Living on the margins : illness and healthcare among Peruvian migrants in Chile

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Chapter VI

Families, Identities and Frontiers

6.1 Introduction

> Graciela, pondering their years in Chile says*: Chile has given us food for four years. It has given us all these things. It has given us money, work, all this that we are taking along*.
> To this I said: *well, yes Graciela, but you have earned it out of your own work.*
> *Yes* (she says), *and they* (the Chilean employers) *exploit us. …Our strength.*

Migrants' identities are like pieces of a broken mirror. Migrants recognise each other's faces in some of its broken parts. In others, new features begin to be reflected. Migration involves changes in migrants' identity as well as the reassertion through its enactment of other and more persistent dimensions of their identities. While some dimensions are constitutive of the condition of being a migrant, others are in the process of being redefined and negotiated, to a large extent, as an effect of the influence of the host society. Yet, most of these dimensions become apparent in the boundaries – or differences – that exist among migrants themselves and the broader Chilean society. Migrants' reflection on what is seen as central to their identity often emerges in comparison with –and contrapostion to– the Chilean society. This chapter explores various dimensions of migrant's identity as well as some of its redefinition.

One of the shared elements of being a migrant is the fact that most, if not all, have left close family members behind in Peru. They are part of transnational families. Maybe it is this circumstance which gives them a sense of similar purpose and compels them to live under similar constrained circumstances in order to provide for those left behind. Being part of a transnational family also implies great emotional burden shared by these migrants. The chapter begins by looking at migrants as members of those transnational families and examines the efforts invested and dynamics involved in keeping their families together across national frontiers.

A following section examines another dimension of migrants' identity – this time their national identity – through food related practices**.** These practices include the preparation, eating and talking about food**.** Two processes are observed here. Firstly, food practices are seen as 'liberating'; they reinforce social linkages among migrants creating a sense of place and of belonging to a common national identity. It is argued that such food practices constitute a critical social domain for the perception of selves among Peruvian migrants in Chile.

Indeed, in this rundown housing unit, migrants cook their own good Peruvian food, far from the gaze of their Chilean employers. In this sense, the compound serves as a social space where Peruvians are free not only to cook their own food, but also to regain a sense of control over their own lives through social interactions with other Peruvians. Through their food practices migrants differentiate themselves from Chileans and assert their own national identity (Núñez 2005). Secondly, while food is a celebration of their

national identity, it also confirms the traditional sexual division of labour since the task of cooking continues to be assigned to women. This issue is discussed next.

Changes in gender identities and gender relations among the migrants are also discussed. These have been triggered by women's involvement in the labour market but also by the influence of living in a more liberal society. Gender identities are examined along with the coexistence of conservative and innovative behaviour. While migrants redefine some aspects of gender identities in more egalitarian terms, some other traditional dimensions are retained in the new context – such as the ideal of the 'decent woman'. Forms of male control are reinstituted in reaction to women's increasing freedom.

The last section explores interfacing with Chilean society. This is done through migrants' perceptions of their differences in relation to Chileans. An issue such as the change of status, which particularly affects educated migrants in Chile, can be seen as a reflection of the imposition of a foreign identity upon migrants. This is very much a reflection of the general exclusion affecting them in the host society. Finally, the issue of discrimination is discussed here as witnessed by me, the researcher.

6.2 Transnational families

Most of the migrants included in this study were part of a transnational family. These families can be defined as "families that live some or most of the time separated from each other, yet, they remain held together. They create something that can best be described as a collective welfare and unity, called 'familyhood'. This exists even across national borders" (Bryceson 2002:3).

Furthermore, important family decisions are taken via long distance communications. Indeed, transnational family life "entails renegotiating communication between spouses, the distribution of work tasks, and who will migrate and who will stay behind..." (Levitt 2004:1016). As Yeoh puts it, "the decision to migrate and the whole migratory existence are not simply based on each individual's experiences but strongly influenced by being part of a family network" (2004:148).

For many migrants, to be part of a long distant family relationship involves great emotional cost and a constant concern about their well-being. The various dimensions involved in being part of such a family are discussed here as well as tensions and conflicts associated with its dynamics. These include: (i) the formation of a transnational family, ii) the logic guiding these family bi-national movements, (iii) conjugal relations in a context where migrants are living away from home and their partners, iv) the importance of remittance money and lastly v) cultural definitions of motherhood and fatherhood, as well as the financial commitments associated to these roles.

6.2.1 Formation of a transnational family

Families, whose members have had a previous trajectory as internal migrants in Peru, seem to be better prepared to take up an international migration endeavour. In these

cases, crossing borders is seen just as 'another step' in their long-term search for better opportunities. For members of these families, migration is expected, moreover it becomes the norm. The experience of *Señora* Angélica, my neighbour, illustrates well this situation. Her case also shows how migration is a collective enterprise, based on an extended social network. Acquaintances may be part of it but their help is not always reliable as the assistance family members can provide.

> One day I asked Angélica about her family and where she came from in Peru. She showed me pictures of her family and her 9-year-old son who is under the care of his grandmother. One of these photos showed a traditional indigenous celebration in which all the participants were dancing in colourful traditional costumes. She took a deep breath expressing the sadness of missing her hometown Huancayo in the *Sierra* highlands. This was a place she left when she was 13 years old, as she migrated to Lima to live with an uncle. In the city, she finished school. Finally, she married Don Hugo and lived with him and his extended family in that same city.
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> When her older son was 6, the economic difficulties began. Her husband's salary was not enough to support the family. She planned to migrate to Japan with the help of an acquaintance. She borrowed money and bought the ticket, but the plan fell apart at the last minute. Her friend dumped her. The trip was cancelled and she lost the money for the ticket. Now, she needed to find an alternative solution since she was in debt and still stuck in Peru. This was then when she decided to migrate to Chile – a cheaper and more feasible alternative.
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> She left her husband and child behind. A year after settling down in Santiago, her husband joined her. However, after 4 years in Chile, the couple was not satisfied with their life in Chile but now they had the additional burden of a small daughter. *Señora* Angélica currently takes care of her baby and cannot carry on with paid work. She and her husband have not been able to save any money and the promotion promised to Don Hugo at work has simply not happened.
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> *Señora* Angélica is now planning to move to Italy. Her sister-in-law lives there and has offered to lend her the money to travel. Again she will go alone. This time, she was assured she would have good job opportunities in Italy as a domestic worker. However, men do not find jobs so easily.
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> *Señora* Angélica's plan is to leave her daughter with her mother-in-law in Peru. The entire family will return home as she thinks it may take her a year before she is able to migrate to Italy. In that time, her daughter will accustom herself with her grandmother. Once Angélica finds a job in Italy, she plans to send for her husband, and later her children. Then, finally her family will be reunited in Europe. When I asked her about how she felt moving so much, she said: "I only feel at home in my hometown. …Everywhere else is the same for me, it is not my home*"*.
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> *Field notes, December 2002*

Señora Angélica was ready to take up the adventure of migration again. However, in her case, the presence of family and the fact that she was not engaged in paid work, made her situation much different than the majority of the other women living in the compound. Indeed, for women working as domestics in live-in situations, the distance from their family seems to be almost unbearable. Rosita returned every two weeks to spend the weekend in the compound with her partner Lucho, whom she met in Chile a year earlier. One Saturday morning, we chatted in their room. I noticed she was having problems. I sat with her and she said with great sorrow that they would not go to Peru in December.

They had planned to attend the graduation of Rosita's eldest daughter. Then, she realised she couldn't afford to take a month off work and pay for the trip too. She had

just got back from calling her daughter to tell her the bad news. She was very affected by this, and told me with tears in her eyes: "All what I want is to go back to Peru. I need to be closer to my children. They are growing. My eldest daughter is almost 18 now and I need to be closer to her". Although she made regular telephone calls, she said it is not the same. She was crying. Rosita had been working in an in-live situation for three-and-half years, only getting days off every two weeks.

6.2.2 Family reunions

In general, if resources are available and the legal status in the country is not a problem, migrants may travel back home during Christmas, Mother's day, birthdays or school's graduations. However Rosita's situation was not uncommon as migrants often faced several impediments to travel. Limited mobility is the result of many factors such as a lack of resources, difficulty getting time off at work or having irregular legal status. Indeed, migrants who do not have regular visa status know they would risk not being allowed back into Chile again. This can be especially difficult in situations where migrants cannot be present in times of illness or attend the funeral of a close family member in Peru**.**

Migrants who enjoy more mobility are those who hold permanent visas to reside and work in Chile, or as they call it have *la definitiva* (the definite one). Such visas allow them to come in and out of the country without being questioned by border controls about their intentions. In addition, they are entitled to bring dependent family members into the country, a prerogative not available to those holding temporary visas. However, in order to maintain such visas, migrants should not be away from Chile for more than one year. Stories abounded of relatives that were not allowed to enter into the country.

