regimes in Europe and the role of migrant women as providers, mediators and clients of welfare. In Chapter 7 we outline the range of political activities in which migrant women participate and the ways they attempt to negotiate and challenge power relationships at different levels ranging from the home and the private sphere, to the national level and the European sphere.

This book is not the product of a series of research projects designed specifically to elucidate key questions regarding migratory histories, employment, welfare, citizenship and politics. That would constitute a mammoth task. Hence, inevitably, the partial coverage of certain areas has been one of the major problems we have confronted in seeking to provide a fairly comprehensive picture of the situation prevailing in different European states. The book is also, to varying degrees, disproportionately dependent on British material. This arises for several reasons. Firstly the interest in gender and migration in the social sciences and the development of migrant women’s groups has a longer history in the UK than in many other European countries. As we have seen, the major reviews of literature on women and international migration are found in English-language journals and books. Secondly, much of the available material in European states tends to be produced in the form of unpublished reports or small-scale publications. This makes it extremely difficult to access material uniformly throughout European states. In each state there may be particular preoccupations or an emphasis on certain groups, and often those who are considered problematic in terms of traditional customs by official organizations.

The authors have brought to bear their own expertise. Eleonore Kofman has undertaken research on the development of policies towards migrant women in France and is particularly interested in countering a truncated history of female migration in Europe. Rosemary Sales has been involved in projects concerning the settlement of refugees and the role of migrant women as advocates in the UK. Eleonore and Rosemary have worked together for almost a decade in researching issues of exclusion and citizenship facing migrant women in the European Union. Annie Phizacklea has a long-standing interest in specific sectors of employment involving migrant women across a number of European countries. Parveen Raghuram has been involved in researching migration issues in India, gender and ethnic minority enterprise in the UK, and is currently interested in issues of skilled migration to Europe.

While there has been a dramatic speeding up of contemporary processes of feminization of migration, our conceptualization of these developments has not moved as fast. Perhaps some of this glacial movement in theory is because of the long-standing stalemate between models based on classical economics and those that draw on a neo-Marxist political economy tradition. Both of these claimed to be gender-neutral, but were in fact based on a model of gender relations that assumed female dependence. As Truong has argued:

At best these two paradigms can incorporate women as a normative category in migration flows, and explain their migration in terms of individual rational decision based on wage differentials (neo-classical), or collective rational decisions of households and states based on the interest in remittances (neo-Marxian).

(Truong 1996: 31)

Women migrate for a whole range of reasons such as poverty, displacement from the land, debt, and many other external reasons over which they have little control. These problems are shared with men, though their impact is always gendered. The decision to migrate is influenced by wage differentials in sender areas and receiving areas, but this is only one element in the decision to migrate. Some non-economic factors are especially important for women. Social constraints facing women (both from lack) also influence sex selectivity patterns in migration. Marital discord and physical violence, unhappy and broken marriages, and the impossibility of divorce often influence women’s decision to migrate. Migration also offers women and men the
opportunity to transgress sex-role behaviour but this is especially important for women, as the constraints on women's behaviour are usually greater than those on men. It often allows women to escape discrimination because of other aspects of their gendered lives, particularly those who have suffered because of age or their position within the family. These interrelate with perceived and/or real opportunities for women after migration and, thus, influence migration. Women may perceive migration as a means of resisting and escaping at least some aspects of the oppressive structures in which they live their lives. It may provide the opportunity to improve financially their own situation and that of their families; to avoid or leave unsatisfactory, perhaps violent, marriages; and perhaps to restore self-respect and justice through collective action and resistance in the course of migration (see Chapter 7). In this chapter we examine some of the ways in which the reasons for migration have been theorized, examining the major approaches to migration through a critical gendered lens. We attempt to link this literature with other key concerns in social sciences, which are interrelated with issues of migration but have been inadequately linked to migration theories.

Looking back and moving on

The primary focus of early theories of migration was to understand the reasons for migration. What are the factors influencing migration? Till the 1970s the most influential theories were those preferred by neo-classical theorists who viewed individual migration decisions as a result of push-pull factors. They located decisions making in individuals, rather than within wider social units, but also conceptualized the reasons for migration within a reduction- economistic framework. Migration is the product of rational decisions made by individuals who sit down and weigh up the costs and benefits of a move, and migrate to the destination that maximizes the net economic returns on migration (see for instance Todaro, 1969, 1976).

