Mujeres en la Linea: Engendering Migration, Agency, and Urban Space on Mexico's Northern Border

Heather Craigie
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Introduction

Nogales, Sonora, like many cities along Mexico's northern border, has long been on the receiving end of migration flows from the interior of the country. Historically, Nogales grew as a railroad settlement, and transportation development provided the principal conduit for urban expansion (Arreola & Curtis 1993:208). In the last thirty years, however, migration to Nogales has been increasingly construed with a macroeconomic strategy that both forces people out of rural areas and pulls them to the border with the lure of job opportunities, particularly in maquiladora[1] factories. This internal displacement of migrants to the U.S.-Mexico border affects family structure and gender relations, testifying to the significant social ramifications of a process that may be interpreted as primarily economic. Close examination of contemporary manifestations of migration and settlement processes in Nogales, Sonora, particularly as seen through the lens of gender, reveals the changing physical and social landscapes of this border city.

Recently arrived internal migrants in Nogales settle in *colonias populares*, or squatter communities, often without basic services, that spread into the hills and canyon walls on the outskirts of the urban area. This study evolved out of a curiosity to gain a more in-depth perspective on the agency displayed by women who migrate to the border and settle in *colonias*. Even while recent immigration research has significantly incorporated the category of gender into studies of regional and international migration, women have often been assumed to merely accompany males, and are thus portrayed as lacking agency in migration processes. In order to move beyond this assumption, it is necessary to employ the lens of gender at many spatial levels. Beyond analyzing intra-familial gender relations, for example, it is also crucial to locate migrant women's

experiences within the context of the global economy as it surfaces along the U.S.-Mexico border, as well as in the social and cultural landscapes of the *colonias*. Accordingly, this paper addresses two interrelated research goals: 1) Through local-level analyses, to explore the interdependent relationship between social reproduction and economic production in Nogales, as seen through the situation of migrant women; and, 2) Through use of a spatial framework, to reveal how migrant women's agency in settlement processes contributes to the gendered construction of household and *colonia* spaces on the border.

In this study, I conducted thirty-eight structured interviews with internal migrants living in Nogales *colonias*, in addition to several other interviews with employees of social service agencies that addressed migration or women's issues. The vast majority (thirty-six) of my interviewees were female. While every woman's experience was unique, each testified to the significant roles that women play in both migration and settlement processes on the U.S.-Mexico border.

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[1] Maquiladoras are foreign-owned assembly plants located along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Chapter 1: Social Reproduction in the Context of Globalization

"*Todo Nogales es una madre soltera*[2]"
~ Paty, internal migrant from central Sonora

In the course of my field research, I found that while women take on extra responsibilities in many contexts after migrating (such as within the household, the maquila or the colonia), men's roles remain comparatively stagnant. Because of gendered social expectations that emerge during and after migration, women on the border become overextended in domestic, workplace, and community spaces. It follows that even when women begin working for the first time outside the home—which could be considered emancipatory, given the social and financial freedoms it implies—they are still socially constrained by time, energy, and particular gendered expectations. Furthermore, I argue that the maintenance of the reigning economic order in Nogales (characterized by numerous indicators of neoliberal restructuring), hinges on the preservation of women's unrealistic workloads. In this chapter, I examine these gendered expectations through the lens of social reproduction.

Interdependency of Gender and Economic Orders

The concept of social reproduction is an analytical tool that is helpful in recognizing and challenging the ostensibly "natural" double and triple workloads that women take on in Nogales. To designate a working usage of social reproduction, geographer Sallie Marston quotes Katz and Monk (1993), who theorize that social reproduction "entails both the reproduction of the social relations that maintain capitalism as well as the reproduction of the material bases upon which social life is premised"

(Marston 2000:233). Marston explains that the theory was also embraced by Marx, who believed social reproduction to be strongly implicated in relations of production, conceiving it as “the social relations, objects and instruments that enable the maintenance of everyday life within capitalism” (Marston 2000:233). Similarly, political scientist V. Spike Peterson (2003) mutually implicates social reproduction and economic production by introducing the concept of the *reproductive economy*. By placing social reproduction within an *economy* of reproduction, Peterson acknowledges the social and economic contributions that women make by working in both formal and informal labor venues, in addition to household spaces. The reproductive economy (particularly unlike the productive, neoclassical depiction of waged labor) is often systematically omitted from mainstream economic analyses. To these ends, Peterson notes, “the reproductive economy is the economy of families and the private sphere—where human life is generated, daily life maintained, and socialization reproduced” (Peterson 2003: 79).

In this study, examining social reproduction within an economic framework acknowledges the centrality of socialization practices in reproducing the economic order (Peterson 81), and also unveils women’s contributions—particularly through domestic labor—that are crucial to maintaining the productive economy. For example, several theorists have recognized that formal sector wages can be kept low by forcing women to “take up slack” in the domestic sphere (see Fernandez-Kelly 1989; Dunaway 2001). Taking up slack, as I observed in Nogales, often translates into an enlargement of the informal labor sector—which is strongly gendered in industrial zones such as the U.S-Mexico border. In the case study that follows, Gloria is an internal migrant who personifies many of these trends in her adopted city.

[2] “All of Nogales is a single mother”

Gloria

Gloria migrated to Nogales four years ago from a large city in Sinaloa. She came with her partner, Raul, with whom she is in a *union libre*[3], along with their three sons. As the second youngest of 9 children, Gloria began to work in the informal sector at age 9, selling buñuelos, tamales, and champurrado in the streets of her home city. I asked her if she had many responsibilities when she was young. Replied Gloria,

> Well, responsibilities, no…more than anything, necessities. Necessities. We sold tamales. All of my siblings…some walked around, others sold popsicles, others of us sold tamales. Because my mother and father separated, my mother led us forward. Everyone, as we grew up, she got us to work, well, because of the necessity.

Like many other migrants, Gloria and Raul came to the border in search of better pay. Gloria almost immediately began to work in the maquilas. She currently is working in her third plant, and is thinking of applying to another one with slightly better pay and easier work: "*Well, I go and ask for the night shift, always. They always have 2 shifts. But if there is a later shift, well, later in order to…take care of the kids [during the day].*" Gloria has always found it necessary to work in Nogales, in part to make up for her partner's inability to hold down a job. Although he works from time to time selling food at a popular weekend destination outside of Nogales, Gloria thinks that he may have recently quit. She also alluded to a drinking problem that not only inhibits his financial contributions to the household, but also effectively requires Gloria to stay around the house all weekend to take care of him. When she was thinking of working weekends at a maquila, for example, he refused to allow her: "*It's that he didn't like the shift that I got. I told him about it, and he says no. It's that Sundays are when they drink, and Saturdays.*

[3] "free union"; partnership outside marriage

They don't leave, and I leave at 3:00 [to go to work], and he's in the house Saturdays and Sundays, shut up and he gets mad. Don't take those shifts, he told me."

