International Female Migration to Atlantic Canada through Internet Mediated MatchMaking Agencies

Susan M. Brigham, Mount Saint Vincent University, has research interests that include migrant women's experiences, diversity issues in lifelong learning, international/ intercultural education, and critical feminist pedagogy.
Catherine Baillie Abidi works with the International Red Cross in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Her research interests include immigrant and refugee issues and conflict-related humanitarian issues.

Abstract
In this paper we draw on post-colonial feminism in order to analyze the complex ways in which gender, race, class, nationality, and education affect women who have migrated to Atlantic Canada via the international Internet matchmaking industry. We discuss power which is a recurring theme identified in the data.

Résumé
Dans cet article, nous nous fondons sur le féminisme post-colonial afin d'analyser les façons complexes par lesquelles le genre, la race, la classe, la nationalité et l'éducation affectent les femmes qui ont émigré au Canada Atlantique par le biais de l'industrie d'entremetteur internationale par internet. Nous discutons du pouvoir, qui est un thème récurrent identifié dans les données.

I find what I need. Magic. First man I write. I find very quickly. Like magic I find him.
(Russian woman - Natasha)

My friends couldn't believe it. "Why would she want you? You are old and she is young"...They could not believe that there was a woman on the other side of the world in Russia who was interested in me!
(Canadian man - Jack)

Some men see the woman as a sense of possession because they have invested a lot of money into the relationship.... I just say to them "you can't purchase a person." (Immigrant Service Provider - Bea)

Introduction

The practice of international female migration through Internet mediated matchmaking agencies or so-called "mail-order bride marriages" is a poorly understood and inadequately considered aspect of women's migration to Canada despite the fact that it has been growing internationally, particularly since the advent of the Internet (Lacroix and Brigham 2006; Kojima 2001; Perez 2003; Simons 2001; Vergara, 2000). These relationships are defined as a "transaction between a [Canadian] man and a woman from...countries [of the South], usually brokered by an agent, who is part of the mail-order bride industry, via catalogues or the Internet" (Philippine Women Centre of B.C. and the Status of Women Canada Policy Research 2000, 1). Louise Langevin and Marie-Claire Belleau (2000) assert that one of the main objectives of such relationships is to enable women to immigrate to Canada.

The purposes of this paper are to examine some of the complexities inherent in

international female migration through Internet mediated matchmaking agencies and understand the ways in which policy (for example, immigration policy) has an impact on migrant women in Canada. To do this we draw on data from a qualitative study conducted in Atlantic Canada. We centre our discussion around the transcripts and notes of in-depth interviews with one Russian woman and one Canadian man, both of whom used an international Internet matchmaking agency to meet one another. We also draw on interview data from four immigrant service providers in Atlantic Canada. In this paper, we begin with a discussion of the theory of post-colonial feminism as it pertains to our study. We then provide background on the prevalence of the phenomenon of Internet mediated matchmaking, policy and legislation, followed by a discussion and critical analysis of power, a dominant theme arising in our data. Finally, we conclude with recommendations related to a) settlement, support, education, and legislation and b) research.

Theoretical Framework

We draw on insights from post-colonial feminism in order to better understand the complex ways in which the experiences of migrant women are impacted by class, gender, race, culture and language, nationality, geographic origin and residence, level of education, previous work and cross-cultural experience, familial/kinship roles, and so on. Despite Russia's current location in the global community as an economic superpower and a member of the "G-9," we argue that a post-colonial feminist analysis provides an effective framework to analyze our data. Post-colonial feminism also provides a basis from which to analyze the data we received from the service providers who reference women's experiences from the global South.

Our theoretical assumptions are multifaceted to ensure a holistic analysis of the experiences of this particular group of migrant women. Firstly, we recognize that women are not a homogenous group (that is, they are divided by class, race, ethnicity,

citizenship, geographical location, level of education, etc.). We also recognize that women migrants have varying degrees of social and cultural capital, which has an impact on their migration experience (Riano and Baghdadi 2007). Finally, we recognize that the politics of difference result in unequal social relations locally, nationally and internationally (Dhruvarajan and Vickers 2002; Razack 2002).

