emergency (even disaster), conditions
RECOMMENDED PLANNING FOR LOW-INCOME FOREIGN-BORN MEN, WOMEN, AND CHILDREN

- EVALUATE existing design, to improve connection between planning and training, education, health, and labor among different populations
- USE an in-depth focus on long-term experiences and conditions among diverse migrant and immigrant women and men, boys and girls—including their descriptions of their experiences
- AVOID stereotypes and assumptions
Thank you

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