Not only is Gloria obliged to support the family financially, she is also the primary caretaker of her children, and at times her husband. In addition to her formal work in the maquila, Gloria supplements her earnings with informal work. She is proud that she has carried on her mother's work of making food to sell to neighbors or on the street: "*I am the only one who knows how to make tamales, of everyone. Sometimes I make them to sell here, to earn a little. Sometimes I offer them to my neighbors,…make me 10, 12, they tell me…"*

As reflected in Gloria's story, most of the women I interviewed said that they took on extra responsibilities, such as formal labor or community work, after migrating to the border. In addition, women's unpaid domestic labor in the household continues to be an unacknowledged yet crucial aspect of daily survival in cities like Nogales. Many women explained that the extra responsibilities they shouldered did not mean that they could shirk on their household duties of maintaining the house, preparing food, and—perhaps most notably—caring for children. Several women had cooperative child care arrangements worked out with relatives or neighbors in their colonia. Even with their entrance into the workforce, women such as Gloria are still expected to be responsible for social reproduction as they attend to household duties with minimal help from their male counterparts. In Gloria's case, she was also expected to take care of her husband, who had a notable alcohol problem and was essentially incapacitated for at least two days a week.

An analysis of a man's responses when asked about his changing responsibilities in Nogales—although he is certainly not representative of all male migrants—reveals stark gender differences. In the conversation that follows, Oscar speaks of the comparatively easy way of life that he encountered on the border. This difference was principally defined by the change in work: Oscar went from working outside in the fields to assembling medical products in a maquila.

Heather: "Since you arrived, has life changed here? Does it seem more difficult to buy things now?"

Oscar: "Well…it's easier"

Heather: "And food?"

Oscar: "Well, I see that it's cheaper here."

Heather: "And, has your life changed much since arriving in Nogales?"

Oscar: "Yes, it has changed a lot, because the people are more comfortable, and I work less, I get less tired…it's easier."

In contrast to Oscar's testimony, practically all women I interviewed claimed that life had gotten harder in the last few years of living on the border, because of the economic downturn and the recent closure of maquila plants. Generally speaking, women's lives tended to get more difficult, while men found work on the border to be easier. The gendered expectations apparent in these stories illustrate how female-driven social reproduction is closely connected to economic production. Women, through their paid and unpaid labor, maintain their families *and* contribute to the economy of Nogales. When I spoke with Maria, the director of a women's outreach program in the Nogales mayor's office, she explained how the current economic situation on the border requires women to enter the work force:

> It's more difficult now, because now the problem that we have in Mexico, is that here both people have to work…when it involves maquiladora jobs, with one maquila salary, you earn between 50 and 100 dollars a week, well…that doesn't do it. So, before, from what I know of my city, is that before with a maquila salary it wasn't so difficult. Money was worth more, it covered what you needed…But now I see the necessity for both people to work, that the woman has decided to contribute, as well, to help her husband.

In Maria's statement, it is evident that the economic downturn had gendered consequences, because more women were pressured to work. An analysis of women's participation in formal labor, particularly in the maquila work force, requires contextualization in the global political economy. Specifically, it is evident that the shift from state to corporate regulation of basic services disproportionately affects women. Labor geographer Jamie Peck explains the trend of women shouldering extra responsibilities as he notes,

> …Where neoliberal states have been active in rolling back the welfare state, they are not so much exposing the process of reproduction to market forces as often forcing it back into the domestic sphere by enlarging the scope of women's domestic "responsibilities" (Peck 1996:40).

Geographer Altha Cravey echoes Peck's findings in her study of labor trends in Nogales. She observes that increased corporate regulation over labor marks a pivotal moment in the social reproduction of gender roles. Cravey posits, "social reproduction has been reorganized simultaneously with the reorganization of production," referring to the commodification of services that women rely on daily, such as childcare or health care (Cravey 1998:136).

Maquilas in several border cities have taken up these previously-state subsidized services, offering child care, health care, meals for workers and their children in the form of cafeteria passes or food coupons, transportation to and from work, and even subsidized housing (at times in single-sex dormitories) to workers who qualify (Cravey 1998:94). Calling these commodified services "benefits" is actually a misnomer, as their costs are

often deducted from worker paychecks. Corporate privatization of services not only makes them even more inaccessible to non-workers, but it also makes formally employed women increasingly more dependent upon their jobs and more vulnerable to workplace abuse. For example, in a study of maquila workers in Nogales, anthropologist Catalina Denman found that the desire to improve education and living conditions for workers' children strongly motivated them to tolerate disagreeable work conditions, including poor ventilation, ergonomic hazards, and social factors such as sexual harassment (Denman, Harlow, Cedillo 2004:141).

In addition to their contributions of waged labor, women's *informal* labor also supports both social and economic reproduction. As Peterson attests, various strands of feminist economic theory (such as Marxist and world systems theory) bring to light how informal labor, undertaken both by women and other marginalized populations such as migrant workers, supports capital accumulation (94). Referring to both formal and informal labor in Nogales, Kopinak contends, "Women's work outside the home is absolutely essential to the household's subsistence" (Kopinak 1995:39). Accordingly, female informal labor in this border city is undertaken in many forms; in the cases of the women I spoke with, Graciela sews school uniforms, Gloria prepares tamales to sell in the neighborhood or outside of maquiladora factories, and Juana collects used clothes to sell in the weekly tianguis (flea market) held in various colonias around the city.

After having explored women's contributions in the formal and informal labor spheres, it is crucial to recognize that women's contributions in the *household* also support the reigning social and economic orders. This observation is consistent with Dunaway's acknowledgment of unwaged female labor and the role of household sphere

as a unit of reproduction in the commodity chain. Quoting Maria Mies, Dunaway advances, "...the housewife and her labour are not outside of surplus value production, but constitute the *very foundation* upon which this process can get started. The housewife and her labour are…the basis of the process of capital accumulation" (Dunaway 2002:16, emphasis mine). Maier arrives at comparable conclusions in her research of indigenous migrants from Oaxaca who have migrated to the borderlands of Baja California. She finds that although women are expected to participate in agriculture work, they still retain all of the household duties:

> Though women –and children- progressively participate in salaried work, a basic labor division still entrusts most reproductive chores to women in Native-Mexican settlement communities. Cooking, marketing, housework, washing clothes, dishwashing, childcare, healthcare, religiosity, and family integration and consolidation are still considered a woman's vocation. Present female participation in traditional (mainly) male-associated agricultural production has not as yet deconstructed the conviction that female domestic and family responsibilities represent an essentially natural way of arranging daily routines. In Indigenous extra-territorial settlements in Baja California women frequently have double and triple workdays, attending to housework, childcare, physically demanding salaried work, craft production, and its commercialization in local tourist sites (Maier 2004:8).