Despite Ravenstein's qualification of women as 'greater migrants than men', they were essentially left out of theoretical thinking. Where women's migration was analysed at all, the major trend was to confine it with reasons usually cited for men. Effectively they adopted an 'add women and stir' approach. The experiences of women migrants were fitted into models created to understand explain and predict male migration, thus assuming that women have the same reasons for migrating as men. Agency in these accounts was never viewed within the context of resisting oppressive and exploitative structures. They assumed that men and women would act in exactly the same way and have the same relationship to those structures.

From the mid- to late-1970s there was a wave of theorizing that drew heavily on Marxist political economy, dependency theory and world systems theory. Castles and Kosack (1973), Castells (1975), Nikolinakos (1975), Phizacklea and Miles (1980) and Meilloux (1981) were all representative of this approach. At the heart of these historicized political economy accounts was a focus on the unequal distribution of economic and political power on a world-wide basis and the way in which migration is a mechanism for mobilizing cheap labour for capital. Castles and Kosack (1973), for instance, argued that labour migration was in fact a form of development aid given by the poor countries to the rich countries and that it is unrealistic to assume that individuals exercise free choice over migration given these global inequalities in economic and political power and the ways in which economically dominant states control migration to suit their labour supply needs. Racism was often viewed as an essential mechanism for the 'over exploitation of the so-called under-developed peoples' and for keeping the latter in a constant state of fear (Meilloux 1981: 121).

Looking back, some of these accounts seem guilty of an masculinized view of migrant workers as passive agents tossed around in the turbulent seas of international capitalism. There was a tendency to reduce human agency to the interests of the collective - the global working class. The role of agency is particularly neglected for a gendered account of migration because it is so often alleged that women simply 'follow' men and that their role in migration is reactive rather than proactive. Some theorists were guilty of an obsession with economy and class to the exclusion of other dimensions such as gender, although Castles and Kosack (1973), Phizacklea and Miles (1980) did pay attention to the gender division of labour. Whatever their faults they provided an antidote to the anodyne explanations provided by neo-classical economics. Structuralist accounts continued to downplay the economic factors influencing emigration. This lacuna was particularly important in the context of understanding women's migration because the reasons often include marital discord and
physical violence, the impossibility of divorce, and the prevalence of conservative social legislation and practices. Research carried out by Morokvasic in the mid-1970s was among the first to point out the extent to which migration represented not simply an enforced response to economic hardship by single, widowed or divorced women, but also a deliberate, calculated move on the part of individual gendered actors to escape from a society where patriarchy was an institutionalized and repressive force (Morokvasic 1983; see also Gray 1996 on Irish women). Given the low social esteem and worth accorded to girls in many societies, we should pay much closer attention to this as a motivating factor in women's migration. There is also evidence that women's ability to earn and send home remittances significantly increases their social worth in their home settings. Hence economic factors interact with and influence non-economic factors, and together affect the decision to migrate. Skrobanek et al. (1997) argue on the basis of research in Thailand that parents tacitly accept their daughter's involvement in sex work as long as she is sending money home.

Parents may wield less power over their daughters' decisions and choices. This contrasts with the not-too-distant past, when parents were the decision makers in all things. ... Now a family with several daughters is considered lucky. (Skrobanek et al. 1997: 74)

Structural accounts may have erred in the direction of capital-logic in the past but this is not to say that structure is unimportant. The explosion in the number of women from poor countries seeking to migrate in search of work is firmly linked to the feminization of poverty resulting from structural adjustment programmes and, particularly, their impact on women's work in both the waged and unwaged sectors of the economy. Such bodies as the International Monetary Fund insist that growing cash crops may create agricultural jobs for women, for example in the picking and preparation of fruit, vegetables and flowers, but these jobs are low paid and virtually always highly precarious. At the same time, this form of production deprives families of land for the growing of subsistence food and other cash-generating activities. State policy in many developing countries, particularly in Asia, has encouraged labour migration, often in competition with one another, as a way of relieving internal poverty and servicing foreign debt. Migrants may be legally required to remit a certain proportion of their earnings. But labour remitting is ultimately demand driven and most demand for labour in the affluent and newly industrializing countries is now for women (Lim and Oishi 1996: 99).