> Demetrio is worried. He and his family are getting ready to go to the airport to fetch Yajaira, their oldest daughter, who is about to arrive. He tells me he fears she may be sent back. To my disbelief, Don Carlos who has joined the conversation tells me the story the daughter of *Señora* Marisol. This young woman was not allowed into Chile after she had arrived in the country. Upon arrival, customs officers asked those Peruvians who were coming to Chile for the first time to stand in a separate group and all of them were immediately put on a flight back to Peru. The same night, mother and daughter were talking on the phone and were both crying.
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> *Field notes, September 2002*

Yet, for migrants who have *la definitiva,* returning home to deal with urgent matters may involve quitting their jobs. Typically, in cases of serious illness or a death in the family, employers are only willing to grant leave of one week. Unfortunately, the trip back to Peru takes a minimum of three days and the traveller may not reach home on time the deceased's funeral. Therefore, the only way to be able to remain in there for a more extended period is to resign from their jobs.

In the most fortunate of circumstances, a migrant may negotiate to have another migrant work at their job as a temporary replacement. In circumstances of migrants' own illnesses, decisions may vary from returning home or somebody from home coming to assist them while they are ill.

Migration of other family members is mainly driven by economic criteria. Often members of families reunite in the new country. Predominantly these new arrivals are people who can work and are more likely to find jobs in Chile. Conversely, families separate as parents leave their children behind in the home country, to be able to fully engage in paid work. To a large extent, this is a "forced separation" and causes migrants, great emotional attrition.

As a general rule, migrant workers first come to the host country alone. After the first member of a family has migrated, others may follow. After some time, it is expected the newcomer will become economically independent. This pattern was confirmed by the fact that in most of the rooms at the compound, there were two or more adult family member and almost everybody had some relative living and working in the country.

There is a residential pattern associated with family transitions. This begins when one member of the family comes alone and shares a room with friends. As more family members arrive in Chile to join him/her, an independent room is then rented. This pattern also applies in the case of women but is also dependent on type of work regime they engage in. So typically, women who come to Chile on their own, would work as domestics and enroll themselves into live-in systems. Eventually, partners may follow them, or they find another partner in the new country. In such situations, the woman may then switch to a "living-out" system, where she would rent a room and move with her partner.

In general, migrants can never be sure of the length of their stay in Chile. They may plan to bring more relatives into the country but they, themselves, may leave at any moment if a better opportunity comes along. The decision to remain strongly depends on what the Chilean labour market has to offer them. It also depends on the exchange rate of the dollar as their remittance money is converted into that currency. If the dollar rises, as was happening at the time, then the worth of their money was less. Carlos assessed the situation in this way: "we might leave soon. To find a well-paid job now, it is very difficult. It used to be good but now the dollar is very expensive and there are too many of us" (Peruvians in Chile, competing for the same jobs).

Furthermore, as the trip to Peru is quite affordable, many migrants have moved and settled in Chile more than once. Some have made money and returned home to try operating their own businesses in Peru. If such ventures do not turn out well, such entrepreneurs see themselves obliged to return to work in Chile.

When facing problems sending money to support their families in Peru, parents may decide to bring their younger children to Chile. This is especially true of children old enough to go to school. This is never an ideal situation, as parent workers usually have to leave their children alone in the rooms; in an insecure environment. In addition, migrants also feel the influence of a more liberal society upon their children is not a positive one.

Often, new family members are born in the new country, although most pregnancies among migrant women are unwanted.[88] This is because when a new baby is born, the economic participation of the woman is interrupted for a protracted period, dramatically

[88] This topic will be further discussed in the chapters on reproductive health, chapters X and XI.

affecting the migrant family's finances. Migrants refuse to leave their small children in Chilean crèches, as they don't trust the care given there; to the extent that they would prefer to take their children back to Peru rather than arrange for day care in Chile. So often, a woman will look after her child for two or three years, until the baby can be sent back to Peru. This is done to allow her to again go back to work. Young couples especially resent having to separate from their newborn children. However this is not different to what happens to Chilean live-in domestic workers whom originally come from rural areas to work in big cities.

The case of the Campos family illustrates the efforts made to reunite. However, the precarious stability reached through these family arrangements leads to continuous movements back and forth – in and out of the country. Of the 20 rooms in the building, only Demetrio and Graciela had their four children living with them for an extended period of time. First the two younger children aged 12 and 14 arrived. But only Amparo the girl attended school. The older boy, Demetrio *chico* refused to go to school and helped his father with gardening work. Tania, their 19-year-old daughter came later to do domestic worker. However, after some months, she decided to return to Peru to live with her grandmother who had raised her, and whom she missed very much. At 21 years of age, Yahaira was the eldest child, and the last to arrive in Chile. Although her parents invested in her education – she graduated with a computer sciences diploma – she was only able to find work as a domestic. Soon Yajaira was pregnant and ran away from the family's room to live with her new partner, Chapita.

Graciela often expressed the opinion, especially following a family fight, that she would have preferred not to have had her smaller children with her in Chile. She felt they were a nuisance and a constant concern. But as it was said to me, Demetrio was missing them too much. I later gathered from other neighbours, that when he was alone without his family, he used to drink a lot. Demetrio was unfaithful and violent with Graciela. Even though the presence of his children seemed to have influenced Demetrio in a positive way, Chilean society was not having the same impact upon the children.

I arrived at the building one evening and a group of residents were discussing the rearing of children. Something had happened the night before when I was not there. Demetrio had beaten up three of his children for something they had done. He had also beaten his wife when she tried to intervene. Graciela, I heard, went to the police who came to the building but she did not press charges, so Demetrio remained free.

> But the conversation concerned the question of how to educate the children in Chile, as the neighbours were trying to understand why Demetrio had so violently punished his kids. Everyone had an opinion regarding what should be done.
> Marisol said she could not control her 20-year-old son. She remembered how she, herself, was taught and how strict her parents had been with her. The entire group seemed to agree on the view that Chilean society was "irresponsible and messy".
> They remarked on the excessive freedoms youngsters enjoy and how easily they engage in love relationships corrupted their children. All this was said after having first apologising to me for being so critical. They usually would introduce a criticism towards Chileans in front of me by saying: "…we apologise Señorita Lorena, please don't take it wrong, but Chileans are…"
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> *Field notes, November 2002*

Demetrio and Graciela's family were a particularly mobile one. Once they packed up, took the younger children and went back to Chimbote. Graciela then returned with Amparo to Santiago to continue working and re-enrolled the girl into school. After some time, Demetrio also returned to Chile but then left again. By the end of my fieldwork, Graciela was living with her daughter Yahaira, her daughters' partner *Chapita* and their newborn baby, in Chile. The rest of the family had gone back to Peru.

6.2.3 Conjugal relations

Most migrants were married and had families in Peru. However to migrate causes great tensions in the stability of partner relationships. Couples often face problems in remaining loyal to each other. This is particularly true when one partner stays away for extended periods – even years. New relationships are often formed in the host country among lonely migrants. Men and women, now living the same migrant life – sharing houses and rooms, combined with the emotional burden of being far from home and family – share a close physical proximity and common experience. They have similar needs of emotional support and can offer each other company. All are circumstances which often lead to the establishment of new love relationships. This section deals with marriages and temporary relationships as well as tensions created around these partner arrangements.

My first commitment

Migrants refer to their permanent and stable relationships in Peru as *mi primer compromiso* (my first commitment). This socially consented union has as much strength and validity as a legal marriage. In fact, legality is seen as not something necessary to assure the couple's mutual obligations.[89]

However, having a socially validated partner commitment as well as one's own family represents an important element of the ideology for this community. It legitimates migrants' endeavors and justifies their sacrifices, although – in practical terms – migrant married men and women live separated from their families in Peru. Moreover, while being away, as it was said, migrants may well engage in other partner relationships. But this ideal situation, Ñato does not fulfill; he is single 'uncommitted' man and has no family to care for. I witnessed how often he was teased assigning him all sort of potential partners – including me. This was an issue, which until the day I left the community, an invariable topic raised by members of the community, in any conversation I had with them.

Ñato was often questioned about being single and whether he had or had not, marriage plans in the future. The conclusion drawn by married women, which explains his single status, is that he is scared of women. Men on the contrary, pointed to him with some measure of envy, that he could live his life carelessly. They felt he was free from burden and the responsibility of having to support a family, Ñato was also

[89]In general, couples may marry in Chile when circumstances oblige them to do so. This would be when this status is a requirement to obtain visas or to access to social benefits such as health insurance. More often, migrants may prefer to postpone marriage until they go back to Peru. Ideally, for a wedding party, they expect to have their relatives and friends present at the celebrations.

criticised that he has not saved any money after his seven years in Chile. Furthermore, his status as a single man was often used as an argument to invalidate Ñato's efforts. He wanted the Peruvians in the compound to organise improvements in the building of Bandera Street or to participate in the meetings held by APILA (the migrants' association). The fact that he did not have a family to support undermined his credibility. However, everybody thought it was fine for him to participate and spend time in such activities.

For most of the migrants in the compound having their own family to support and a commitment in Peru gave their stay in Chile a clearly temporary character. Thus, they were simply not interested in getting involved in any local initiatives if it was not directly related to their individual needs.

My second commitment

In the new context of migration, women and men – already married or committed to other people – live together, setting up temporary relationships. This helps each participant to cope with the distance and unbearable loneliness of being away from their spouses and families. Such living arrangements may well coexist with an intended faithfulness with priority given to each one's 'first commitment', who still lives in Peru.