The double and triple workdays that Maier documents are also reflected in my research. Most women in Nogales worked formally, practiced some sort of informal labor, took care of domestic duties, and participated in colonia organizing efforts. In analyzing women's assigned responsibilities for these various types of labor, it becomes clear that gendered hierarchies are taken advantage of by capital to reproduce economic and social orders. In order to survive, women are expected to be breadwinners and domestic caregivers, thereby maintaining the social order of the household through gendered expectations of women. The border economy depends on female labor, paid and unpaid, formal and informal, to function efficiently. It follows that to question

women's roles—threatening the gender order—would also threaten traditional assignations for social reproduction and economic efficiency.

These observations are consistent with geographer Melissa Wright's findings that the devaluation of women (or their disappearances, in the case of the Juárez femicides[4]) supports the productive order, thereby conflating the formations of capitalism with a particular gender order (Wright 2004). In Wright's research and in my own study in Nogales, a particular set of gendered expectations and the capitalist economic system are mutually dependent. Despite the perseverance of this pairing, however, migrant women are actively exerting agency in various spaces on the border. In the next chapter, I employ a spatial framework to examine how migrant women shape the colonia and household spaces of Nogales.

[4] The Juárez femicides are a phenomenon too complex to focus on here, but Wright's analysis of this tragic trend informs my findings about the interdependence of gendered expectations and a particular economic (capitalist) system. Since 1993, over 400 women have been murdered in Ciudad Juárez and Chihuahua City (see Mexico Solidarity Network, http://www.mexicosolidarity.org/)

Chapter 2: Gender and Urban Space in Nogales

The Utility of Spatial Analyses

Human geographers have long been concerned with the way that humans inhabit, adapt to, and create space. Integrating spatial analyses into this study of the workings of gender in migration and settlement processes on the U.S.-Mexico border serves two primary purposes. One, it provides a theoretical framework to compare and contrast the social geographies of power in two distinct (yet interrelated) locales in Nogales: the household, and the colonia. Other researchers[5] have examined the evolution of gender norms within the spaces of maquiladoras, and I acknowledge their work as useful points of reference. My study, however, emphasizes other forms of citizenship and community building that women on the border perform in the household and the colonia. How are women's roles, responsibilities, and agency different in both of these spaces? In other words, how do social geographies of power differ in the household and in the neighborhood? How does the physical landscape of the colonias intersect with the social landscape of gender relations?

Secondly, spatial analysis is a crucial tool used to recognize the existence of (and potential for) resistance and social change on the border. In this vein, I affirm Cravey's argument that, "organizing space may be a key element for organizing resistance to the more onerous aspects of contemporary globalization" (Cravey 1998: 133). Cravey argues that it is necessary to look at many spatial levels in order to recognize the contradictory

[5] Salzinger, in *Genders in Production* (2003) analyzes how gender orders are produced and reproduced on the shop floor of Juárez maquiladora factories. However, she minimally extends her research out of the workplace. Cravey (1998) bases her study in Nogales, Sonora and concentrates on how corporate regulation extends into the private sphere, seen in the example of on-site child care and single-sex dormitories for maquila workers. At the time of my field research (summer 2004), these dormitories no longer existed in Nogales maquilas.

identities and local – global linkages that emerge in global cities like Nogales. Similarly, while geographers Peck and Tickell acknowledge that, "neoliberalism seems to be everywhere," they also recognize how its deepening on a global scale may actually "amplify its structural vulnerability" and expose weak spots. (Peck & Tickell 2002:399) How do the works of these theorists (and others) speak to women's agency in Nogales? Are networks of resistance, or possible weak spots in neoliberalism exposed as women migrate to and settle on the border?

Landscapes of Gender on the U.S.-Mexico border

When engaging in multi-scalar analyses, it is necessary to begin with the theory that space is not static, but socially constructed and therefore, able to change. Sociologist Henri Lefebvre's theorization that space is a social product is widely used as a touchstone for a large body of scholarship, mostly from the discipline of geography, that analyzes the construction of urban space (Marston 2000:221). Furthermore, Lefebvre argues that the production of space is inextricable from the inner workings of the political economy, stating that, "every society in history has shaped a distinctive social space that meets its intertwined requirements for economic production and social reproduction" (Hayden 1995:19).[6]

The concept of *landscape* is another theoretical lens that undergirds the gendered construction of space on the border. Geographer Richard Schein advances a conceptual framework for interpreting cultural landscapes, structured around the premise that landscapes are tangible, visible articulations of numerous discourses (Schien 1997:660). Dialectically, landscapes at once inhibit and are constructed by individuals who live in a

particular place. Although the idea of fixed, immovable landscapes tends to be reified, Schein insists that landscape is "implicated in ongoing formulations of social life" (662). In other words, landscapes are always *becoming*, and can be observed as "articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings" (Massey 1993:66).

Within this field, a growing body of literature explores the construction of space from the perspective of gender. In this paper, I refer to this phenomenon as the "gendering" of urban space, beginning with the premise proposed by political scientist Barbara Jenkins that, "spatial relations reinforce gender differences" (Jenkins 2003:70). To take this premise one step further, I echo the theory posed by feminist geographers that as urban spaces are transformed, so too are gender relations. Much recent work relevant to my study challenges the traditional dichotomy between feminized, private space and public, masculinized space. Evidence of this dichotomy is still visible today, as Jenkins notes, "the assumption that women's labor is worth less derives largely from the assumption *that a woman's place is in the home* and her role in the workforce is only as a secondary wage earner" (70, emphasis mine).

In the context of Mexico, I find the theoretical framework proposed by Alejandra Massolo helpful in analyzing the changing landscapes of gender. According to Massolo, an Argentine urban sociologist based in Mexico City, urban space is not gender-neutral. Writes Massolo,

> El espacio urbano, la ciudad como espacio construido, no es una abstracción de género, es decir, de las relaciones entre hombres y mujeres socialmente construidas. Ambos—género y ciudad—son objetos analíticos que contienen historia, sociedad, cultura, poder, cambios, a lo largo del tiempo y los espacios. Esta vinculación significa reconocer que las relaciones de género también se construyen y transforman sobre el espacio así como

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[6] In my research, I have reached similar conclusions about the interdependency of gendered and economic orders in Nogales, as I explain in chapter 1.

> dentro de determinados espacios, y que las ideas de "femineidad y masculinidad" tienen un soporte espacial donde se manifiestan.[7]

Massolo affirms that just as cities are constructed spaces, so too are the gender relations that are constructed *and* transformed in the urban space of the city. Moreover, she argues that changes to urban space transform the lives of women more than men, as women tend to travel across more diverse environments (such as the market, school, neighborhood, workplace on a daily basis than men, and are therefore more cognizant of the "good or bad functioning of the city[8]" (Massolo 2004:10, translation mine). In addition, Massolo posits that because of personal safety factors that affect women more than men, females have a drastically different "*derecho a la ciudad*"[9], based on the social geographies of power that are ascribed to both genders. Put simply, men and women experience the same physical space differently.

