Introduction

REASSERTING THE CENTRALITY OF WOMEN IN DIASPORAS

Haci Akman

Since the early 1990s, significant developments have affected how gender and migration are conceptualized. A reading of works from that period, such as those by Anthias (1992), Buijs (1993), Indra (1999) and Anthias and Lazardis (2000), among others, suggests that gender continued to occupy a peripheral position in analytical and theoretical discussions, despite its pervasiveness in the processes of conflict, forced migration and subsequent settlement in the diaspora. The 2000s saw a marked increase in the attention paid to the connection between gender and migration, although as Palmary et al. (2010) argue, the nature of the 'and' in 'gender and migration' is rarely interrogated.

This book aims to examine the very nature of these interactions and their effects on studies of gender and diaspora, which together offer suitable territory for a fruitful exploration of frequently overlooked mechanisms. The authors in this anthology draw connections between gender and migration by reflecting on *how* gender becomes a preoccupation in thinking about migration. Some of the links they find lie in the absences, silences and exclusions in understandings of gender in knowledge production about migration.

The book purposes to revisit the concept of diaspora through the experiences of women living in Norway, Sweden and Denmark. Some aspects of these texts are particular to their Scandinavian setting, but the relevance of the themes they raise extends far beyond this geographical region. Consequently, the authors often invoke studies on gender and migration in other regions by way of comparison. The primary focus on women recognizes that migration impacts men and women differently, and that as actors, women and men typically respond differently to the changes generated by migration and to experiences of inclusion and exclusion. As diaspora communities are often considered homogeneous or gender-neutral, we emphasize the importance of a gendered analysis of the migration process, of integration and welfare policies and prac-

tices, and of home-host relations as well as ways the migrants themselves are gendered and characterized by various subject positions that affect their everyday experiences and their access to political, economic and cultural forms of citizenship.

This emphasis on women's experiences relative to men's is not intended to invalidate men's migratory experiences but rather to give women more visibility, particularly in Scandinavia, where women have historically migrated as dependents of men, as is the case throughout the global North. It is also fitting to focus on women because family reunification laws in Scandinavia are still premised on the notion of a male sponsor/breadwinner. Women's different positionalities can provide insights into the structures and forces that operate to reproduce economic disparities and institutional injustices for some migrants but not for others.

The general scope of the book extends to the experiences of migrants (including refugees, asylum seekers, exiles and labour migrants) in three Scandinavian countries who view themselves as members of national, ethnic, linguistic, cultural and political communities living outside their habitual 'home'. With varying emphases, the articles address the processes that produce diasporas as well as structures that work to impede their formation. Another theme is the role that 'home' and 'host' play in understandings of citizenship, interactions across and within communities, identity formations, the sense of belonging or alienation, and emerging new power relations.

The title of the book, *Negotiating Identity in Scandinavia,* reflects an observation that concurs with Bhatia and Ram's (2001) argument that throughout the process of migration, migrants constantly negotiate between here and there, past and present, homeland and country of settlement, the self and the other. These negotiations may be in response to affirmations or contradictions that individuals or communities might encounter about who they are, where they belong, which religious and cultural values they hold and how they 'fit into' the host society. This book contends that migrants reaffirm identities that may have been distorted by adopting different strategies with ambivalent outcomes, including acts of resistance. As its articles illustrate, trying to make sense of what to take from one's culture and what to leave behind, and what to take from the dominant culture and other subcultures and what to leave out, can be a particularly challenging everyday task.[1]

Most research within the field of migration studies is based on the experiences of male immigrants. However, many investigations have documented differences between women's and men's experiences of migration to highlight and theorize women's experiences (Wright 1995; Alicea 1997; Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997; Jones-Correa 1998;

Sassen-Koob 1984; Sassen 1996; Pessar 1995; Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc 1995; Alinia 2004; Eliassi 2010).