Migrants refer to the other relationship that has been initiated in the context of temporary relationship as *mi segundo compromiso* (my second commitment). The moral standard of these relationships lays in the commitment of the new couple to continue sending money to their respective *first commitments* and children in Peru. New couples even go together to buy presents for their respective children in Peru.

Señora Esperanza, 66 years old, and Don Luciano 60, was a couple in Chile. However, each of them was married to someone else and had a family in Peru. *Señora* Esperanza affirmed with conviction, the positive aspect of their relationship: "I always tell Luciano to save to send money to his children. I remind him of his obligations". They gave each other company. More than once, Don Luciano expressed to me with sentiment, how lonely Esperanza was before she met him. However, information about their current relationship, although known, should not be publicly acknowledged.

> We are celebrating the birthday of *Señora* Esperanza. The party was organised by Don Luciano, and held in *La Buena Mesa*. The event is being video taped. In a moment, we are all singing Happy Birthday while the couple stands solemnly in front of the camera and an imaginary public. *Señora* Esperanza calls me to stand between them. I go there. I congratulate her and join them in front of camera smiling as she introduces me.
> Esperanza then tells me in my ear "I can't hug Luciano because this video is going to be seen in Peru".
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> *Field notes November, 2002*

A source of conflict was Dany, Luciano's son who shared the room with his father. He kept the secret of his father's relationship from his family in Peru but did not get along well with *Señora* Esperanza. Here, it can be surmised that Don Luciano did not fail as a provider for his own family in Peru, and this allowed him to be on good terms with his 'first commitment' and children.

Nevertheless, as many other migrant couples engaged in a 'second commitment', the future of Esperanza and Luciano was in question. Both were well aware they would eventually go back to their families and different towns in Peru. Their return was at the same time wanted and feared, especially by Señora Esperanza. She would have to go back to what she considered a bad marriage. There is a general tolerance existing among migrants towards the setting up of 'second commitments' which may often coexist with 'first commitments' in Peru. This is probably due to the fact they are all acutely aware of how important these relations are for maintaining their own emotional survival.

6.2.4 Remittances and transnational parenthood

Remittances – money and goods – are indicative of the emotional ties binding families together. Remittances operate as a language of care and help and maintain relationships among family members. It is as an "expression of profound emotional bonds between relatives separated by geography and borders and, they are the manifestation of profound constant interaction among these relatives regardless of the distances between them" (Suro 2003:4).

The frequency and regularity with which money is sent to Peru signals the affective proximity and migrant's responsibility to other members of their families. No matter of how little economic value, "remittances represent the continued connection between migrants and their origin households or families" (Cohen 2005:91). Remittances are also related with constructions of gender and 'cultural commitments' to family, aspects which increasingly are becoming relevant to the understanding of migration patterns. Cultural commitment to provide family support as well as failure to meet these will be discussed in this section.

Sending money and goods home was often the topic of conversation among migrant men and women. This regularly included their inability to save enough money and was their greatest concern. M**i**grants' unstable economic engagement in the labour market, led them often to face problems in meeting their commitment of regularly sending support money to their families in Peru. The continuous increase of the dollar's exchange rate at the time seriously impacted migrants' ability to meet required remittances. In addition, financial demands for children's maintenance in Peru often increased, making it even more difficult for migrants to fulfil their economic commitments.

Failing to send support money regularly often caused the caretakers of the children in Peru to complain. This not only put additional economic strain upon their families in Peru but it also affected the relation with them. Other times, migrants talked with enthusiasm about their plans to repair or extend their houses back home,[90] and set goals on what they would save for next.

[90] As I could personally witness, in Chimbote, many houses had been structurally improved as a result of migrants' remittances. It was actually possible to identify those families whose members had been abroad by the use of solid material their houses are built of. Totora roof (vegetable fiber) was replaced by bricks, and dirt floors are covered with cement. Although good weather allows *Chimbotanos* to live in somewhat flimsy houses, they are subject to breaks-in. As soon as remittances allows, they build sturdier homes.

> It is a Sunday morning. Olgüita, smiling, walks into the corridor where we are sitting. She showed us a sketch of her house in Peru. The drawing was sent to her by her son in a letter she just received. The construction has been made with the money she has been sending every month. She explained to us which were the rooms that were made bigger. Satisfied, she comments that she covered the floor with cement and closed the back of the house. It has already been six months that she has been in the country working as live-in domestic.
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> *Field notes, January 2003*

However, things didn't always operate so smoothly. Sometimes migrants living in Chile experienced difficulties in controlling their investment money from a distance. Many times, this "earmarked" money would not be used for the planned purpose. I often heard stories of houses that were not completed, and of relatives who used the money for themselves. Aurora told me she periodically asked her husband to send her videos of the improvements on the house, to make sure the work was really being done.

Transnational motherhood

Migration alters traditional roles, the division of labour and meaningful categories of gender construction**.** Sustained unemployment in Peru has eroded the role of man as the economic provider for their families. Women, as a consequence, cannot rely entirely – or often at all – on men for the family economic support. Therefore, they have taken on a full productive role. However women's migration endeavours, in this context, does not seem to clash with their moral commitments as mothers. On the contrary, it is in response to this commitment that women have migrated, leaving their children behind.

The value of motherhood among migrant women seems to have been transferred from their physical presence of raising their children at home. Similar to what Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila found among Latino women in Los Angeles, transnational motherhood for Peruvian women is not based on physical circuits of migration, but rather on "circuits of affection, caring and financial support that transcend national borders" (1997:550). Motherhood for Peruvian migrant women now extends to providing for the economic support of their children – even when this responsibility involves leaving them behind, left in the charge of other family members. The redefinition of motherhood among transnational migrant women as Pareñas found among Philipino women and Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila among Latino women in the U.S. is so that "rather than replacing caregiving with breadwinning definitions of motherhood, they [migrant women] appear to be expanding their definitions of motherhood to encompass breadwinning that may require long term physical separations" (1997:562). Existing cultural patterns of collective motherhood prevalent among Peruvians are well established in Latin American cultures. Reliance on grandmothers and compadres for shared mothering comprises an emotional and practical resource for Peruvian as well as other Latino women, one that "facilitates the emergence of transnational motherhood" (Hondagneau-Sotelo & Avila 1997:559). Peruvian women rely on such support when making a decision about migrating. It is the cultural legitimacy of this kind of 'collective motherhood' that enables women to excercise a transnational motherhood while simultanouesly rely on the physical presence of other female members of their extended families who take an important role in looking after children and child rearing.

Transnational fatherhood

Unlike women, for some men, a break-up with their partner in Peru may also mean the interruption of their role as provider for their children. After a break-up with his partner Marlo changed his priorities.

> M: I totally forgot, I said to myself. *Why should I work? What for? Why should I be sending* (money)*? I am going to have fun, motherfucker!* I began to buy clothing for myself. At that time, I did not live in El Bosque any longer. I had moved here (into a compound). Things that I bought for example… I bought myself a TV set. It lasted one and half months and pum! I gave it away. I bought myself a music set. I had it two months and I gave it away; a microwave the same.
> L: Who did you gave these items to?
> M: To friends that were drinking with me. They would tell me: *How nice, my brother. Shit, I earn so little, not like you. You earn fine. How I wish to buy* (this) *for myself.*

Many men, however, continue to provide for their children through remittances. Unlike with women, for Peruvian men, as has been found by Parreñas among transnational Philipino households (2005), fatherhood in the context of its associated gender definition has not been redefined. Exerting a distant fatherhood mostly consists on finding ways to reassert men's authority within the household. In cases where men stay behind in Peru, they are left with the responsibility of looking after the children. In those cases though, there will be a woman relative playing the role of a substitute mother. Parreñas' findings are applicable to the dynamics found among Peruvian migrants in Chile, similarly then it is possible to assert that "the expansion of mothering duties in transnational families increases the work of women, in the same way that narrow constructions of fathering limits the responsibility of men" (2005:47). As Parreñas discovered, fathers left behind get away with having fewer responsibilities than the mothers left behind" (ibid).

6.3 National and gender identities

> "People from the jungle, the indigenous there, they eat snakes," said my neighbour Luis – with a distance conferred by his coastal urban identity – referring to Consuelo, who is originally from the jungle. "She is very stubborn; because she is *serrana*," said Luis, Ñato, and Graciela who are also urban, in reference to Angelica who comes originally from the *sierra* (mountains).

In general, this community of migrants shares great commonalities. Mostly, they are *mestizos*, speaking Spanish as their first language. The majority is Catholic, urban and has had access to formal education. In addition, they come from low or lower middle income families. However, regional, racial and class differences also appear to be relevant within the migrant community and eventually emerge.

> *El Ché,* the Peruvian man who had lived in Argentina for sometime where he acquired a strong Argentinean accent arrives and joins us. We have been talking about everything and nothing in particular. He shows us photos from Argentina and Peru. It is clear that he was better off than the others, in the past. During the conversation *el Ché* establishes and marks the difference between him and the others in the compound. He explains to me that the *polladas* are of the *barriadas* (shantytowns) and not of the higher social sectors in Peru.