In my research, I became aware of how female migrants were actively shaping the social landscapes of Nogales, particularly in the spaces of their colonias and households. Ana's story, which follows here, reflects the fluid nature of spaces on the border inhabited by internal migrants, and how these changing spaces interact with migrants' gendered identities.

Ana

Ana migrated to Nogales four years ago with her husband and young son from a medium-sized city in Sinaloa. Ana grew up on an ejido outside of the city, where she

[7] "Urban space, the city as constructed space, is not an abstraction of gender, that is to say, of socially constructed relations between men and women. Both—gender and city—are analytical objects that contain history, society, culture, power, change, across time and space. This connection means recognizing that gender relations are also constructed and transformed around space as inside particular spaces, and that the ideas of "femininity and masculinity" have a spatial platform that they emerge from."

[8] This conclusion was reached according to Massolo's fieldwork in Buenos Aires and Mexico City, and may not reflect the social mobility of women on the U.S.-Mexico border.

lived with her grandparents throughout most of her childhood and adolescence. Says Ana, "*It's my father's fault that we are so many!*" While Ana had only three siblings with the same parents, her father had fifteen other children who also lived on the ejido[10]. Her father drove a cargo truck with vegetables that were harvested from the ejido, and her mother was a homemaker. As one of the oldest daughters, Ana had, as she says "*I had all of the responsibilities of the house…*" where she lived with her grandparents:

> See, I was raised with my grandparents, there on the ejido. My mother lived to one side. But I had, however you want to say it, all of the responsibility of the house. That I lift this, move this, mop, go to the store, and in the kitchen I helped her…I was the one who did everything. Yes, because they are already old people, my grandparents, and I was the one who did everything…go to the store for this, go to pick this up…and I was everything; I was the only one who was with them.

In school, Ana progressed as far as the *prepa* (the equivalent of high school in the U.S.), which was, in fact, the most education out of all of my interviewees. She married Luis from a neighboring ejido at age 20 and they had a son before coming to the border. When asked why they decided to come to Nogales, Ana responded:

> We came [to Nogales] because there is no work for what he does. Work is very rare. When we came, there were more possibilities of moving forward, to improve the child's life, and us as well…to make something of ourselves, a house, from a little plot of land. And to see what we have achieved—that is why we decided to come here. To do something.

Like the vast majority of migrants I interviewed, Luis and Ana came to the border for primarily economic reasons. They also saw that the border held better possibilities for their young son. Luis found work in construction, which is considered one of the better jobs in the border city. Recently, however, Luis's construction company went under because they lost several contracts with maquiladoras that had closed. Even though neither Luis nor Ana worked in a maquila, they felt the effects of recent plant closures,

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[9] "right to the city"

reflecting, "*When we arrived, yes, there were more opportunities. But now that many factories have shut down, the work went downhill. And he felt it a lot because from [the factories], we earned money to eat from there, from working there in the maquilas…*" Because of the lack of work in Nogales, for the last few months Luis has been working in Puerto Peñasco, a seaside city about four hours away. Ana and their son stay in Nogales, which she doesn't mind. She has chosen not to work formally, preferring to stay home and care for her son. Even though Ana has not entered the formal work force in Nogales or become very involved in colonia organizing, she says that her life has changed significantly since she came to the border:

Heather: "Since you arrived on the border, how has your life changed in the last few years? Is it very different now than it was before?"

Ana: "I feel that yes. Yes, I have more opportunities for everything. Things that before, no…for my son and for me. I feel that I have more opportunities, that I have more progress here, than there."

I noted that towards the end of the interview, the language that Ana used revolved around making a better life for herself and her son, not necessarily with her husband. Although Ana made no mention of plans to divorce or separate from Luis, it was clear that she felt ownership over the space of her house, and the opportunities that awaited her and her young son. I asked Ana what she had on the border that she didn't before:

Heather: "What are the things that you have now that you didn't before?"

Ana: "A house. I did not have a house. Well, I lived with my grandparents, I got married, and I lived for a time with my grandparents again…when my son was born, Jose Rogelio. But I never imagined having my own house, right? I am going to go crazy, I would say. And now I have a house. What I know, what I am going to do in my house…this…is a lot for me. A house. I may not be luxurious, or have this or that, but it has a roof…that's the best for me. And well, it is mine."

[10] It wasn't clear if the parents were still married, but Ana said that she knew all of her half brothers and sisters and considered them family.

Heather: "And do you (all) think that you'll stay here?"

Ana: "Yes, if I don't end up doing something else, I plan to make my life here in Nogales, and that my son will also make his life here."

As our formal interview finished, Ana's control over the household space became even more evident as she told me about a program called "*Oportunidades*" that had recently been initiated by a municipal social service agency. The program, as she understood it, would give monetary subsidies to cover school fees for low-income families with children. Eligibility would be determined upon first-had inspection of the condition of her house, including an assessment of the various services and appliances that she had. The previous day, Ana had gone with some of her (female) neighbors to an office downtown, where they all passed an initial eligibility interview. When I spoke with her, Ana had recently tied a red t-shirt to a post outside her home; it was to serve as a marker for the inspectors to identify her house for the site inspection. Ana mentioned the program in response to my inquiry about whether she considered her life to be easier on the border than it would have been had they stayed in Sinaloa. She replied,

> Yes, it's easier here [on the border]. Here it seems more…for example this morning, we went to go sign up for a program of Opportunities, of the government. And they are going to come see, to check in my house, to check everything to see if I stay on the list. They didn't not already tell me, 'That's it; you're going to stay on the list' – no.

Despite the hopes that she had for qualifying, Ana did not want to get her hopes up. A couple of years ago, she had been disqualified for a similar program run by social security, the basic health care program that she and her family qualified for under Luis's work. She described the interview:

> But the other time, when social security did this government program, I went, and they asked me, 'do you have electricity?' 'I don't have it', I said, '[neighbors] are passing it to me.' 'Do you have a stove?' 'No, well I have a little grill.' 'Do you have a television?' 'Yes, I have a television,' I told them. 'Do you have a [non-dirt] floor?' 'Yes, I have a floor,' I told them. 'And what is your house made out of?' 'It is plywood,' I told them. 'You are not acceptable' [in the program] they told me, 'because you don't

> have…necessities,' they told me. 'But listen, how is it that if I don't have anything, that I don't have necessities, how can this be…I tell you…well, how it can be like this,' I told them. 'If one looks for the way…to be better?' And I don't know if now, if they're going to give it to me…

Ana was clearly frustrated with her disqualification, based on the program's assessment that because she had slightly more than the minimum, such as a TV and flooring, her family did not have true needs. Ana recognized the paradox, asking, "how is it that I don't have needs? How can it be, that if one looks for a way…to be better off?" She hoped that the "*Oportunidades*" program would be more reasonable.