These studies focus mainly on family situations and responsibilities; women's role in the creation, development and maintenance of transnational communities and transnational family and kinship networks; and the ways migration to a highly industrialized society affects gender (Alicea 1997; Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997; Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc 1995; Pessar 1995; Darvishpour 2002). Others explore women's sense of belonging in the community and their political participation (Jones-Correa 1998; Alinia 2004), or attend to the impact of the restructured global economy and global relations between capital and labour in terms of women's migration (Sassen-Koob 1984; Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc 1995). Sassen-Koob describes the global processes of economic restructuring as 'one element in the current phase of Third World women's domestic and international migration' (1984: 1161–62).

The 'feminization of the job supply'– that is, the household's becoming a global market for women's labour – and the increase in female migration are therefore strongly interrelated (Lutz 2011). Women who create, develop and sustain the transnational kinship networks and communities and 'transnational motherhood' (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997: 548) migrate both with or without their families in search of a job. They are often forced to leave behind their families and children, to be looked after by other female relatives or the children's fathers (Alicea 1997; Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997).

The above-mentioned studies provide a broad perspective on postcolonial migration in general and women's migration in particular. Several studies show that irrespective of differences in the structures of the host societies and their migrant policies, respondents share many experiences in being women and immigrants from the Third World (Jones-Correa 1998: 336; Alicea 1997). On the one hand, they are objects of racism and xenophobia and are excluded from the national community; on the other, as women they are better positioned within the family and in society in general. Thus women, who are supposed to be bearers of tradition, often become the first to challenge it.

Previous studies have highlighted gender differences in social mobility, sense of belonging and political participation (Jones-Correa 1998: 327, 335). They show the impact of wage earning on women's social and family life – for instance, conflicts within families become more visible as women's economic independence and resources offer them more confidence and they assert their rights to greater autonomy and equality within the household (Darvishpour 2002; Eyrumlu 1998; Alinia 2004). According to these studies, the family as an institution goes through

significant change that in turn affects the relationship between couples and also between parents and children.

However, as Alicea rightly points out, women's sense of belongingness and their relationship to their countries of settlement and countries of origin cannot be seen within the framework of a 'home/host dichotomy' (1997: 600). This dichotomization, according to her and other researchers (Bhabha 1999; Sassen 1999), results from categorizing 'host' and 'home' in terms of binary opposites such as modernity and tradition, progressiveness and backwardness, and so on. In reality, however, the relationship often proves both contradictory and ambivalent. The achievement of economic independence and improved social status encourages women to grow closer to their countries of settlement, but at the same time they feel that unfavourable racial and class conditions discriminate against them (Mohanty 2003). Alicea (1997) argues that placing transnational networks at the centre of the debate might in itself be a way to prevent such dichotomizations and simplifications.

Many women have believed that their migration would equal an escape from gender oppression. They highlight inequities at home and their desire to break away from repression. Paradoxically, traditional gender expectations, coupled with women's sense of moral obligation and their desire to resist racial oppression and disadvantaged class conditions, keep them tied to subsistence work that extends across national boundaries (Alicea 1997; Lutz 2011). These women construct homes and homeland communities as familiar places that give a feeling of comfort, yet they are aware of the gender oppression that makes up 'home' (Alicia 1997: 621–22; Alinia 2004).

On the Structure of This Book

The book is divided into two parts. The first addresses issues of bargaining and negotiating identities in view of the displacement and uprootedness caused by migration, providing examples of the various forms of meaning-making that migrants to Scandinavia engage in. The second deals with home politics, host policies and resistance. Each part highlights central aspects of the migrant experience, although the categories are by no means separated by strict boundaries.

Bargaining and Negotiating Identities

The first part revolves around how refugee or exile status affects people's lives and experiences.