We are critical of the conception of a composite, singular "migrant woman." Such a conception reduces the material and historical heterogeneities of the lives of migrant women and supports a "monolith notion of patriarchy or male domination that leads to the construction of a similarly reductive and homogeneous notion" (Mohanty 2003, 19). In the literature, we found feminist analyses that consistently attempt to homogenize women who migrate to Western countries through Internet mediated matchmaking agencies. For example Langevin and Belleau (2000), Donna Hughes (1999), and Vanessa Vergara (2000) discuss women who develop relationships with men from Western countries through Internet based matchmaking agencies as either trafficked, naïve, passive, suffering false consciousness, and coerced solely by their desperate circumstances (Lacroix and Brigham 2006) or all of the above. By categorizing migrant women in binary opposition to men and/or to other women, such as women from Western Europe, Canada, the United Staes or Australia, we ignore the intricacies and effects of interlocking systems of oppression in which we are all embedded.

In the next section, we explore how patriarchal capitalism as it is enacted through such complex organized practices as Canada's immigration policy shapes the experiences of migrant women at the intersecting sites of power. We look briefly at the historical background and then current policy and legislation in juxtaposition to the narratives of our research participants.

Background

Historically, the means and methods of marriage have often included the

intervention of a matchmaker (Kojima 2001; Langevin and Belleau 2000; Simons 2001). In the North American context, the first accounts of women immigrating for the purpose of marriage were the *filles du Roi* in French settlements in Canada during the mid-seventeenth century, when French women traveled to New France with the intention to marry a French man (Langevin and Belleau 2000). In the United States (US) during the nineteenth century, men from China, Japan, and the Philippines immigrated to Hawaii and the West Coast to work on sugar cane plantations and farms. Restrictive immigration laws combined with anti-miscegenation policies prohibiting relations (marriage) between Asian men and White women contributed to a "picture bride" system. The "picture bride" system involved an exchange of photographs between men living in the US and women from Asia. It developed in the early 1900s and led to the migration of several thousand Asian women to the US (Perez 2003). The main distinctions between the international Internet matchmaking agencies, the *filles du Roi*, and the "picture bride" matchmaking system are the nationalities of the individuals involved in the relationships (Langevin and Belleau 2000; Simons 2001) as well as the obvious role of modern communication technology, namely the Internet. The current prevalence of the international Internet matchmaking industry is virtually unknown due to lack of research on the issue and the lack of credible data (Simons 2001). Although there is limited information in the literature about the prevalence of international Internet matchmaking that result in marriage, there is even less information about informal relationships that evolve through international Internet matchmaking agencies.

Little is known about the international Internet matchmaking industry in Canada (Lacroix and Brigham 2006). Of the little research that exists about the experiences of migrant women and the relevant policies, the literature is almost exclusively focused on the experiences of women from the Philippines (Philippine Women Centre of B.C. and the Status of Women Canada Policy Research

2000). According to the Philippines Women Centre of British Colombia, 3,500 women from the Philippines have entered Canada on "spousal" or "fiancée" visas; however this figure does not reveal how many of these women have met their partners/spouses through an Internet matchmaking agency (Philippine Women Centre of B.C. and the Status of Women Canada Policy Research, 2000). Our immigrant service provider informants state that the women they have worked with who developed relationships through international Internet matchmaking agencies in Nova Scotia are largely from Eastern Europe (particularly Russia), Latin America, the Philippines, and the Caribbean; on average they are in their mid-twenties; and they are often highly educated individuals.

Policy and Legislation

At the international level, there is little policy or legislation dedicated to the issue of marriage migration. The main international body of law that is referred to in the literature in connection to the international Internet matchmaking industry is the Palermo Convention (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2006). This body of law, to which Canada is a signatory, focuses on the recruitment, migration and exploitation of persons and is not exclusively focused on intercultural marriages (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2006).