The household: the workings of gender in private space

Ana's story provides a helpful lens into the workings of gender in the household spaces of Nogales. The "*Oportunidades*" program is an interesting example of how household spaces, mediated by women, are exposed and judged publicly. In the process, the traditional dichotomy between public and private space is challenged. Similarly, Marston points out that throughout the last two centuries, the home has been reconceptualized "not as a private space, but as a unique form of public space" (Marston 2000:237). Many other social phenomena in Nogales households, however, are not immediately noticeable in the public sphere. For example, issues of childcare, single motherhood, and even domestic violence—although associated with private spaces—have public implications and are closely tied to the wider socio-economic context of the border.

Childcare is a domestic duty in Nogales that is almost completely managed by women. As established previously, the economic need experienced by working-class migrant families in Nogales often requires that women work outside of the home, both in the formal and informal sectors. Although a small percentage of maquilas have child

care facilities, the cost is deducted from worker paychecks. Women at times set up cooperative arrangements for child care with neighbors or relatives. For women who do not have access to cooperative arrangements, children are simply left alone, oftentimes locked in their houses while their parents work. The phenomenon is so widespread, in fact, that these children have been are known as latchkey children, or "*llaveros*" left to let themselves into their homes (or who are locked in) at an extremely young age. Maria from the mayor's office gave her take on this situation:

> But one thing leads to another as well, because we see that we are here on the border, with all of the problems that implies, the drugs for the kids who were left alone, someone says that here in Nogales there are a lot of "key kids" they are called, who have a key, you have the key, and when you arrive from school, I will not be there, but you can get into the house. So, this…there is much more to reality than what we see.

The existence of *llavero* children testifies to the strong influence of border economics on household spaces of Nogales. Because of the scarcity of affordable child care options and the economic need that requires men and women to be outside of the home, adequate childcare is a casualty of the exorbitant demands that are placed on women who migrate to the border.

Similar to *llavero* children, domestic violence is another hidden phenomenon that speaks to the social geographies of power at work in the household spaces of Nogales. Domestic violence is a complex issue with intricacies beyond the scope of this study, but its alleged predominance in Nogales[11] clearly serves to maintain the gendered and economic orders of the border city. For one, men have very little accountability for the domestic violence they commit—primarily due to the lack of advocacy services available to women. In addition, because of economic necessity women are often dependent upon

their husband's income to support themselves and their children. In my field research, I was only aware of one of my interviewees, Graciela, who was a victim of domestic violence. After Graciela worked up the courage to publicly denounce her husband, he eventually moved back in for reasons that were not made expressly clear. However, Graciela did admit that she could not support her children on the earnings she took in sewing school uniforms. Maria spoke of the cycle of domestic violence, emphasizing the lack of financial and social resources available to victims:

> We just finished talking about the whole cycle [of domestic violence], that I don't have a job, where can I go, I'll put up with it for a little bit longer…where can I go? If I'm in a difficult situation, what authority will help me? Who will give me a place to stay while this intrafamiliar crisis that we are living continues? I am sure that nobody…"

Rosario, a long-time community leader, was one of the only internal migrants to speak about domestic violence in a relatively direct way. Recognizing its persistence in her colonia, she helped to organize weekly meetings for couples led by social workers and psychologists:

> There is a lot of mistreatment. To some women, they hit them…and for this we have had some help come…right now they are giving us a, it's a school for parents, it's called. A psychologist comes, and the classes that they are giving us are, very complete classes, and we are so few, the people who are going to take this course…in this way we have received support, also through CISAL[12] they've given us family talks, and all that, but nobody…when someone asks them, 'do you have problems in your house?" Nobody has them, nobody has problems, we're all happy. Well, I imagine that it has gone badly for them! So in this, for example, they've come to give us some talks, but they're almost no good like that, because the people don't go. The people don't go, and the moment when there really is a domestic crisis, they go for help to the DIF[13] but many times they don't pay them any attention. Or [the potential class attendees] give the reason that they're not up for [going to the classes]. Not those who truly need to go. The people with the most problems, those who most need the talks, don't go. It's because they're scared, or I don't know, I don't know what…"

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[11] I refer to the "alleged" predominance of domestic violence in Nogales because it is based on anecdotal evidence from my previous relationships with women in Nogales. There exist very few services for victims of domestic violence in Nogales, and for the most part it is not spoken about.

[12] CISAL is a health clinic in Nogales that specializes in women's issues

[13] DIF, or "Desarrollo Integral de la Familia" is a social service, government-sponsored agency in Nogales.

Rosario's impression was that the phenomenon of domestic violence would not diminish, so long as the couples who truly needed help would not seek assistance.

While it was not apparent in my particular subject sample, single motherhood is another predominant characteristic of household spaces in Nogales. A house-to-house neighborhood survey conducted by social workers associated with a community center in Nogales, for example, found that single mothers constituted up to half of households in several working class colonias on the eastern side of the city. (BorderLinks 2003) The researchers of the survey did not document the particular circumstances leading to single motherhood. For example, it was unclear if their husbands migrated to the United States and never returned, or if the father of the children still lived in Mexico but simply did not claim responsibility for them. In the case of Ana, for much of the time she is effectively a single mother while her husband works in Puerto Peñasco. But unlike single mothers on their own, Ana's husband is still the family's primary breadwinner and he faithfully supports Ana and their son. Nevertheless, the findings of the survey provide further evidence of the exorbitant demands placed on women on the border.

What do the existence of *llavero* children, domestic violence, and single mothers imply about the workings of gender in household spaces in Nogales? Control over household spaces is paradoxical. Women's domestic duties (including child care) are either dictated or assumed, and domestic violence is prevalent. Yet at the same time, there are instances (such as in Ana's case), when women exert leverage over household spaces. While single motherhood may give women new roles and responsibilities as the head of a household, at the same time is it another example of the heavier workload that women assume after migrating to the border. Other researchers have also come to

contradictory conclusions when studying post-migration gender roles. Although her research is based on transitions with U.S. immigration, Hodagneu-Sotelo finds that after migration, "immigrant women's spatial mobility and their access to valuable social and economic resources beyond the domestic sphere also expand" (Hodagneu-Sotelo 2003:27). However, for other immigrant women, "gains" within a specific sphere, like the household, are frequently accompanied by strains and contradictions (28), much like I encountered in my research.

The colonia: the workings of gender in public space

"¿Qué más puedo hacer para mi colonia?"[14]
~ María, women's program director, talking about her impression of older women involved in colonia committees

In the public spaces of the colonias, the workings of gender are similarly complex. In Nogales, organizing around community and labor issues is undertaken almost entirely by women. In this sense, my research with women in Nogales resonates with Cravey's conclusion that, "against all odds, workers continue struggling to provide for themselves and asserting their right to earn an adequate living" (Cravey 1998:90). At the same time, my interviewees and other researchers alike have been reticent to declare that women hold a greater share of power in the urban, public spaces of their new city of residence.