The extent to which migration is institutionalized at both ends of the migration route is often overlooked. At the receiving end, women's experience of migration is mediated by immigration policies and rules that, often in very subtle ways, continue to treat women as confined to a male-regulated private sphere. In cases where women do enter as a spouse, their entry is conditional and reinforces dependency on their husbands (see Chapter 3). For women entering as independent workers the kinds of jobs available to them are often not officially considered 'work' because they are hidden within the home (domestic service) or otherwise considered to be part of the private domain (for example sex work). As we shall see in Chapter 5, while all women face the constraints of sex segregation in employment (even if for the highly qualified this may only be encountered when they hit the glass ceiling), migrant women also face limits on their citizenship rights and an institutionalized racism that deems some low-level servicing jobs as what migrant women do.

All these factors are part of broader structural contexts that constrain women's opportunities, but this does not mean that they cannot be challenged. It is important to recognize that notions of structural context and agency are heavily inter-related. Unless we do this, migrant women will continue to be viewed as passive victims, helpless in the face of the impersonal cycles of international capital and bowing to oppressive patriarchal structures. Patriarchal structures take many different economic, social and political forms throughout the world. Being a widow in certain cultures, for example, will bring with it a range of social and economic constraints from which migration may provide an escape route of a kind. But wherever a woman migrates to, she will enter a labour market that is highly segregated by sex and, unless she holds certain scarce and highly valued skills, she will find that employment choices are confined to a narrow band of servicing and caring work traditionally associated with women's role in the private sphere. Nevertheless, once agency is put firmly in the same frame as structural context, we can begin to analyse in a rather different way migrant women's economic contribution and their efforts to improve their own (and their family's) standard of living, their bid
for self-respect and their contribution as collective agents in instigating political change through alliance and coalition building. One way out of the impasse between structuralist and neo-classical approaches to migration has been to focus on the family or household as the key to understanding migration (for instance Stark 1984) and to study the decision to migrate as part of household strategies. Early literature on the household treated the homogenous household as the primary unit of analysis, retaining the myth that the household is a refuge from the selfishness of the outside world, in which the members behave altruistically towards one another. Its overriding ethos was to counteract the exclusive concentration on individual motivations for migration. It argued for a shift towards ‘understanding how these small social units pool resources to organize a process as complex as international migration’ (Portes 1997: 816). Goss and Lindquist (1995: 327) point out that the principal tendency within the migration literature was to reify the household and to confine the interests of its members with those of the male household-head, ignoring the ways in which the household can be a primary site for the exploitation of labour and transfer of value. This conception of the household is unlikely to be applied uncritically to Western societies and is consistent with the ideological tendency in social sciences to romanticize peasant and community in the Third World. Somehow, members of Third World households, not burdened by the individualism of Western societies, resolve to co-operate willingly and completely, each according to their capacities, to collectively lift the burden of their poverty.

(Goss and Lindquist 1995: 328)

This work embodied no analytical shift towards recognizing that households are deeply implicated in gendered ideologies and practices. Families were assumed to make their decisions as a group rather than on an individual basis, weighing up the costs and benefits to the family as a whole of the migration of its members. However, households are not the cosy rational decision-making units that neo-classical economics would lead us to believe. Migration decisions reflect the power relations within the household and are influenced by both individual as well as collective interests. A number of studies explored the ways in which gendered power influence migration.

Two excellent gendered accounts of migration can be found in the work of Grasmuck and Pessar (1991) and Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994), both of which take the household as central to their analysis and start from the premise that, 'The household, as we conceive it, has its own political economy, in which access to power and other valued resources is distributed along gender and generational lines' (Grasmuck and Pessar 1991: 202). Their empirical research presumably falls foul of Portes warning against ‘making respondents’ definitions of the situation the ultimate test for theoretical propositions, and points to the hollowness of the assumption that households make collective decisions. Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994: 95) concludes, 'Opening the household “black box” exposes a highly charged political arena where husbands and wives and parents and children may simultaneously express and pursue divergent interests and competing agendas.'