It describes problems faced by refugees and exiles, from more prosaic everyday issues to struggles with identity, the sense of belonging and tensions between homeland and their new environment. It explores art as way of mending the fracture caused by exile, creating meaning and even empowerment. Its chapters also investigate Muslim women's self-positioning in relation to dominant discourses in Swedish and Danish society, detailing how they navigate the mechanisms, beliefs and prejudices of their host society and the diaspora community in order to represent their religious identity and gender, and how they carve out new identities for themselves at the intersection between these groups.

Haci Akman's 'Art as Political Expression in Diaspora' explores exile's alienating, confusing impact on those who are forced into involuntary migration. Having left all that is familiar, they must make their way in an unknown, bewildering environment where they strive to find 'new understanding, new goals and new meaning'. Akman focuses on the role of female artists in the diaspora, some of whom have been imprisoned and tortured because their art is perceived as challenging the political system. He considers the internal and external forces that influence an exile's need to create a sense of belonging, to find a new 'home'. It is existentially vital to the exile to feel accepted and affirmed, not only by the new society but also by fellow members of her ethnic group in the diaspora. However, as Akman observes, many female exiles feel 'locked out' of their new community both personally and institutionally. Relationships that previously defined identity no longer exist. New roles and responsibilities lead to contradictions in how the self is experienced in the homeland and in the diaspora. Akman illustrates the pain and suffering of exile with reference to the paintings and experiences of the artist Kwestan Jamal Ali, who was born in Kurdistan but now lives and works in Norway. Through her strongly political art she explores motifs inspired by her own experiences and memories of oppression, flight and exile.

Pia Karlsson Minganti, in 'Islamic Identity as Third Space: Muslim Women Activists Negotiating Subjectivity in Sweden', analyses the complexity in the negotiations of Muslim women as they position themselves relative to the dominant discourses of a 'Swedish' and a 'Muslim' sphere. She uses the concept of an ambiguous, creative, critical *third space* that provides a 'location' for negotiations within and between groups perceived as dominant and homogeneous. After describing the women's experiences of and responses to the dominant discourses, Karlsson Minganti explores how, neither rejecting nor overemphasizing the bipolar categories, they negotiate a third position defined as 'Islamic', inspired by their engagement in Muslim youth associations.

Influenced by the Islamic revival, the women in the study see the Koran as granting many rights to women, for instance, permitting them to be educated and to educate others. The women counteract stereotypes of passive, oppressed Muslim women in that they have agency and see themselves as both bearers of Islam and active citizens in Swedish society. However, Karlsson Minganti points out, their actions may also maintain power structures, particularly related to gender issues; thus the third space accommodates collective norms even as it contests them. As a hybrid space that allows for transgression and empowerment while simultaneously reproducing domination, it runs the risk of being disciplined and incorporated by essentializing discourses.

Rikke Andreassen's 'Political Muslim Women in the News Media' furthers the focus on Muslim women in Scandinavia. Examining the Danish news media's debates on veiled Muslim women, she concentrates on the case of Asmaa Abdol-Hamid. Rather than focusing explicitly on diaspora, Andreassen's text provides a valuable contextualization of the general political-public discourse that frames diasporic discourses, practices and identities. These debates offer insight into the media's construction of ethnicity/race, gender, sexuality and nationality. When Abdol-Hamid became a presenter at a Danish public-service TV station in 2006, an outcry by a feminist organization claimed her attitudes threatened women's rights in Denmark. This sparked a debate through press releases, national newspapers and TV about the interpretation of headscarves as oppression of women. Andreassen argues that this is also a debate about how to define feminism, and about the relations between different feminisms. The headscarf issue challenges the hegemonic view within Danish second-wave feminism that the headscarf prevents the emancipation of women, particularly with regards to education and employment. In 2007, Abdol-Hamid became a candidate in the parliamentary elections. Andreassen argues that Abdol-Hamid and other female Muslim candidates were treated differently, especially when it came to their attitudes towards sexual minorities and gender equality. Andreassen shows how accusing Abdol-Hamid of being homophobic and hence against sexual liberation functions as a national mechanism of exclusion: sexual tolerance is racialized and associated with the white, ethnically Danish community, whereas homophobia and intolerance are reserved for the Muslim community. By analysing Yildiz Akdogan's 2011 election campaign, Andreassen also shows how female Muslim candidates faced criticism from not only Danish politicians and news media but also certain Muslim groups. Andreassen's text reveals how these debates highlight the intersection between race, ethnicity, religion, sexuality and the construction of nationality. She

maintains that the media, instead of challenging power relations when it comes to Muslim women, has helped maintain and uphold existing power relations in Denmark.