> Then Tania enters my room, smoking and dressed in a tight pink t-shirt that shows her bared – and bulky – midriff. She tells *Ché* that her friend has failed to her. *Una punta* is the world she uses; meaning a friend to travel with to Peru at Christmastime. These trips average three days and any thing can happen, they all assured me. "Robberies; people rob a lot at this time of the year, and in addition to this, they drink a lot too". I asked where does it happen? "*Everywhere",* they answer. They agree that Christmas is an especially dangerous time.
> *El Ché* then tells me that to say *una punta;* it is using the language of the *achorados*, meaning that it is low-class, *lumpen* jargon. Tania does not acknowledge Luis' explanation, as he continues outlining, in depth, the differences between the people of the *barriadas* and himself.

Existing internal differences as well as boundaries are also negotiated. Marlo, referring to his fellow Peruvians expresses himself in this way:

> They (other Peruvian men) get angry (about not having good jobs in Chile). But when they have jobs, they don't look after them. That is what makes me upset. I get *colera* (anger)! Why don't they look after their jobs? When there is a moment to drink, one can drink. Over the weekend, I think, Saturday night you can get drunk; Sunday not anymore, because you have to go to work. The jobs (available) here in construction are heavy. Why are you going to start drinking on a Sunday? Well you can on a Sunday drink half a day, no more. But these ones, they throw themselves (into alcohol) *pucha*! It looks as if the world is going to end!

While *el Ché* is aware he belongs to a different social class, Marlo holds a deep criticism towards his fellow country people. Yet, the need to provide for families left behind brings migrants, with their varied identities, together in a space of close and intimate interaction. Maybe for the first time, they are confronted with the need to withhold their differences and recognise each other as the same – and hopefully, an unproblematic – national identity.[91] In this context, food plays a central role.

6.3.1 Food and national identities

Although I did not focus on food initially, in my observation of this community, the importance of how community members' lives were structured around food became more apparent. It became evident general concerns about their well-being, about health and illness in particular, were often expressed in the language of food. This is done by talking and recalling memories of meals, cooking and eating traditional food. Food seemed to be the 'centrepiece' around which the migrants' collective lives were articulated.

As such, it proved to be a path into the subject of strategies to maintain migrants' well-being, which I was investigating. Food sharing made up a substantial part of practices and rituals performed in the close community. This corroborated in practice as well as symbolically, their sense of belonging to a community. As Cohen put it "the reality of community lies in its members' perceptions of the vitality of its culture.

[91] During the time I spent in the compound as well as among Peruvians in general, the issue of politics – which in Peru itself creates great division – was never raised. Ñato for example, would never disclose in front of his fellow country people his own political involvement in the past. For him, talking about politics was to be avoided at all costs. In contrast, food talks did not appear as a problematic component of Peruvian national identity.

People construct community symbolically, making it a resource and repository of meaning and a referent of their identity" (Cohen 1985:118).

Food talks

In general, Peruvian migrants very often complained about having to eat frosen food, or food that was cooked some time ago and stored for days. They complained that food consumption in Chile was restricted to indoor venues as opposed to street eating venues in Peru. Street vendors are common in Peru and provide freshly cooked food. Migrants also complained that Chilean people eat very little and rush through meals. Chileans were also accused of eating tasteless, insipid, junk food. These migrants felt seafood available for consumption in the Chilean markets is not fresh. For example, in Chile, fish is frosen and transported to the city days after being caught. Rather than debating on the veracity of such statements, I would like to reflect on what seems to underpin migrants' opinions. Ultimately, it was the clash of ideas and principles of what is good and healthy food that was the greatest problem for them. These clashes, I will argue, helped them to draw their boundaries as a national community and to reaffirm themselves in opposition to the society in which they are living.

Even though the actual act of eating is central, talking about food seems at times to be even more important than what they actually ate or cooked. Furthermore, as observed, the ability to cook traditional Peruvian dishes was often limited by the availability and affordability of obtaining the necessary ingredients in Chile. However for migrants, eating real Peruvian food in Chile seems to be impossible. Whenever they used similar Chilean ingredients, as opposed to the authentic Peruvian ingredients, the migrants often commented that Peruvian dishes cooked with Chilean ingredients never taste the same.

The importance of talking about food became more evident to me while sharing the living space with the migrants. It was the length and frequency with which people engaged in food-related conversations and the vivid character of their descriptions which lead me to suspect there was something else being stated. When conversing about food. This had to be something which transcended actual food but at the same time was intimately linked to migrants' bodies, self and identity. Food talks appeared to be central to the community as experienced by its members. Community, in this sense is not here understood as a social structure but rather as a symbolic construct. Or as Cohen has put it, community is "the thinking about it" (Cohen 1985:98).

In fact it was interesting to note that while talking about Peruvian food, there were no internal clashes. Neither regional antagonism, nor class, nor gender hierarchies came into play. Women and men participated equally in the discussion, as well as people from the sierra and from the coast. Each participant seemed free to add comments to the collective picture. They used their own culinary experience and subjective preferences as well as memories of meals, recipes or fruits they used to eat and dishes they used to cook back home. Each element would be celebrated and included without opposition. It was as if each one was allowed to bring into this evocative scenario, their regional specialities and these memories were taken with pleasure into everyone's repertoire. In addition, accounts of the variety, size, colour, taste and nutritional value of the food produced in Peru were often presented as proof of the richness of their homeland. Such

things were offered up as proof of the goodness of Peruvian nature and the abundance of its diverse landscape.

It appears what migrants actually evoked through this collective remembrance was a primordial element of their cultural identity assembled in the palatable texture of their traditional food. As a result of this exercise, it would nurture a positive relationship to their common native soil, as described in the next account.

> *Vivir al lado del mar es mas sabroso…* (Living near by the seaside is more delicious) were lyrics sung by Tony in between courses during a meal shared at the migrants housing compound. He sang in remembrance of the delicious fish eaten in his coastal hometown in Peru. Migrants also recounted then that in Peru, even with just a little money, a fresh, big fish could be purchased. "The fish are so delicious, fresh… as if they just jumped out of the sea".
>
> *Field notes, January 2003*

In contrast, comments about Chilean food inevitably led to the undisputable conclusion of the superiority of the Peruvian food. The dynamics of these food related conversations reveal how feelings regarding their national identity are channelled. Conversations around food were frequently held while talking about Peru. Memories of Peruvian cuisine were connected with a feeling of nostalgia and longing for being back in Peru. Through the language of food, migrants constructed their collective sense of selves, which was explicitly informed by contrast with regards the others' (Cohen 1985); in this case Chileans.

Conversations about food always occurred while sharing a meal with other migrants. This also happened while shopping for food products, when two or more people engaged in such an activity. Whereas with me, a Chilean citizen, these conversations took on another aspect. They tended to be more descriptive of the size, colour, and taste of vegetables and fruit, and quality of the meat produced in Peru, since it was implicitly assumed that I was not familiar with it.

In my opinion, such comparisons helped the migrants to reposition themselves in their unbalanced relationship with their host country. The interpretation I propose here is that remembering and appraising Peruvian food and Peru's natural resources allows migrants to strengthen their common cultural identity. It also allows them to reconcile themselves with a country which has been steadily 'expelling their people'.[92]

By placing emphasis on what the Peruvian natural environment gives them, Peruvian migrants acknowledge belonging to a country that – despite its many problems (unemployment, corruption, political instability, and violence) – remains faithful to its people and can provide for its population. As Demetrio, who was once a fisherman in Chimbote, often said: *en Peru nadie se muere de hambre* (in Peru nobody dies of hunger). In contrast, the harshness of Chilean society is expressed through deriding the lack of Chilean natural products, specifically its colourless and tasteless food. Chile is seen a country which gives them jobs but does not feed them.

[92] It is estimated that more than 2.6 million of people make up the so called "Peruvian Diaspora". In the last two decades, Peruvian citizens have been steadily leaving Peru, migrating to various countries in Europe, USA and Japan. In Latin America, Peruvian migrants have mostly migrated to Argentina, and Venezuela; and only lately to Chile (Berg & Karsten Paerregaard 2005:11-34).

Cooking and gender relations

Transformation of the foreign world into their own Peruvian space took place in the compound. Together with music**,** food was central among the various elements used by migrants to make an inhospitable building a home. Migrants gathered around food and enjoyed eating in their own Peruvian way. As in the case described next, food helped to create and enact the social world which supported migrants' well-being and restored the ability of the community members to act, outside the foreign world. It also allowed these migrants to consolidate their relationships as neighbours. However, other relations, such as the traditional sexual division of labour were not transformed. Cooking has continued to be 'a woman's task'.