The Philippines, Australia and the United States are among the few countries to enact specific legislation pertaining to the international Internet matchmaking industry. The Philippines passed the *Republic Act* 6955 called the "Anti-Mail Order Bride Law" in 1990, which sought to protect Filipino women from being exploited in their quest for economic security (Hughes 1999). Australia has introduced policy to limit the number of foreign partner sponsorships (Rossiter 2005). Australia also provides residency to migrant women even if their marriages to Australian nationals fail (Philippine Women Centre of B.C. and the Status of Women Canada Policy Research 2000). The United States has three areas of legislation that specifically regulate the international Internet matchmaking

industry (Simons 2001). The K-1: Fiancée Visa and the CR-1: Conditional Resident Visa provide opportunities for US citizens to apply to support the immigration of a fiancé or spouse (Simons 2001). US law requires that during the application process for both the K-1 and the CR-1 Visas, all matchmaking agencies provide information on the prospective groom (including his income) to the prospective bride prior to immigration (Simons 2001). The third piece of legislation in the US is the *Violence Against Women Act* (VAWA) of 1994 which has a component that seeks to protect migrant women if they are experiencing domestic violence (Simons 2001).

There is no specific legal framework that regulates the international Internet matchmaking industry in Canada (Langevin and Belleau 2000). Citizenship and Immigration Canada policies restrict the migration of minors; restrict sponsorship from Canadians who have committed violent crimes; and require that a relationship must have existed for at least one year for Internet relationships/marriages to be considered for approval (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2007). Although the government created new legislation in 2008 restricting the number of partners a Canadian can sponsor within a certain time frame, Bella, one of our service provider informants, suggests this change in legislation has more to do with curbing migration than supporting women. Unlike legislation in the US and Australia, women migrating to Canada have few options to apply for immigration status without the sponsorship of their partner/spouse (Langevin and Belleau 2000; Philippine Women Centre of B.C. and the Status of Women Canada Policy Research 2000). Women who come to Canada via the international Internet matchmaking industry require spousal sponsorship in order to stay in Canada. Bea recalls several clients who wanted advice on the question: "This is my sponsor, how long do I have to stay with him?" In other cases, Bea's clients experience difficulty accessing health care because they were not officially sponsored and were in Canada on visitor visas (visitors do not have access to national

health care). This lack of access to healthcare is also a concern for those whose visas have expired (for example, when their partners do not apply for an extension before the expiration of a visa). Those whose visas have expired are deemed to be contravening the *Immigration Act* for being "out of status" and can be deported. Threat of deportation may be used by the Canadian partner to keep the non-Canadian visitor isolated.

Methodology

We employed a qualitative research methodology, which involved in-depth interviews with: an immigrant woman (Natasha) who migrated to Canada via an Internet mediated matchmaking agency, a Canadian man (Jack) who formed a relationship with Natasha through an Internet mediated matchmaking agency, and immigrant service providers at women's centres and immigrant settlement agencies who were not directly connected to the aforementioned participants. Each interview lasted between 1 and 2 hours. Half of the interviews were conducted by both researchers and half by the first author alone. Some of the interviews were audio-taped; however, where some participants opted not to be audio-taped we took interview notes only. Although interpretation services were offered, the interviews were all conducted in English as preferred by the participants. All participants were assured of their confidentiality. All names of participants are pseudonyms.

By focusing on one couple (Natasha and Jack) we are able to tease out dimensions of diversity such as class, ethnicity, citizenship, geographical location, and level of education. We do not claim that Natasha represents all women who migrate through Internet mediated relationships, although some of her experiences in Canada may be similar to those of other women who migrate in this way or women who migrate on visitor visas in general. Similarly, we do not claim that Jack represents other men seeking a relationship through Internet mediated matchmaking agencies. We do acknowledge, however, that their relationship fits some of

the descriptions of other couples that form relationships through Internet mediated matchmaking agencies, in that she is younger then he, is more highly educated, and is seeking a better standard of living than she can find in her country of origin.