Malene Fenger-Grøndahl follows up on several themes in Andreassen's chapter, discussing Western feminism and its relation to Muslim immigration to Denmark. Her essay considers the case of Maria, who arrived in Denmark from Chile in 1973, seeking political asylum. At the time she was not only granted asylum but also welcomed by Danish left-wing activists with an interest in Latin America. She was encouraged to divorce her husband and set herself free through the Western concept of feminism. Forty years later, the 'headscarf issue' and Muslim women are on the political agenda, and female Muslim newcomers to Denmark as well as children of Muslim immigrants are expected to fit into a new political agenda that sees Islam as a threat to democracy and gender equality. While wearing the veil and behaving 'well' opens up educational possibilities for Muslim girls, taking on the identity of a well-behaved Muslim girl also poses limitations when it comes to choice of career and political influence. Fenger-Grøndahl examines the prejudice, challenges and identities available to, and in some cases imposed upon, immigrant women and men in Denmark from the 1970s onwards, arguing that a new framework incorporating multiple identities might be under way, partly due to the efforts of immigrant women.

Fenger-Grøndahl's contribution contains interesting narratives that in many ways illustrate this anthology's central concerns. It favours a journalistic approach to the theme over narrative analysis, a choice that might have had implications for the conclusions drawn in the text. Nevertheless, her chapter remains a highly relevant, substantial contribution to the body of knowledge on and insight into previous and present experiences of immigrant women in Denmark.

The following chapter moves on to discuss Kurdish diasporic experiences, identities and movements, based on interviews with Kurdish men and women living in Gothenburg, Sweden. In 'Gendered Experiences of Homeland, Identity and Belonging among the Kurdish Diaspora', Minoo Alinia focuses on gender's impact on their relation to Swedish society and the Kurdish diaspora and highlights the complexity of processes of identity and belonging. While both men and women experience political freedom in Sweden, women exercise social and legal rights that frequently go well beyond what they were used to in their country of origin and consequently have a more open, positive attitude to Swedish society. Similarly, migrant men and women may lose both social standing and social networks, but the rights women gain go some way towards compensating for their losses. Moreover,

a woman's role as a mother and caretaker provides some continuity and leads to contact with society, whereas there is little to compensate for the losses experienced by men. Both genders experience racism and exclusion in the form of suspicion and discrimination. Alinia discusses perceptions of gendered racism among her respondents, who find that Swedes categorically see Kurdish men as violent and oppressive, and Kurdish women as subordinate and oppressed. Thus, women and men alike feel rejected by Swedish society and find a home and a sense of belonging in Kurdish communities. However, women take a more ambivalent, critical stance towards the Kurdish community and try to challenge its boundaries and create their own spaces.

Home Politics, Host Policies and Resistance

The chapters that form this book's second part exemplify different forms of gendered resistance in relation to homeland politics and public integration policies. The authors further probe the concept of diaspora and its relation to migrants' engagement in political struggles in their home societies, and offer concrete examples of mechanisms within policy management and strategic plans for immigration and citizenship.