> As the Christmas celebrations was getting closer, my neighbour Lucho, proposed to Ñato and me that we organise a *pollada* to gather money for Christmas presents for us and the 4 other *vecinos* (neighbours) living in our corridor. Ñato proposed to invite all people in the house to participate. Lucho was opposed to this, arguing he did not get along with some of the people there and that he knew in advance, some of them would not cooperate and would get the Christmas gifts anyway. He did not mention names.
> Lucho was unemployed at this time and he could foresee how sad it would be spending Christmas without any money to celebrate. A *pollada* was a feasible way to pull resources together and give nice presents to our closest neighbours. He counted on the help of his partner Rosita to cook the *pollada.* So, he suggested the chosen day should match Rosita's day off, which only happened every two weeks.
> Lucho said he would convince the neighbours and give them tickets to sell. With the ticket money, he would buy the ingredients for the menu. Lucho emphasised meal portions should be *"*one quarter of a chicken per person, not less*",* stressing this would be a 'real' *pollada* like the ones in Peru.[93]
> Tasks involved in the preparation of the *pollada* were several. Firstly, we had to get the housing committee's authorisation, produce the invitations and spread the information among the people in the neighbouring buildings. Lucho and Ñato did the shopping from the nearest supermarket. The cooking and serving was done by Rosita and involved a Friday evening and the whole of Saturday, with the occasional help from us the neighbours in the corridor. The day of the *pollada* was spent frying, serving and cleaning up from 10:00 in the morning until 5:00 in the afternoon.
> Throughout the day, people popped in. They sat on the chairs placed along the corridor, ate and chatted for a while. Some complained and left disappointedly since alcohol was not sold and music was not being played. This was a condition imposed by the administration committee when authorising the *pollada* to us. The money generated from selling the *polladas* amounted to $100 Dollars, US. The profits were invested into six Christmas grocery baskets.
> When the money was put together, Lucho went to purchase the groceries. We agreed upon meeting at his room two days later to make up the packages.[94] We used cardboard boxes wrapped in transparent paper. Greeting cards proclaiming Merry Christmas was included with each one. Afterwards Ñato, Lucho and I, ceremoniously knocked at each one of the surrounding neighbours' doors. After formal greetings were exchanged, we delivered the packages to the smiling recipients as they stood in the corridor. We made these deliveries without Rosita, as she had already returned to her work. However, nobody bothered to ask about her. After receiving their gift packets, each person quickly returned to their room, and that was it!

[93] See endnote.
[94] See endnote.

> Although the dispersing of gifts was a rather short ceremony, it gave us three a feeling of having achieved what we planned. And, in the end, to some extent, the 'spirit' of Christmas was created.
>
> *Field notes, December 2002*

The task of cooking was allocated to a woman – Rosita. She was burdened with the mission of cooking for 80 people. She probably felt powerless to oppose being allocated this task and had no alternative but to devote one of her few weekends off to additional domestic work. Actually, her role was central to the success of the *pollada,* which generated the cash resources to purchase Christmas presents for the neighbours. She contributed to the construction of social relations among people with whom she only spent one weekend every two weeks, as she really was not part of the "neighbouring" relationship. Still, the housing compound and her partner's room were the only places she felt were "at least a little bit of her own". However, the invisibility of her role and the lack of recognition given to her, in the relations constructed, were evident in the end. The ceremony of distributing the Christmas presents to each of the neighbours was carried out without Rosita's presence or acknowledgement.

The task of cooking and the responsibility of feeding in the context of the Peruvian culture are assigned to women within the current traditional sexual division of labour. Men's work is deemed to be more demanding and difficult than what a woman does. According to it, man, the breadwinner demands from woman. The housewife, therefore, must care for her man's well-being and support him through feeding. This will restore his exhausted strength. He is also entitled to the greatest share of a "right diet," meaning his needs come ahead of the rest of the family. Doing this assures the replenishment of a man's potency and protects him from getting sick. A good variety of dishes and a well-balanced nutritional meal are vital for maintaining the hard worker's good health. In the following quote, a migrant man became furious at his partner who failed in her duties. She had been feeding him with the same meal over and over again. He accused her of putting his health on risk, by giving him an inappropriate diet. The lack of variety rather than nutritional value was cited as probable instigator of illness, placing the economic stability of the family at risk. His suspicion of what she was using the family's food budget for, made him even more violent.

> One evening I came back (from work), my daughter was playing. And she (his spouse) says to me: *Take it*, *a stew,* (to what Marlo responded) *you son of a bitch! Who the hell* (do) *you think you are?!!* (He reacted very angry) *I give you money every week and you give me this…!* I threw it away, into the garbage bin. *I am fed-up! Son of a bitch! Every day, stew! Son of a bitch! What do you do with the money?*
> *But Marlo...!* (His wife said to him.) *I do it with affection.*
> *What affection is this shit? You should care for my health! I get my ass out working, and what for? You should care for me!* (mimicking an angry voice). I told her: *What if I get ill? Who the hell is going to go to work? Who is going to support you and the baby?*

Migrant couples tend to act in compliance with this order as long as men are involved in paid work and the women are not. In this new context, the task of cooking tended to be assigned to women. And, often relationships among migrants were initiated and consolidated through a woman cooking for a man. Women have the opportunity to take advantage of their role as "the cook". In this way, they can use food as a means to

exert influence over men. This is because migrants believe food has an influence on their behaviour.[95]

However, one of the consequences of involvement of migrant women in paid work is change in the traditional order. In some cases a gradual redistribution of the traditional gender assigned tasks had taken place. So, for many couples, feeding each other tends to be seen increasingly as a mutual obligation. In situations where food sharing was not based on family relationships, negotiations had to be carried out among men and women as well as the various resources and tasks involved. In the compound for example, shopping, cooking, washing up were assigned independently of gender and men eventually participated in cooking duties. Lucho, who knew how to cook, would do this for himself and for Ñato during weekdays, when Rosita was not there. At this time, both men were unemployed and spent much of their time at the housing compound.

Although the sexual division of labour is now challenged and this forces men to take part in "female" activities such as cooking, still men – even the younger ones – in the compound were ashamed of being seen cooking. Demetrio junior (14) and Marcos (20) did cook meals and, as I heard it, they did it quite well. However, they considered such activity to be embarrassing as they were doing "woman's" tasks.

Traditional Peruvian gender order is further altered by the influence of Chile's own gender order. Gender relations among Chileans prompt a more equalitarian distribution in the sexual division of labour among Peruvian migrant couples.

6.3.2 Gender identities

The current international migration has created a new scenario for changes in gender identities and partner relationships. One reason for this may be found in the leading role women have taken on in this migration. The sustained economic crises in Peru forced women in great numbers, to search for means of survival outside the home. As this particular economic crisis persisted and employment became even scarcer, women have since seen themselves compelled to search for other means of survival outside the country.

Contributing factors inducing women to migrate abroad are economic niches available for them in domestic service in various host countries. The existence of consolidated communities of migrants living outside Peru facilitates the "settling-in" process in the destination country. As a result, an unprecedented number of women have taken on these endeavours alone. Men in these arrangements are left behind in Peru, waiting to be called upon by their partners when a suitable job opportunity comes up in the host country.

This section discusses changes in gender identities and relations occurring as a result of the dynamic of this migration. Migration often reshapes gender relations with a relative increase in women's power as documented for Mexican migrant women (Hogendau-Sotelo 1992) and Puerto Rican women (Alicea 1997) in the U.S. This

[95] A soup made of fish heads called *chilcano,* for example, is believed to especially influence men's sexual drive.

section examines the changes derived form women's engagement in the labour market as well as the influence of the host society upon gender relations. It also looks at the conflicts derived from this interaction. Specifically, it examines men's attempts to assert their general authority as well as the forms of control they exert over women's sexuality, as women gain greater freedom in Chile. Another gender dimension addressed here are changes in body image migrants experience while living in Chile.

The effect of women's economic role; between emancipation and obedience

There is an outstanding presence of women among Peruvian migrants. Most of these women migrated, pursuing the primary goal of sending remittances to their families in Peru. The survey showed women not only outnumber men but also they are first to arrive in the country. Typically, after having gained job stability and a sufficient income, they bring other family members to Chile. However in many cases, women prefer to sacrifice themselves and endure the situation of living without their families and work as long-term live in-nannies, perhaps for several years. This is often done to save enough money to eventually return home. Most women who visited over weekends, who came as weekend visitors to the compound, were in that situation

> Lili was a woman in her mid-thirties who came from Chimbote. She worked as live-in domestic and had already lived in Chile six for months. She used to spend her Sundays at the housing compound and often stayed at Ñato's room. I remember the first time I met her. It was a cold Sunday afternoon and she was lying squeezed onto Ñato's bed with two other women friends and Ñato himself. I walked into the room.
> Ñato formally introduced us by saying: *She is an anthropologist writing her thesis. She is studying us: the Peruvians migrants.* Lily replied by asking me: *Migrants? Are we migrants?* Uncomfortable, I said: *Yes, I am studying Peruvian migrants who have come to Chile, like you, to work.* This was the first time Lily had heard this term and certainly was not happy to be referred to in this manner. She made the point very clear to me. *Do you know,* she continued, *we are going to leave this country? We are not going to stay here!*

She did not want to be labeled a 'migrant' in my study. She warned me that if I counted on her as a research subject, she and many others like her would most likely disappear. No matter how much I attempted to engage her as a "subject of study", Lily, like many others I classified as 'migrants' were actually ready to leave the migrant life as soon as they possibly could.

One Sunday after that, Lili told me how she planned to cope with the situation she was currently in.

> I want to resist (leaving) Chile and do not go back to Peru, because I want to leave (Chile) and do not come back (forever). I saw one friend of mine who, after short holidays in Peru, came back even sadder than when she left. She was crying and crying so much…

Thinking of her having to return to her current situation after spending some time in Peru was something Lili could already foresee as being very difficult. "Knowing that now whenever I talk to them (her children) on the phone, I go back to my room and cry there". The economic situation in Chimbote is so bad, that for her, returning home for longer than "just a visit" was not possible. There are no jobs there. Even though her husband was employed, the money he made was not enough to support the family. Lili

migrated because of her family's economic need. She explained the way she managed her finances and what her goals were. From her salary of USD $280 each month, she was sending USD 260 to her family.