Natasha is in her mid thirties. She has a child from her former marriage. The child lives with family in Russia. Jack is in his early fifties and is also divorced with a child. Natasha and Jack have known one another for approximately one year. They are not married. Natasha is a graduate student in Russia and is currently unemployed. She is in Canada on a visitor visa. Jack is employed as a salesman in a company.

Women who migrate to Canada through Internet mediated relationships are a particular heterogeneous group of migrants who have received limited scholarly attention but whose lives have very much been impacted by globalization processes, particularly with the rise of the Internet. This group of women is often referred to in popular culture as "mail-order brides." However, we feel the term "mail-order bride" is both highly ambiguous and problematic as it has been used to construct some women in certain ways such as coming from low socio-economic backgrounds, having low levels of education, being young, "traditional," and "feminine," and according to Langevin and Belleau (2000) having a penchant for tall, white, blue-eyed men.

In this paper we simply use the term migrant women to refer to the specific group of women in our research who are/were citizens of countries other than Canada, who may or may not have established legally recognized or registered marriages with Canadian men but who have developed relationships with Canadian men through Internet based matchmaking agencies and have come to Canada.

Having provided the historical and contemporary scene pertaining to international Internet matchmaking we next draw on the narratives of our research participants to highlight the ways in which the theme of power was taken up in relation to their experiences and understandings of the international Internet matchmaking phenomenon.

Discussion

POWER

> It all boils down to power.
> (Sophie, immigrant service provider)

In the data a recurring theme we identified was around issues of power. We had no specific interview questions that included the word "power" yet it was a word that arose frequently. The term "power" was taken up by our research participants in different ways. For some of our research participants power is defined as a complicated network embedded in relations and exercised through immigration policies, immigrant service provider agencies, etc. For others, it was defined simply as such that when someone has it, other persons do not and are disadvantaged. For example, both Sophie and Bella compare so-called present day "mail order brides" with "war brides" (women who immigrated to Canada to marry Canadian military men during World Wars One and Two). Both service providers feel that unlike the latter the former lack "equal power in the relationship." Bella elaborates: "[A war bride] had the power to reverse the position. [She could say,] 'You can live with me in England'." In this way colonial power is invoked by those from the British motherland, a power that cannot be claimed by a woman from the South. Bella agrees with Sophie's suggestion that the term "'Mail Order Bride' only goes with two nationalities, Russian and the Philippines [sic]." Bella then distinguishes Russian women from Filipino women based on various levels of power that certain women are assumed to have, presumably because of their class and savvy. She states,

The women from the Philippines are usually coming from a poor family...Russian women are really smart enough to learn the human rights as defined in Canada. They can easily present themselves [to authorities] as abused. At the same time they cannot be compared with women from the Philippines. Two different levels.

For Bella, women migrating from England during the world wars and present day Russia are set apart from the "ever poor Filipina." While a distinction is made between nationalities of migrant women as suggested in the above quotes, when discussing them in contrast to white Canadian men both Sophie and Bella tend to group women from the South as a singular disempowered group. This supposedly unified group of migrant women is formed in opposition to men, particularly white Canadian men who are also assumed to be a unified homogeneous group. In contrast to the migrant women, white Canadian men are described as "more powerful" based on their gender, their assumed economic privilege, their geographical location, their language and culture. Sophie comments: "Men have power. They can do whatever they want with a [migrant] woman. They can get away with more." She adds:

[Because] the man offers an opportunity for a woman to migrate [and] it is hard to get to Canada any other way, the man demands an extra mile of whatever they want because they have invested in them. The man has money. There's no balance [or] equality between them [man and the woman]. They own them. Are we going back to slavery?

Bella also emphasizes the power imbalance. She describes a migrant woman this way: "[The migrant woman is] scared. How does she know any better? She doesn't speak English. She doesn't have information. If there is more equal power distribution, but it is unbalanced."