Kariane Westrheim's chapter, 'Kurdish Women of the Diaspora and Political Participation', opens this section with an account of the collective imaginations of nation inside and outside Kurdistan. She traces the development of the concept of diaspora and the historical turbulence in Kurdistan, caused by external and internal conflicts, war and deportations, that resulted in Kurds' dispersion from their original homeland to diaspora communities worldwide. Her article provides a brief overview of some characteristics of Kurdish diaspora in Europe, using Norway as one example. Here, Westrheim underlines the dearth of research and academic literature on gendered Kurdish diaspora in Norway. The chapter's main concern is the politicization of Kurdish diaspora and the ways in which diaspora can promote political awareness and political literacy among Kurdish women. Whereas women from traditional Kurdish families previously had limited possibilities to engage in activities outside the home, she argues, the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK), which entered the stage in the 1980s, has also actively recruited Kurds with diverse professional and educational backgrounds from diaspora. In North Kurdistan, Kurdish women have been at the forefront of the political and armed struggle, and Kurdish women in diaspora often function as a bridge between structures and organizations in two countries. Westrheim's essay discusses the intersections of learning processes, political participation and gender issues, and the

joint efforts of Kurdish women in the diaspora and in the homeland to change the role of women within Kurdish society. These interactions and exchanges, she surmises, are relevant and applicable not only in Scandinavia, but wherever Kurdish communities have settled.

Bolette Moldenhawer's chapter 'Territorial Stigmatization, Inequality of Schooling and Identity Formation among Young Immigrants' continues to focus on education by engaging with host countries' policies of compulsory education, exploring the way social background, ethnicity, gender and residential segregation help produce and reproduce disadvantages for young immigrants. Based on major findings from the EDUMIGROM research project, her text uses select Danish and French cases to show the impact of gender on how immigrant students' schooling and social relations relate to the symbolic and social order of local residential areas and become superimposed onto the stigmata of ethnicity. Inspired by Loïc Wacquant (2007, 2008a, 2008b) this symbolic work around schooling is conceptualized in relation to mechanisms of territorial stigmatization in an age of advanced marginality. Moreover, by addressing the concept of diaspora (Gilroy 2009), Moldenhawer takes identity formation among immigrants into account, discussing its changing patterns and its effects on female students in a context of territorial segregation and stigmatization. Having illustrated important factors in immigrant students' school achievements, the chapter presents an empirical analysis of how gender intersects with social backgrounds and ethnic discrimination in the selected Danish and French cases to create new forms of inclusion and exclusion within compulsory education. Moldenhawer's examination of the mechanisms and policies that create educational differentiation in two countries committed to egalitarianism in the school system also relates various ways immigrant students cope with these issues.

The final chapter of this anthology, Tina Kallehave's 'The Absence of Strategy and the Absence of *Bildung*: When Integration Policy Cannot Succeed', discusses host policies and resistance in a Danish context. Kallehave studies Danish authorities' efforts to integrate Somali immigrants so as to make them self-supporting and able to understand basic Danish norms and values. Kallehave considers the concept and aims of integration as well as unintended effects of sociocultural processes in interaction with Somali immigrants. Integration programmes have evolved into social programmes for those Somalis classified as socially vulnerable. Kallehave uses the theoretical framework of 'interpellation and *Bildung*' to examine the features and challenges of integration. She argues that interpellation has the potential to ease some of the complexities of integration by factoring in resistance to the organizing strategies

designed to result in *Bildung*. Kallehave explores complexity and resistance by pinpointing differences between the authorities' and Somalis' varying understandings of responsibilities to family and the gendered implications thereof. She suggests that Danish approaches to integration are not strategic because they fail to take sufficient account of Somali acts of resistance and to differentiate between the objectives of the programmes and the programmes themselves as a means of achieving *Bildung*.

This anthology gathers a diverse set of research questions related to gender, migration and diaspora in Scandinavian countries, and addresses undergraduate and postgraduate students as well as scholars within different scientific disciplines. In doing so, it aims to further nuance the literature within the field and reaffirm the role of women within studies on diaspora.

Notes

1. This does not, however, imply a view of cultures as static entities – rather, they may be seen as dynamic processes that go through continual change.

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