The money sent home was used for the family's maintenance and her children's school fees. However, she wanted to invest in goods to take back to Peru, to make her efforts more visible. In the previous month she had sent only USD $100, and saved $160 to buy a refrigerator and a stereo to take with her when she returns to Peru. The months she could do this were the ones with no extra expenses such as school fees, materials, uniforms, or health-related expenditures. These extraordinary expenses were paid out of the remittances she sent. Besides the cash she sent every month, she bought clothing for her children. So in the end, every month she is left with just US $20 to spend on transportation and food for the Sundays when she has the day off.

Lili, and many other migrant women like her, would have preferred to remain with their families in Peru. But, despite being caught in a quite constrained position, Lili – and other migrant women in Chile – enjoy certain economic autonomy in deciding how the money they have earned is to be used. Women's participation in paid work also involves exposure to a more 'liberal' environment and allows them greater autonomy as compared with their situation in Peru.

Women's increased autonomy however, may be only apparent or in some aspects greater than in others. Guarnizo has pointed out: "Instead of being a social equaliser that empowers all migrants alike, transnational migration tends to reproduce and even exacerbate class, gender and regional inequalities" (Guarnizo 1997:45).

The complexity of the way transmigrant women renegotiate power shows that "while migration may provide some opportunities for enhancing women's status, such processes are not inherent within migration" (Yeoh 2004:149). In transnational migration women continue to maintain connections with their homelands– kinship networks, with religious and cultural traditions. In these contacts, patriarchal structures which limit women maybe renewed. For these women, living amidst their community involves exposure to various forms of social control. Such control is exerted on account of continuous contact maintained by members of the community with their families in Peru.

An example of this can be found in the ideology which legitimises and values women's lack of knowledge and experience in sexual matters. This continues to prevail among female migrants in spite of the fact that, in Chile, they do have more freedom. Among gender constructs, there is the commonly accepted notion of a 'decent woman'. This is somebody who does not know anything about sexuality and contraceptives until she is married – be it a legal or socially consented union. Therefore, information and decision-making about sexuality and reproduction is only legitimate for women to obtain through a man (her partner), in the context of a socially consented union.

> Among the varying questions I was asked, I was actually surprised to be queried several times by women in the compound whether I was a *señorita* or not. By that question they meant whether or not I had sexual experience. This is because they knew I was single. Tania once even gave me her advice on the matter. I should never tell my boyfriend that I am not a virgin, because if I do, in the future he may bring that information up and use it against me.

Field notes, November 2002

Family control on the younger women and particularly in regard to her sexuality, is to some extent, lost when women migrates. This is either because the family is not there to exert it – or because involvement in paid work gives a woman more opportunities and independence to interact with men. As do other migrants, young single women often take part in the migrant community's social gatherings in Chile.

Women in Chile, opposed to the limitations imposed on them, at home in Peru – see themselves enjoying more freedom to take their own decisions, to explore the 'outside world' and to engage in more liberal behaviour. This behaviour is more of a norm for women in the new cultural context. Examples of this include: going out to dance in groups of only women, or to smoke, or to drink in public. Needless to say, the possibility of freely engaging in this behaviour as well as in love relationships – which are not been censored by parents or males in the family – is now open for women, but has always been available for men. Nevertheless, in the face of these new opportunities for women, "innovative" forms of control of them have been put into place.

> Johnny knew Olgüita's partner and family back in Chimbote. She felt obliged to be *nice to him* by buying him beers to keep his silence about her activities in Chile. – Olgüita liked to go out to dance and this could be construed that she was being unfaithful to her husband, even though she was not. Migrants were often caught by surprise with a phone call from Peru, asking if the stories the family had heard about them were true or not.
>
> *Field notes, January 2003*

According to the traditional patriarchal order, men in Peru generally exert the most authority. However, this Peruvian norm has some exceptions.

> Don Hugo and *Señora* Angelica are from Pacasmayo. As people in the compound say, they are *serranos* (from the highlands). As a *serrana,* she is considered to have a very difficult and strong character. Neighbours comment that Hugo lets himself be dominated by his wife. This is absolutely not the norm among women from other groups originating in Peru. However, for Peruvians, one sign of *Chilenizarse* (to become like Chilean) happens when a woman begins to "boss" her man.
>
> *Field notes, November 2002*

As they call it, a process of *Chilenización* takes place in terms of gender relations[96] that is when women become more autonomous and men get involved in domestic labour. Elena tells her experience.

> E: I see here is different. Many times I have been invited by my Chilean colleagues, I go to their houses and I see their husbands helping them to do the laundry… When I saw that, I was left with my mouth open. I was so, so surprised looking at him; how he was doing the laundry. And then, my friend she was talking to me, and I

[96] The term *Chilenizarc*e has also other connotations. It was used for the first time in the context of the annexation of Peruvian territory into Chile as a result of the Pacific War, in 1879. The *Chilenizacion* of these territories involved as a deliberate policy implemented by Chile at the time aimed at and incorporate the territory into the Chilean domain. Measures taken at that time involved relocating the Chilean population into these new annexed territories as well they imposed Chilean symbolism and icons upon the original Peruvian population.

saw him serving us. He put the kettle on, set the table and then served us tea! Then he sat with us while the washing machine was on… Then I saw him hanging the clothes in the washing line… I got back so excited and I told my husband… and he said ah 'he must be a *saco largo'* (a *long sack).*

L: What is a *saco largo?*

E: A man who is bossed by the woman... I told him *you are wrong*… and then he told me *ah! Maybe he is a'mantenido*' (a man supported by his wife) and then he said *I am not a mantenido...* Few days later another colleague invited me and the same thing, the husband helped the wife in everything. Then here, next to us came to live a Chilean couple, the same thing. He would wax, mop the floors, he would cook, he would wash, and waited for his wife with the house clean and fragrant and he was also working… So I told him is this man bossed by his wife?... – *No* – he said … Now he helps me to rinse, to hang the washing. He helps me to cook, but before he would never. He would sit and say to me: *Elena, a glass of water, Elena, my shoes. Elena, put my socks on. ...*This was while he was watching TV …. So there was no support… I sometimes talk to my husband. I tell him, how can you want me to come back home and meet my obligations with you in our intimate relations if I am feeling tired from working, tired from the home work, tired from everything? …I told him; I don't even feel like saying *hi, how are you?* Now he says: *Elena, we Peruvians, we are wrong. – You see?* – I told him. He was very hurt when I told him if I were single I would be with a Chilean man.

However, while changes do take place they don't necessarily go smooth. One means men use to assert their authority is physical violence. Violence against women tends to be the norm in Peru and it also happens to be the same in Chile. When domestic violence occurs, members of the community will not intervene even in the event of a physically violent fight. However, women soon become aware of the existent legislation in Chile against domestic violence. More importantly, they also learned of the more efficient mechanisms to punish it. Migrant women began to threaten their men with calling the police. In this way, they were able to protect themselves from being beaten. The threat in itself operates as a deterrent for violent men, as they know they will be punished by the police.

Body images

Changing of bodily traits, reflect some of the transformations observed among these migrants. Such alterations often occur along gender lines. Women increasingly begin to dye their hair. Men in turn, acquire tattoos. Younger migrant men living in Chile have taken to wearing an earring and have fashionable haircuts. All these body fashions are common among Chilean citizens.

Greater affordability of new and more fashionable clothing makes it a factor of interest as well as differentiation between migrants and their own community. This differentiation can be observed also among their families back in Peru who are recipients of the items their relatives send from Chile.[97] So wearing the latest fashion

[97] The concept of social remittance (Levitt 2001) provides an understanding of the changes that result from migrants' being in contact with the new culture and society. These may be new behaviour patterns, values or life orientations. The concept of social remittance suggests those changes not only affect migrants themselves but also their environment at home. This means changes can also affect people who may have not travelled outside their home country but are in contact with migrants; thus becoming influenced by the cultural patterns of another society.

item or a trendy brand clearly signals the difference in once having or currently having a relative living and working abroad.

> The Campos family is packing up their room. They are going back to Peru. Amparito, the youngest daughter, shows me the 'hip clothing' she is going to wear when she arrives in Chimbote. She has a pair of pants with strings along both sides of the legs – very fashionable among youngsters. She is also taking music videos of very popular Brazilian groups. This music was played on the radio stations all the time and was called *aché* music. She says she will teach her friends in Chimbote how to dance.
> Demetrio's son then in an angry voice mumbles… *Ah Chileans… they think they are such a big thing*...I know he is not been attending school, so I ask whether he is planning to resume his studies in Peru. *Yes*, said Graciela with conviction. *This one is going to go to school.* And she added, "He is going to do physical exercise. He grew fatter and bigger, largely bigger. In Chile, he has turned into a *muchachón* (youngster). He smokes. He has been invited to drink". Ñato who had entered the room just before said… *Nephew, when are you going to drink with me? You have never drunk with me…*
>
> *Field notes, February, 2003*

In downtown Santiago, there is a lack of public spaces to practice sports. This is one of the reasons why migrant men had stopped exercising as they once had in Peru. However, there were also other reasons, as Ñato once related to me. "Practicing sports involve eating healthier and bigger quantities of food, and this I simply can't afford".