Natasha and Jack both talk about the ways in which Natasha's right to be in Canada is dependent upon Jack as is her access to healthcare and transportation. For example, Jack suggests that the decision about when and if Natasha would come to Canada rested primarily with him. He explains: "[At first] I was concerned I was taking her away from her family and her friends....And I thought maybe it would be better just to leave her in Russia and not go through the process. Then...I said, 'OK, I'd bring her to Canada.'"

As her sponsor Jack elaborates on his critical role in Natasha's migration process:

[Citizenship and Immigration] has to have a letter of invitation from me to give to her. They have to have a letter from my employment to say I have a job. Have to have a letter of my income to show I can support her financially if she came over here. All that just for her to come as a visitor and you have to pay every time 75 dollars. As soon as she got the visa I called the travel agent and got her a ticket.

In this way Natasha's dependence on Jack for her visit to Canada is evident as he, the sponsor, abides by the immigration laws, although the decision to take up Jack's offer ultimately rests with Natasha. On the topic of sponsorship, Bea, an immigrant service provider, explains that the reliance on the Canadian partner contributes to a power discrepancy within the interpersonal relationship. She states that should a man choose to sponsor his partner, "he is responsible for [his partner] for three years. But maybe he does not want to sponsor her. If she is sponsored she will have all the rights of a permanent resident. If he does not sponsor her he has more power. He holds that power over her."

Jack and Natasha both discussed the issue of sponsorship and the insecurity of Natasha's present visitor status. Here Jack explains the difficulty and precariousness of Natasha's sponsorship application:

We have to apply for visitor visa and everything [each time]. It has been a single visa where she can come once and go back...we have to wait [every time we apply]. It all depends on the visa officer in Moscow...The immigration officer said it is better to keep bringing her back under a visitor visa until she can remain...CIC [Citizenship and Immigration] can always say no and try again.

Natasha has similar concerns about her status. She states, "For me, better [get married] in Canada....Because I think about documents. I don't think about [wedding] party. I always think about documents for me..."

ANALYSIS

When analyzing the ways in which power is exercised in Internet mediated relationships, many of our immigrant service provider participants described a conceptualization of power which maintains a "victimhood dogma" (Chow 1993, 68) of migrant women, particularly women from the South. According to most of the immigrant service providers, women who look for Internet mediated relationships are largely passive, ill-informed, dependent and desperate. These migrant women are either blameless victims of economic restructuring or they are blamed for their desire to become involved with men outside of their countries and migrate to pursue economic security.

The comments of the immigrant service providers, particularly in regard to the ways in which they discuss power and how it is invested, ignores the directionality of the power relationships between/within hemispheres, nation states, genders, classes, and individuals. This reductive notion of power is bolstered by the ways in which some of the service providers reduce the material and historical heterogeneities of the lives of migrant women, with some distinctions between Russian and Filipino, and a monolithic notion of male domination. This assumes a "stable, ahistorical something that apparently oppresses most if not all the women in these countries" (Mohanty 2003, 19). It also reinforces assumptions that migrant women live in unfortunate circumstances in their home countries and therefore would be better off if they migrate to Canada but only if they do not come to Canada for the purpose of an Internet mediated relationship, in which case the women will be worse off in Canada (where they may live in fear, ignorance, and possibly confined in a form of slavery). Moreover, it excludes other conceptions of gender and deflects a critical analysis of the interlocking systems of oppression.