As I spoke with Elena and Paula, two women who organize maquila workers (themselves internal migrants and former maquila workers), the gendered nature of their

[14] "What else can I do for my colonia?"

organizing efforts in the community became evident. When asked about why women tend to be more involved in activism, Paula commented,

> I feel that women fight more for what they want, and men, well, you know, they tend to fight more with punches than with words, right? And us, no, we use dialogue and that's the best…and women, well, because we know that we have children, and that we have to care for them, we are more responsible.

Through this statement, it is apparent that women fight for better working conditions in part because of their assigned responsibility for social reproduction, including childcare. At the same time, however, another organizer, Elena, spoke of how she was transformed personally by entering the maquila work force:

> It's not really like the men say – that we women, when we begin to work, that we liberate ourselves and begin to scream – no. What happens is that you begin to live, to live your own life. Normally, you live according to what he says, what he does, what he gives you, no? And when you begin to work, you realize that you can, you can do many things, and you don't necessarily have to sleep with someone…or do bad things to survive…but that you can work and be respected as a worker as well.

Elena shared that although she was still under some degree of control from her husband, entering the labor force had given her more self-confidence, both as a worker and as a woman.

In their methodology, Elena and Paula start with the "common sense", lived realities of women (and men) who work in the maquiladoras. Starting from these realities, they engage the workers in critical reflection about how the abuses they experience perpetuate a flexible labor standard, which in turn supports the existing economic order of Nogales (and, in turn, the success of the multinational companies). Drawing on their own backgrounds and using tools they acquired through training as organizers, Elena and Paula work in households and colonia spaces to advocate for change in the industrial venues of Nogales maquilas. Not only do they see the local importance of their work, they also tie it to the larger global economic context of

increasing corporate regulation that makes such work necessary. Following the model of Gramsci's organic intellectual[15], organizers Elena and Paula could embody geographer Jacqueline Chase's observation that, "it is possible to see oneself today as both a global and local actor, to take advantage of opportunities at both scales and to use global relations, networks, and markets to defend the survival and well-being of local communities" (Chase 2002:7).

In addition to the contributions of women in labor organizing efforts, the gendered nature of participation on local colonia *comites* was one of the more striking findings in my study[16]. Nearly all of my study participants reported that the committees where made up of "*casi puras mujeres*"[17]. Although I had not initially planned to concentrate on colonia organizing, the exceptional presence of women in this sphere further convinced me of the need to look at settlement processes in order to get a more accurate picture of the workings of gender in migration to the U.S.-Mexico border.

The migrants I spoke with gave several reasons for why women were more involved in these committees than men. Many stated that men simply worked more and did not have the time to be involved in such ventures, whereas women were around more and had an apparent desire to better their surroundings. Alma, for example, had the following response when I asked her about the gender imbalance:

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[15] In this sense, I argue that Elena and Paula would constitute what Antonio Gramsci has described as *organic intellectuals*, or "the thinking and organizing element of a particular fundamental social class" (Gramsci 1971, 1999:3). Writes Gramsci, "these organic intellectuals are distinguished less by their profession, which may be any job characteristic of their class, than by their function of directing the ideas and aspirations of the class to which they organically belong" (3).

[16] I would have liked to have done more nuanced research about the genesis, formation, and leadership demographic of these committees in Nogales. Generally speaking, "comites" largely evolved as partisan ventures to gain the support of colonia residents, as still some remain today. Many committees, as I will detail later, have dropped their party affiliations and now operate independently.

[17] "almost entirely women"

> Well, often it's because we as women want to see our city improve, want to see that in our colonia, there are more services, because of this…because there are any of us women who don't work, and we're seeing things because of this, and the majority of men are those who work, who support the household. Or that here, both people have to work so that you make ends meet well. Here, if only one works, often you limit yourself from many things. More when you pay the rent, or when you have to pay for this, and then that…

As reflected here, Alma started out by telling me that it was women who wanted to improve their city and their neighborhood by obtaining services. Since many women did not (formally) work, she inferred that as opposed to men, women have the time to partake in such activities. However, as she continued, Alma described how both men and women have to work in the current economic climate to be able to pay the rent and cover other basic costs. Because I had reached this same conclusion throughout my research, I began to wonder if there was more to female involvement in the colonias than the fact that more men may work outside the home. Rosario's story as a community organizer provides a nuanced view of the gendered nature of women's involvement in these efforts.

Rosario

Rosario is a 54-year-old woman originally from an ejido outside of a large city in Sonora, where she grew up as one of 12 children. After marrying, she and her husband moved to the state capital, where they lived for a couple of years and had two children. At the advice of her husband's family, many of whom were in Nogales, they decided to move to the border in 1973. They both immediately began working in maquilas:

Heather: "Why did you (all) decide to come here?"

Rosario: "For the work—because of the need for work."

Heather: "Did you already have any idea of what kind of work you were going to do?"

Rosario: "Yes, in a maquiladora. The two of us. We arrived, and that was that. Because of this, well, they told us to come because there were some relatives of his here,

and [they said] that we should come here, so that both of us could work. We worked in a maquiladora, and the kids were taken care of by his mother."

Heather: "So, did you both like working in a maquila?"

Rosario: "Well, I would have like to work somewhere else, you know? But, well, there was no other alternative. It was almost pure maquilas at that time, when we arrived here Nogales was a lot smaller. Very different from how it is now."

Rosario and her family were able to live with in-laws for a few months before they were able to move into a housing project subsidized through their maquiladora by INFONAVIT, a government-run program. They lived there for over 20 years, before deciding to be part of a land invasion in colonia on the western side of the city in the late 90s. Around the same time, Rosario was divorced from her husband, who now lives in another part of Nogales. She also met her current partner, with whom she lives in a *union libre*. Although her partner was initially controlling, Rosario made it clear early on in their relationship that she was going to do what she wanted, including starting a neighborhood store:

> Well, I have always liked business. But my partner, no. So I began to sell secretly, I sold in the street. And he did not help me. He didn't help me to carry the things, or anything. He left me alone. And little by little, my children helped me, and he as well, when he finally saw that he wasn't going to get me to stop doing this, so he also began helping so that I no longer had to sell in the street, and with everyone's help, we made this [store]. With everyone's help, we made it.

In addition to owning a store, Rosario became active in the community in other ways as well. After years of working in maquilas, she offered to help a friend in a local organizing effort. The friend, who was one of the leaders of the colonia land invasion, was also part of the *Confederación de Trabajadores Mexicanos*, or CTM. As Rosario explained, the CTM (part of the PRI party since the early 90s) contributed to many

projects in the colonia[18]. Though she was reticent about getting involved in politics, Rosario agreed to because of the personal connection, and saw it as a vehicle to accomplish some of their goals of obtaining basic services. Recently, however, Rosario has decided that she will keep working with local committees, although not as a formal political representative. Though she is no longer affiliated with the CTM, her various connections ensure her position as a respected community leader. Says Rosario,

> I am going to continue being the social voice… almost all of the projects here have gone through me. I am the leader, I am the one who goes around…I was a legislator [in the CTM]. So because of my history many people come to me. From my history, or because I know a certain person, because of that. And I have…social connections. Over there in the municipio. And, well, that makes things easier for me, a bit.