In general changes in body traits reflect an ongoing process of acculturation from their previous uses in Peru to bodily fashions prevalent in Chile. Body size and shape has increasingly begun to be an issue for women. In Chile, they are more often engaged in dieting and expressed a desire to lose weight.

Chame is complaining she has put on weight. She tells me how her mother in Peru, after seeing her in a recent photograph, commented to her on the phone that she must be doing very fine – as she looked more chubby. But Chame felt very upset to be told she looked fatter. After some time, we were joined but a few other younger women in the compound. Maria Elena, Tania and Amparo also said they were interested in losing weight.

> The group decided to start doing exercises and gathered on the open terrace. Directed by Maria Elena's friend who knew some exercises and showed them how do to sit-ups and jumps. They explained their increase in weight was because they said are eating more calories in Chile. While doing these exercises, they were giving each other diet tips.
> One of the more peculiar tips was to wrap plastic bags around one's waist to reduce that area. Several of them were convinced this would melt kilos from the tummies. Chamé admitted that when she does not wear a bra it makes her look like she has lost her shape and gained weight. This exercise initiative, however, did not last very long and I never again saw them exercising.
> Maria Elena finally told me she thinks the amount of food eaten in rural Peru is too much, as compared to what is eaten in Germany or the United States. She feels she is eating better now than she did in Peru because her diet includes more vegetables and salads.
>
> *Field notes, December 2002*

6.4 Frontiers between Peruvians and Chileans

Neighbours' at the compound discussed the differences they perceived to exist between Chileans and Peruvians.

Lili: *Peruvians are marginalised here* (in Chile). *I prefer to keep quiet* (meaning to not to respond to a provocation).

Ñato: *We, Peruvians, like dancing and drinking copete* (alcohol). *But we also know how to show respect,* (far) *more than Chileans do. In Peru for example, the mourning of a dead person lasts an entire year. During that time, one should not dance. Here people do not show the same respect.*

Chela: *We, Peruvians are also more humanitarian than Chileans. In Chimbote, the Hospital gives care to everybody. Here* (in Chile)*, if you don't have Isapre* (private health insurance)*, you must wait 7 or 8 months* (to get free care)*. Here, if you don't have money, you die.*

Demetrio: *But over there* (in Peru), *it is also like this – the Indio of the jungle lives on crops of coffee and cassava. They hunt with a rifle. Over there, there are no hospitals.* (This implies the lifestyle of the Peruvian indigenous people is very basic.)

Field notes October, 2002

As Cohen has stated it "…by definition, the boundary marks the beginning and end of a community" (Cohen 1985:12), and he further asserts "the boundary encapsulates the identity of a community and like, the identity of an individual, is called into being by the exigencies of social interaction" (idem). This section looks at the differences Peruvian migrants perceive to exist in regard to Chilean society.[98]

Migrants expressed their criticism to the informal manners Chilean have as well as the way Chileans speak. Particularly the fact they swear so often in front of everybody was very unpleasant for Peruvians, whom I never heard swearing.

In migrants' view, Chilean youngsters do not show enough respect to their elders. What makes it worse is that, in their view, teachers should not correct them. In addition, school-age youngsters smoke in public and the skirts of schoolgirls' uniforms are short, exposing their legs. This is for them, very inappropriate. Actually, something like this would be unthinkable among youngsters in Peru. Girls in Peru, as always somebody very emphatically would describe *"*wear their uniform skits at the knee".

Amparo, who is a good student, tells me how she was bullied by her schoolmates in Chile. *They told me that I am Peruvian and they we have come to take the jobs from Chileans*. When I ask her what she says to them she answers, *I don't say anything, but if they beat me I tell the teacher and she punishes them.* She then shows me the booklets Demetrio, her father bought for her to use at school. There is one with the list of Chilean Presidents since the time of the country's independence.

Amparo is learning their names and the years when they were in power. She is memorising them all, as she has to sit for an examination the next day. It is a long list of Spanish names and surnames and does not tell anything to me that I am Chilean. I wonder what these names can represent for her. I ask her if they have discussed the Pacific War in

[98] In general migrants would express their criticism towards the Chilean society in front of me always preceded by asking me to excuse them for expressing these opinions. This however was always done in a very polite way.

her history class, and what happened between Chile and Peru. *No,* she says, *my teacher does not know the history of Peru*.

Field notes, November 2002

Criticisms expressed by the migrants were stated as signs of decadency and corruption within Chilean society. Peruvians see themselves as superior in terms of their values and moral principles. However, migrants also often affirm they admire Chilean society for its hygiene and more developed technology. Women observe there is more respect among men and women. As well, Chileans value a more equal relationship between men and women than do Peruvians.

6.4.1 Migrants' change of status in Chile

Economic migration is basically the search for better economic prospect – for a new and better future life 'somewhere else,' outside Peru. Migrants depart on their economic endeavours, often motivated by illusions and expectations of new, bright horizons that will open to them, securing their families' economic survival. Perhaps such expectations are something inherent to every migrating endeavour.

However, once in Chile, migrants realise opportunities available to them are quite limited. As it is often the case, migrants experience a lowering of their social status. This became clear when comparing their current employment situations with their educational backgrounds or previous labour experience. For women, job opportunities are absolutely restricted to domestic work. However, men do have more jobs available to them but always, they remain within the lowest strata of the labour market.

The lack of opportunities and bad working conditions often deflate migrant's earlier expectations. In the long term, if such adverse circumstances continue, this may damage migrants' sense of self-esteem and self worth. In this section, some of their personal experiences working within the Chilean labour market are discussed.

Peruvians working in Chile are often presented with tasks that they feel undermine their sense of self and dignity

Don Hugo is a professional manager he studied in the University in Peru. Yet his first job in Chile was in construction. It was a job he described as involving *brute strength.* As he is very thin and rather short, this kind of work was not physically suitable for him. He remembers with certain ambivalent feelings that, considering his lack of physical strength, he was not given the most difficult work. However, his Chilean boss used to tell him, in a rather mocking manner, *lets' see Peruanito, is it hard the work or not?* To this, he would answer: *Yes, but not as hard as it is in Peru.*

Field notes, November 2002

As a qualified mechanic Luciano knew he had more options. He refused to accept tasks below his qualifications.

Luciano remembers his previous job, which he quit because he was asked to lift sandbags. He refused saying: *I am a mechanic and not a loader.* Luciano lives with his son in Chile. His son was a medical student in Peru who now has suspended his studies to make some money in Chile. He now cleans cars.

Field notes, November 2002

Ñato's case illustrates the difficulties migrants have in achieving any improvement in their working conditions. He, over the years, has gone downwards economically.

> After 7 years of work Ñato has barely accumulated any wealth, nor has he saved any money. It seems his economic situation has actually worsened over that time. In fact, as he has told me, he has moved house several times, but has never lived in worse material conditions as they exist in the migrant housing of Bandera Street. Furthermore, he told me, he did not want his family to know where he was living, but one of his brothers unexpectedly came to visit him from Peru and found it out.
> Soon after, I came in contact with him and the migrant community. He got fired and spent three months formally unemployed. However, he worked as my fieldwork assistant. He used to work as technician's assistant, installing air-conditioning equipment.
> He earned the minimum wage in spite of the many promise s initially made to him by the firm. After four years of working, promotions, training and wage increases were never executed. The only thing he got from the company, as he disappointedly gave evidence by showing me kind of improvised certificate of recognition. Here, the firm states his status of "a trustworthy worker". As time clearly showed, improvements to his working condition never took place.
> Later, he and two co-workers began to engage in "pololos," independent casual work, often done to complement a scarce salary. Although this work was done in their "off time," the employer learned of their activities and the three workers were fired. This was because the firm considered them to be engaged in "disloyal practices". Eventually, he found work again but he was not satisfied with the salary or the working conditions. Although I asked several times, he did not tell me what kind of job he is doing. He was probably ashamed of it.
>
> *Field notes, December 2002*

Migrants in Chile, often go through degrading experiences, as Mary recounted. "I had to sleep on the floor at a friend's place, something I never had done before in my life". These experiences are especially shocking to migrants when they first arrive. I spent several days in the office at *Parroquia Italiana*, a Catholic Church which helps Peruvian women find jobs as domestics. I remember Miriam. We talked while she waited to be called for an interview. Previously, she worked in an office in Lima and had tertiary education. Now she was going through the shock of being *'a nanny'* in Chile. It was her expectation this would not last longer than a few months. This was her experience.

> After two months working in Chile, Miriam lost her job as domestic worker. Her *patrona* told her she could not continue working in the household. This was done without giving her any further explanation. To make things worse, Miriam had already sent her entire monthly salary to Peru to support her two children. She had no money on hand to take care of herself, and for this reason, she was very concerned. This meant it was imperative she find a new job that very day.
> In our conversation, she bitterly complained about how in Chile, the *patrone*s (masters) – a term she strongly disliked because of its slavery connotations – did not treat women well. Her own experience was a good example. In the household where she worked, the family once had an unexpected guest. This was at dinnertime, so to solve the problem; her meal was given to the guest. She felt disrespected and saw this as a lack of consideration for her as a human being. She compared this situation to an occasion when her *patrones* promptly went out to buy dog food when it had run out, demonstrating they had more concern for the dogs than they had for her.