Our research participant, Natasha, discusses power and in doing so challenges and also confirms some of the service providers' perceptions. Her views offer a more dynamic understanding of operations of power. Natasha's narrative troubles the neat simplified assumptions of service providers Bella and Sophie. She resists the fixed images imposed on her as a migrant woman and in this way we are reminded that sexuality is located within matrices of power, produced within discursive and institutional historical practices (Foucault 1990). For example, in contrast to the notion of a woman desperate, ill-informed and poor, Natasha describes herself as a healthy, fit, attractive, middle-class woman with a high level of education, a graduate student in Russia, with a network of support, motivated by a desire for a new relationship and a change in country of residence. She describes her life in Russia as "not a good life" partly because she is a divorced single mother. She also underscores the problems of unemployment, ageism, a lack of "good looking" men, and men's promiscuity. Her decision to use an Internet mediated matchmaking agency was a choice she made with her "eyes wide open." It provided her options, which she could take or leave. Her position in Canada while precarious as a visitor is far from what she would describe as slave-like. She sees her life in Canada not so much as an escape from dreadful circumstances but as a place where she can be with the person with whom she is in love. She indicates that her life in Canada cannot be easily described as better or worse than in Russia. She resists a list of neatly lined up pros and cons; rather, she presents a more complicated picture of her experience in Canada, while calling attention to the need for a deeper analysis of the relations of ruling as they impact on migrant women.

Natasha explains her view of Canada and how it has changed: "For people in my country, Canada like star, like impossible go to Canada. You cannot go. [Compared with] different countries, we always think, Oh, Canada is very good, the United States very good, but I stay here [in Canada], and I see not all good."

She elucidates that Canada's health care system, quality of food especially for babies, and state support for families are not as good as they are in Russia. She also declares Canadian women pay little attention

to their appearance and cleanliness and that of their family members. She further highlights her present lack of money, support, close friendships and family, interactions with other Russian speakers, and access to English language classes. Natasha feels the isolation of living in a rural area of Atlantic Canada. She says,

I never say I am upset I am in Canada. For me very difficult. But I try stop thinking about [it]...Difficult I am alone and because no one come. Nobody come. Nobody speak. I have no friends. No women walk with babies. This big problem. I try to forget about this problem. Um, I miss about this relation maybe all my life...I think maybe later I can have a relations. Perhaps later maybe I can have relations with the woman cut my hair. Nice woman, young woman...I try but it is difficult.

For Natasha the difficulties experienced in Atlantic Canada stem largely from her immigration status, her lack of a support network and limited resources (financial and otherwise). The research participants in this study highlight contextual issues in their identification and articulation of power. They underscore ambiguities and contradictions in their perceptions of the representations of Internet mediated relationships and the people involved in them. While the data force us to question the ethno/Western-centric, sexist and racist representations, they also point to political implications of power. We discuss those in our conclusion.

Conclusion

Power, as was highlighted by the research participants, is a valuable concept on which to focus. An analysis of power helps us recognize this complicated, misrepresented sector of women's migration. Through this focus we are forced to be attentive to the many and varied ways power is invested in our lives, in our social spaces, our societal structures and institutions, and in our "infinitesimal mechanisms" (Foucault 1980, 99). Even though each relationship involves unique challenges and experiences, it is apparent that there is a general lack of awareness of the complexity of issues facing

this particular group of migrant women in Canada and a dearth of research on the topic in Atlantic Canada. Some of the issues as indicated in our findings are that migrant women may find themselves in precarious situations due to a multiplicity of factors including legislation that is inadequate for protecting some migrant women, lack of status or sponsorship, lack of language competency, and lack of awareness of their basic rights and freedoms. We summarize our findings and make recommendations within these two categories: a) settlement, support, education, and legislation and b) research.

SETTLEMENT, SUPPORT, EDUCATION AND LEGISLATION

Our findings indicate that multiple barriers exist for this specific group of immigrant women to access settlement and support services. The barriers range from the lack of status (and therefore limited access to assistance from settlement agencies), limited access to information and support (such as legal and language support), and the negative societal perceptions (including those of immigrant settlement workers) of migrant women. Migrant women (and others) who are in Canada on a visitor visas cannot access immigrant services (with the exception of employment services if the visitor has a work permit). The barriers are further intensified for women migrating to rural areas.