Because of long-standing social connections from the time when Rosario was working the CTM, she is still a respected figure in the colonia who residents approach for help on a variety of issues[19]. Her neighborhood store is where many of the organizing and information exchanges are gestated. In addition to the demands for basic services, Rosario is also attentive to problems of drug trafficking and crime, as well as widespread domestic violence in the colonia. She is concerned for residents' safety and aware of her informal mandate to do what she can to address these problems.

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[18] Much of the involvement of the PRI party in *colonias populares* began in the aftermath of the 1988 presidential elections, when Salinas de Gortari viewed these settlements as crucial places to garner more partisan support. The party sent general secretaries to squatter neighborhoods to encourage residents to form their own committees. These political efforts, however, were widely viewed as 'socio-dramas' whereby the support for colonia residents was largely symbolic and served to promote support for the PRI. (see Craske 1993:120) In addition, the PRI committees promulgated a notion of 'citizenship' that inferred that good citizens participate in committees, and in turn receive services. Notes Craske, "Thus, if the services did not arrive, it is not a problem of bad government but the fault of bad citizens. This reinforces the view that services are not a right but a privilege" (132).

[19] Interestingly, Rosario's switch from politically-based organizing to more independent work mirrors Craske's (1993) findings that non-PRI organizing committees in Guadalajara colonias were more effective in addressing residents' real needs and concerns.

Colonia organizing efforts provides a crucial example of the transformational potential of space in Nogales. As reflected in Rosario's story, women who participate in the colonia *comites* have some degree of autonomy as they work to re-shape the spaces of their neighborhoods. While the participants in my study experienced intensified work burdens, colonia spaces in Nogales seemed to represent a venue where migrant women take more control over their lives and shaping the space around them. This was evident in the disproportional female participation in local organizing efforts as described in the last chapter, and perhaps epitomized in Rosario's experience. Initially, Rosario's neighborhood involvement began as she repeatedly went against the wishes of her partner and began to sell food in the street, before starting up her own store. Gradually, her respected status in the colonia and her personal contacts with local organizers results in her role as community leader (or, as she prefers to call it, "social voice"). As described in her case study, Rosario gets fed up with the politics of her local organizing committee, and occasionally feels that she wants to distance herself from it. In addition to the internal politics of the committee, Rosario describes the varying degrees of cooperation among colonia residents, some of whom want access to services like electricity without paying for it. Given her history as a leader and her positive reputation in the colonia, however, Rosario admits that she has no choice but to continue with community work, because people will continue to approach her.

When I asked Rosario about her impression of the gendered participation on the colonia *comites*, her response was unequivocal:

Heather: "Do you note that there are more women who participate in this than men?"

Rosario: "Almost always. It is almost always women with whom I work. With those whom I work, men, no…because they don't like it, because they want to receive

everything, let other people do it. Let other people do it, and they just enjoy these achievements, and they never understand it, that sometimes we need to be united, that the more united we are, the more people we are, the more things we are going to achieve. But often the [men] are very conforming, very conforming.

Heather: "Why do you think there are so few men who participate – because they are always working?"

Rosario: "Well, machismo, I believe. Machismo, and also because for the same reason that they don't let women participate, they say that we walk around as prostitutes, and that, this, no, no, no. That we just walk around losing our time, they say. And I think that this is it; it's their machismo. And here the majority of Mexicans are like that. My partner is also like that, but I don't pay him any attention! (laughs) So if he is macho, then I am feminist!

Rosario speaks of the tendency for women to recognize the importance of being united, but she emphasizes the hesitancy of men to become involved in the *comites*. The criticism directed toward women, in Rosario's experience, centers around an allegedly wrongful occupation of public space in the eyes of men. This narrative served as a bridge for a couple of contradictory tendencies emerged toward the end of our interview. First, despite Rosario's strong sense of feminine identity with the other women she works with, in addition to her extensive involvement (both willing and reluctant) in the colonia, Rosario confided that she does not feel safe in her neighborhood. Particularly in the last five years, gang and drug-related violence has drastically escalated. States Rosario, "*It keeps being difficult, difficult for us. And then, there is a lot of drug addiction, a lot of alcoholism, much getting into bad things, much robbery, much of everything here. In that way, for me it has been difficult, life here.*" Although she did not designate this violence as targeted toward one gender, as a woman Rosario felt particularly vulnerable. When asked if she felt secure walking around, she replied: "*No, and every day is worse; there is no peace.*" She had gone to complain at COTUMEN, a drug treatment facility for youth in Nogales, but was told that, "*prevención no había*"; there were no resources or personnel available to address the drug activity and violence.

Another concern that emerged in our discussion was the domestic violence that was prevalent in household spaces in the colonia. Even with this increased threat of gang and drug-related violence, Rosario spoke of the significant difference she perceived between the autonomy that women held in the neighborhood, and that which they had in the household. She reflected,

> Well, [women] have more control, how do I tell you, more control for example, to go and ask for support, and all that, at the mayor's office, or at whatever organization, that will help with what we are going to work on. But not in the family. Not in the family. In the family it is the man who always decides, always the man who decides, if things don't appeal to him, well, then they won't be done. That's how it is; that's how the majority of the people are here.

The dichotomy that Rosario draws between colonia and household testifies to the theory that female autonomy is perceived and felt differently across space. In my conversation with Oscar, I also became aware of how these new social geographies of power are also regionally contingent. When I asked him about women's roles on the border, Oscar distinguished between women's roles in the city compared to the countryside:

Heather: "OK, so I don't know if women somehow have different roles here in the city, than those that they would have in another region, in the ejido, for example?"

Oscar: "Well, there, there it's the opposite…it's the men. One is more adventurous there. One has to be on guard, for example, for the toughness, for the work. And here, no…it's very different. Here the woman is more, more than you…"

Oscar attributes the stronger roles of men in the countryside to the heavy, difficult work that they have to undertake there[20]. As was mentioned in his case study, Oscar found the maquila work in Nogales, and the life on the border in general, very easy. In contrast, women's new livelihoods are more paradoxical. In one sense, my findings parallel those

[20] In their study between 1990 and 1994, de Janvry, et.al. (1997) find that men constituted 96% of household heads on Mexican ejidos. In addition, 82% of male *ejidatarios* (holders of the ejido parcel) engaged in agriculture, livestock raising, and forestry as their principal economic activities (de Janvry et.al. 1997:43). In contrast, women made up about 10% of the (formal) work force during each survey year, and their principle activities were wage labor, and commerce, more specifically (43).

reached by Lawson, who researched rural-urban migration in Ecuador. Lawson found that "most in-migrant women talk about the intensification of their work burdens since their arrival in the city and about spatial constraints on their lives in the 'modern' space of the city" (Lawson 2000:3). For female migrants, therefore, the city represents a shrinking social world, a place of isolation that has intensified gendered control over their lives" (3). While Lawson's finding about intensification of work burdens ring true for the female migrants I spoke with in Nogales, I noted that the same women simultaneously display agency to own and transform the public and private spaces of their adopted city.