Miriam was also quite critical of the Peruvian community in Chile. She described them as: *losing themselves.* Women working as nannies, she observed, go through so much hardship that *they end up not caring about themselves. You see them after some time in Chile and they start to disregard their appearance.*
Miriam further commented on how people used to tell her: *Go to the disco! You will forget and it will cheer you up. You should distract yourself.* But for her, people just drank in those places. She thought music played in discos and dancehalls was the music of the *Pueblos Jóvenes* (Shantytowns in Peru). *Chicha music* she described it, which she obviously disliked. She added this was the music of the people from the *lowest strata* of society. This for her, was as an example of how, generally, Peruvian people living in Chile had begun to degrade themselves. The day ended and Miriam did not find a new job. That night, she went to sleep in a friend's room in the compound.

Filedwork notes, August 2002

6.4.2 Experiencing discrimination

Varying degrees and forms of violence, discrimination and racism can be recognised as engrained in the relationship between the Chilean society and Peruvian migrants. Acknowledging this adverse climate allows an understanding of the reasons why migrant's social life tends to be concentrated among members of their own community. Indeed, not only in collective housing but also in the places they gather to spend leisure time. These are almost exclusively Peruvian spaces such as dancehalls, restaurants, plazas, churches, etc.

It is very likely this is a means of protecting themselves from the permanent threat to their physical and moral integrity. The simple act of walking on a public street can give rise to discriminatory abuse. To be recognised by their national identity places Peruvians in a vulnerable position. They are often the target of insults and aggressions perpetrated by the Chilean population.

The event described next is eloquent in that it shows how everyday violence and discrimination can manifest. This was an evening where a group of us where coming from a Peruvian dancing spot in Patronato neighbourhood, returning to the compound.

Santiago, Saturday 1 February 2003

Toni, Chamé and I walk down Patronato Street. The night is warm. It is February in Santiago, very calm. It is two thirty in the morning. We talk a little about the dance and the party we have just left.
Chamé: The place is nice isn't it?
Toni: Hey, did you see how don Luciano danced? Did you notice? He dances well doesn't he?
Chamé: And the granny, she's quite old and she really dances well too. What rhythm she has, don't you think?
Lorena: Yes, it's true. – I think to myself: what energy, they've been working all week, they must have been tired, but as soon as we arrived they started dancing immediately.
Toni: ehh. Why don't we.... Why don't we go down this street down here
-Yes, let's go that way...-
The three of us instinctively take another route. We all spot a group about a block and a half away... They look drunk. They are walking down Bellavista Street. I think that they will stop there.
- Let's go this way- I say

I've never walked these streets at this hour. I wonder if it's dangerous. Well, there are three of us, there's a man amongst us, I thought... We reach Bellavista Street with Independencia Avenue without my even noticing it. The group that has been walking parallel to us towards Independencia Avenue has almost reached the same intersection. You can tell some of them are very drunk. Amongst them is a woman. I seem to recall having seen her pregnant. That image of her being pregnant calmed me a bit. We are about to meet the group. There's no way we can take another detour. I continue to talk as though to distract Toni and Chamé, as well as myself.

Chamé: Hey Toni, if they say anything, don't answer back. Please, Toni, don't answer back.

Toni: Okay Chamé, but anyway, what would I say to them?

We continue to walk. I know that Toni and Chamé have begun to fear something that I don't really fear, and I think, could it be that they are exaggerating,

I had my own plan – we will go past the group and then simply head home, to Bandera Street. We will cross the last bit of the park and there we'll be! But then, one of them shouts, quite ferocious and exalted, loud shouts, but who is he shouting at? I try to understand what's going on. I see one of them, a young man, clearly quite drunk. He goes past me shouting and does not look at me. It is now evident, they are shouting at my friends.

Motherfucking Peruvian! Fucking Peruvian! We go on, we cross the street, almost out of their sight. They have stopped a taxicab. They continue to shout. I feel embarrassed, very embarrassed. Toni and Chamé continue to walk and I go from embarrassment to anger. They are almost all inside the taxicab and are shouting even louder now, shouts that are more vulgar and violent....

Man 1: Come and suck my dick you motherfucking Peruvian.

I can't take it any longer, and in a childish gesture I stick out my tongue at them, as I used to do when I got in a fight when I was small.

Man 1: What's your problem, you stupid bitch?

And then.... I decide to let go of my anger and I shout out loud

Lorena: And what's your problem, you motherfucker? I shout, breaking Toni and Chamé's agreement not to answer back. It's just that I felt so embarrassed that I wanted the earth to swallow me, I wanted the abuse not to be directed to the Peruvians. I wished we hadn't seen or heard them. But there it was; the shouts resounding in my ears. I felt that I had every right to walk in the city with my friends. I thought: whose country is this anyway?

Man 2: Peruvian, suck my pigeon… This obscene gesture shows us what he means by his pigeon (penis).

Lorena: Go to hell you stupid wanker….

Meanwhile, he continues to ramble on about the Peruvian sucking his dick.

The other one butts in. Motherfucking Peruvian, get out of our country! You Peruvian sons of whores, and you, you fucking bitch, shut the hell up! He, of course, is referring to me now.

The car is now right beside us as we walk. The heads of the drunks peer out of the windows, their drunken mouths continue to shout. All I know is that Chamé and Toni are walking by my side, I haven't wanted to look at them as I know this is my responsibility, although I know that I've dragged them into it all the same. But now I hear that Chamé has joined me, I hear her scream in very good Spanish.

Chamé: You stupid people! Who do you think we are? You get out of here!!

Chamé then catches on to my swearing and continues Mother-fuckers!!

They've gone now. They are no longer close enough for us to hear them.

Toni says to us: Why did you do that for? And you, Chamé, didn't you tell me to keep quiet? And Chamé says to me: you see señorita? Why I don't go out? We hardly ever go out with Toni... We try not to go out, this always happens. It always happens to us. Always, if I don't give a beggar a coin, señorita, that same beggar insults me: *Peruvian, get out of our country, motherfucker...*

We continue to walk. We are almost next to the building next to General Velasquez Street where a number of brothels, bars, streets are located and taxis stop. We walk briskly until a thin boy, a teenage crack addict, comes towards us and asks Toni for some money.
Toni: Hey boy, I already gave you some money today.
Boy: Go to hell you fucking Peruvian says the boy. He crosses the street and goes back to sit next to another boy next to a brothel whose door is guarded by a thin woman.
I'm not sure why Toni and Chamé have crossed the street to go towards the boy. And I'm thinking to myself what can you get out of talking to an adolescent drug addict? But Toni finds it necessary to clear some things up with him. I am tired, exhausted by the tension we have experienced. I decide to wait on this side of the street.
Tony: Hey boy, you know me. I give you money every day. I let you go into the building in Bandera, and you insult me like this? I'm not going to give you any more money and I won't let you go back in the building from now on.
The boy defends himself but then the woman standing at the door of the brothel intervenes, screaming.
Woman: And you, fucking Peruvian, go to hell. Get out of here, Peruvian leeches.
Chamé: I haven't come here to ask anyone for anything, I've come here to work and I pay my taxes.
Woman: Get out of here, you starving Peruvian.
Chamé: I'm not starving, I work, I earn my money, pay my taxes, no one gives me anything, I earn it with my own efforts. Not like you! I don't have to suck anyone's pinga (dick)!
Woman: Peruvian leech! Motherfucker!
Chamé: Well maybe, but I don't have to suck anyone's pinga.
Both of them continue shouting at each other. I look and think I'm unable to go on. I can't answer to any more abuse. I feel they are now going overboard. I know that I set the pace. I know I influenced this behaviour. I'm not sure what to do. I do nothing.
Toni says Enough, Chamé, let's go.
Two middle aged men have been standing next to a car watching us the whole time and they've said nothing. Chamé notes that these two men didn't intervene at all. She interprets this as though they have supported her. If they didn't support her, they would have said something against her.
Chamé: Señorita Lorena, do you think they understood what pinga means?
Lorena: Of course, Chamé, if they didn't know that word they've figured it out by now.
Chamé: Yes, the thing is that here the word is not common, is it?
I'm exhausted. We go into the building. We go to Chamé and Toni's room and I really feel safe there. I ask them for a glass of water. I sit there with them and think to myself now I know what it feels like to be and to feel protected, safe. I valued the place, the dwelling, the refuge. No one is going to abuse us here. To be Peruvian here has no stigma.

While this event reflects the constant threat the street represents for migrants, it also shows the logic of their own adaptation mechanisms to face aggression and discrimination. In addition, it shows how I, as a researcher intervened, and in an unintended way – exposed migrants to the possibility the event could have unfolded in an even more violent way.

As it was I who set the pace with regards to directly answering, my two friends in last episode confronted the boy. This in turn, led to even more aggression. These issues were addressed in chapter 1 in terms of health consequences of different strategies in dealing with discrimination. Migrants who develop avoidance strategies towards discrimination are not only protecting their own personal security but also their psychological well-being. These are the topics of exploration of the following chapters.