Canada's legislation related to migrant women is weak. Isolation, lack of a support network, and dependency on their Canadian partners contributes to the settlement and support challenges of migrant women. The isolation they may experience in combination with the precariousness of their immigration status can cut this group of immigrant women off from essential services and affect their adjustment in a new cultural environment in multiple ways. Without access to services and learning opportunities such as language training, orientation programs, health care, employment, or peer support, migrant women who come to Canada via the international Internet matchmaking industry

can experience a level of vulnerability that exceeds that of other immigrant women.

Current policy has evolved from colonialist discourse reflecting ethnocentric and patriarchal ideologies. The legal framework that exists in Canada has enhanced the level of vulnerability of migrants who come to Canada (Langevin and Belleau 2000). Women migrating to Canada through international Internet match-making have few options to apply for immigration status without the sponsorship of their partner/spouse, unlike in the US and Australia where legislation provides some forms of protection for migrant women.

We recommend that women (and men) be given access to clear information about their rights in Canada, pertaining to immigration law regarding sponsorship and visitor visas; family law (marital, divorce, child welfare law), criminal law and civil law. They require information and access to language training resources, skills training, and other resources available for immigrants, such as business start-up loans. This information must be made accessible (translated in many languages) through ethnic/cultural/religious groups, web sites, embassies, points of entry and on the Internet (Canadian Law and Modern Day Foreign Brides 2007). As Jack states,

[There should be some way that they inform immigrants about any kind of opportunity] like some kind of immigrant portal, on-line or something where they can go and read it in their language what's available for them showing them what they can do and how they can contribute back to Canada, because if they can get a loan to start a business [and] then offer employment, they can give back to the country that accepted them.

Local immigrant settlement agencies need to increase and enhance services for this population of women, by advertising their services in many places and in multiple languages and providing easy access to contact information, as well as to translators and attorneys. Further, it is critical to work in creative ways to raise consciousness and awareness of the barriers experienced by this multifaceted group of women so as to challenge societal attitudes and perceptions and existing legislation. We recommend that in the long term, policy analysis and further research as to how policy can be transformed be undertaken.

RESEARCH

Due to the lack of research that exists to help us understand the power relations at the micro, meso and macro levels that affect the complex experiences of this particular heterogeneous group of migrant women, it is imperative that activists, feminists, advocates, adult educators, researchers, and others who focus on social justice find ways to work with, open up safe spaces for dialogue with, and above all hear the range of migrant women's voices. This requires vigilance against reproducing hierarchies. It requires persistent and careful attention to the specificities of women's experiences, and a tireless critiquing of the concept and construction of "migrant women."

This also entails critically analyzing the complex reality between power and relations and understanding power beyond negative terms, as Foucault (1979, 294) demands: "We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it 'excludes,' it 'represses,' it 'censors,' it 'abstracts,' it 'masks,' it 'conceals.'" Canada has a global reputation for being a hospitable multicultural society, yet Canadian legislation and services do not protect or support many women migrating via the international Internet matchmaking industry. In Atlantic Canada, the buzzwords around attraction and retention of immigrants are "welcome," "welcoming communities" and "welcoming environment" (Province of New Brunswick 2009; Province of Newfoundland and Labrador 2009; Province of Nova Scotia 2005; Province of Prince Edward Island 2009) but what do those words mean? All of us have a moral responsibility to assess this concept, to be critical of the ubiquitous pleasant sounding words "welcoming" and "community" to discover how power courses through them. We need to find the radical counter-hegemonic significance in them so that making newcomers "welcome" in the

Atlantic Canadian "community" does not begin and end with pinning a Canadian flag pin on a migrant's lapel. Welcoming requires questioning taken-for-granted assumptions and taking political action in solidarity with one another so as to ensure that the human rights of all are met. It requires keeping Edward Said's statement in mind: "No one can deny the persisting continuities of long traditions, sustained habitations, national languages, and cultural geographies, but there seems no reason except fear and prejudice to keep insisting on their separation and distinctiveness, as if that was all human life was about. Survival, in fact, is about connections between things" (Said 1993, 336).

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