Chapter 3: Reflections on Agency

In addition to providing a framework through which to contrast the gendering of public and private spaces in Nogales, spatial analyses also have the potential to reveal patterns and instances of agency of individuals and groups. As a scholar concerned with the unsustainable social and environmental implications of neoliberal development, I find it difficult not to work under a social imaginary of globalization as an omnipresent, hegemonic force. On the other extreme, as an activist who has worked in the Nogales colonias for many years, I find it challenging to see beyond the local manifestations of neoliberal development, seen and felt through the dirt floors of maquila workers' homes. It seems, then, that a partial step toward reconciling these two extremes, toward bridging the local and the global (and recognizing patterns of agency and resistance therein) might be realized through two inroads of spatial analysis.

First, as I have tried to establish in this paper, it is necessary to articulate a theoretical framework that establishes the social constructed nature and transformational potential of space. This framework requires the recognition of several premises. Drawing upon Schien's Foucauldian leanings, for example, it is crucial to acknowledge the nature of space as *discourse materialized* in the form of social relations (Schein 1997:663). Just as supposedly fixed landscapes are reified and naturalized, so too are the social relations (and, as I would add, gendered and economic orders) that create these landscapes. It follows, according to Mitchell (2002:71), that scholars become more

cognizant of how landscapes are created and controlled when we understand scale (like space) to be actively and socially produced. By coming to understand landscape production, one's own position within the landscape is also illuminated. For example, in constructing their new lives in Nogales, migrant women in Nogales take active roles in shaping their workplace spaces (through labor organizing) and colonias (through colonia committee participation). Despite the reigning economic and gendered orders, women push the boundaries of these spaces, such as Elena and Paula who teach workers to stand up for themselves, and Rosario who participated in the informal economy behind her partner's back.

In addition to understanding the discursive production of space and border landscapes, it is important to employ this spatial framework in order to identify patterns and instances of agency as undertaken by individuals and groups on the border. In my research, I would add that it is particularly important to identify patterns of agency from the perspective of gender. Recognizing the interdependence of social and economic (re)production, for example, unveils the often-unacknowledged contributions of women in spaces as diverse and the maquila, the colonia, and the household. Along these lines, Mitchell ties urban movements of resistance to the forces of capitalism, in a relationship that is mutually determining. The production of space, Mitchell writes, is "the intersection of capitalist circulation and the struggle against that circulation by social groups that have a stake in living in that environment" (2002:71). Counterhegemonic actions, such as Rosario's colonia involvement, Elena and Paula's labor organizing, and even Ana's increasing household autonomy, are gradually transforming the social landscapes on the border.

But beyond understanding the production of space and the social geographies of power that constitute it, how do local-level actions, such as those undertaken by migrant women on the border, eventually affect social change? A partial answer may be found in observation that movements that are able to bridge several scales are oftentimes the most effective.[21] In the case of organizing against femicides in Juárez or maquila labor organizing in Nogales, it is interesting to note that these movements have gained international recognition through groups like Amnesty International and the American Friends Service Committee[22], who provide publicity and financial support to women's struggles. On this note, Bayes and Kelly describe the crucial element behind social change as the "dialectic between identity and recognition" (157), or, in my words, the blurry line between identifying one's agency to contest oppression, and accessing the power, resources, and strategic alliances to be able to change it.

Of all of the women spoke with, I would argue that labor organizers Elena and Paula came closest to this model of critical reflection of one's agency, paired with cross-border coalition building. They exhibit many characteristics of Gramscian "organic intellectuals" who can critically understand, and perhaps see beyond their immediate realities. Similarly, geographer Victoria Lawson, in her study of urban-rural migrants in Ecuador, argues that their unique social positionings privileges them to "question dominant narratives of neoliberal development" (Lawson 2000:173) and, to "articulate both the possibilities and contradictions of free trade growth" (174).

[21] Neil Smith, as reviewed by Marston (2000), "advocates for the possibility of 'jumping scales', or moving to a wider geographical field, in order to counter the impacts of capitalism as they are played out in everyday life" (232).
[22] There are numerous advantages of cross-border alliances, as well as critiques because of the potential for an imbalanced partnership between players in the U.S. and Mexico. For a detailed discussion of these arguments, see Fox (2002).

But in local-level spaces, must all female migrants in Nogales see themselves as global actors just because they participate in one of the world's major export processing zones? In the case studies I have presented, there are numerous examples of women who exercise agency in migration processes and settlement processes in Nogales. These are examples that may not gain international recognition, but are nevertheless significant pieces of the shifting social and cultural landscapes on the border. Acknowledging these local instances of agency requires challenging various dichotomous constructions that have upheld certain ways of conceptualizing women's roles. For example, as I have illustrated in the case of Nogales, there is no clear delineation between women's agency in colonia spaces and household spaces. Migrant women display new forms of agency in both spheres, but at the same time they are constrained by new risks on the border (such as drug-related violence in the colonias), as well as the "old," holdover expectations for taking care of household duties, including child care. New social geographies of power on the border are not contained within the public-private binary, but are constantly shifting alongside changing gender roles and responsibilities.

By analyzing the *intentions* behind women's actions in colonia and household spaces, one establishes grounds to challenge a second dichotomy. Early feminist analyses of women's political action have drawn upon the duality between feminist and pragmatist, or *strategic* and *practical* gender interests[23]. According to Maxine Molyneux (1985), practical gender interests arise "from the concrete conditions of women's positioning within the gender division of labor", whereas strategic interests are derived from "the analysis of women's subordination and from the formulation of an alternative, more satisfactory set of alternatives" (232-3). In other words, Molyneux posits that there

is a linear progression from fulfilling pragmatic needs to strategically maneuvering to advance the societal position of women, thereby challenging the existing gendered (and economic) orders, such as those that exist on the border.

Although many women who shared their experiences with me in Nogales are undoubtedly aware of their positions within the socio-economic schema of the borderlands (such as the labor organizers I mention above), to pigeonhole migrant women as merely "practical" or "strategic" agents ignores the Foucauldian possibility of multiple sites of resistance across space. I concur with Craske, who argues that instead of separating women's actions into pragmatic survival acts and pre-meditated, large-scale movements for social change, that we use "a continuum which would allow us to use the concepts [of practical or strategic feminisms] in a mutable and unfixed way" (133). It is crucial to emphasize that most acts of agency and resistance (and their ramifications for change) are ones that are not publicized. These acts only become evident as one spends significant time in border communities and begins to understand the intricacies of gender, space, and power as they operate on the northern edge of Mexico—which is, in a small way, what I have tried to do throughout the course of this research.

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[23] See Kaplan (1982); Molyneux (1985)

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