While we recognize the need to understand the complexity of household relations, and the existence of both mutual solidarity and conflict within them, there are good reasons why a number of scholars, almost exclusively women, have concentrated on single sex-focused research. The role of women in migration was almost completely ignored until the late 1970s (see Chapter 1). This research, along with some studies of the household and social networks (e.g. the work of Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994), has been aimed at giving women a voice. This voice had never been heard and is often at odds with the overriding assumption in much of the literature that women simply follow men in the migration process.

This also challenged the notion that households are benign units which power and resources are equally distributed. Feminist social science has questioned traditional epistemological assumptions, particularly in terms of what ‘passes the test’ of ‘objective’ empirical research (Stanley and Wise 1983; Harding 1987). As Ray Evans (1997: 122) argues ‘feminism can claim to have developed one of the now great critical traditions within the modern academy, that of suggesting that the universalistic assumption of knowledge in our society are false, and partial, because they are drawn from the experiences of only one sex.’ By neglecting the hitherto untold experience of women migrants, work has contributed to the wider understanding of migration processes.

There are other reasons why the household can never be a satisfactory unit of analysis in bridging the gap between micro-level
understandings and the structural context within which migration takes place. First, households take many different forms, from the ‘neat’ nuclear family household to a vast extended form. Second, households are entrenched within and reflect a whole range of power structures, which are by no means static and uncontested. Gender has remained the only theoretical lens through which household migration has been analysed. In an article titled ‘Immigration theory for a new century’, Portes implicitly accepts this view by concentrating a discussion of gender and migration to a single page subtitled ‘Households and gender’. However, he suggests the need for caution in relation to ‘analyses that concentrate exclusively on the individual motivations of household members and the conflict of interests between them. This has often become the centre of gender-focused research’ (Portes 1997: 816). Besides, as the example from Thailand discussed above illustrates, the balance of social and economic power may shift quite rapidly. Finally, households are only one part of a number of mid-level institutions that play a part in the migration process.

The limitations of the focus on households have led to an interest in migration research in the role of social networks and the other institutions that link individuals across time and space. The role of social networks in facilitating migration, employment and settlement came to pre-occupy many during the 1980s and into the 1990s (see Boyd 1989 for an overview), although they had always been treated as significant elements in the older theories of chain migration (Castles 1999). Boyd argues that a starting point for research on social networks is that structural factors provide the context within which migration individuals or groups make decisions. However, at this micro-level analysis, the decision to migrate is influenced by the existence of and participation in social networks, which connect people across space (Boyd 1989: 645).

Social networks are important in sustaining migration flows (for example by providing information, accommodation and employment for incoming migrants) and provide an important link between the individual actor and the structural context that fashions migration flows. If we are to explain an individual’s decision to migrate we must combine accounts of structural context (in which structure is seen as both constraining and enabling) with situational, micro-level understandings.

Social networks comprising households, friends and community are crucial for an understanding of settlement patterns, employment and links with the homeland. Once migration begins these networks come to function as causes of migration in themselves because they lower the costs and risks of migration and increase its expected returns (Massey et al. 1995). Networks constitute an important resource for migrants who use them to gain employment, housing and other resources in the migration setting. Much of what is being described here is the phenomenon of chain migration, or the passing of information from migration to home, particularly information on job vacancies that may encourage family members and friends to devise ways of migrating. Social networks are also central to Hondagneu-Sotelo’s analysis of Mexican migration. She concludes that

traditionally, gender relations in the networks have facilitated men’s and constrained women’s migration, but this is changing. While patriarchal practices and rules in families and social networks have persisted, through migration women and men reinterpret normative standards and creatively manipulate the rules of gender.

(Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994: 96)

These social networks facilitate transnational links (Glick Schiller et al. 1992) in which migrants move regularly between and participate in more than one society. As Sutton (1992) notes in relation to Caribbean migration, there has been little reflection in this literature on gender aspects of the use of transnational networks. Women in particular have played nurturing roles (nurses, carers and domestic labour) and sustained households in societies of emigration and immigration.

The importance of social networks in facilitating migration is therefore well established, but they do not by themselves provide an adequate bridge between structure and agency because it fails to take into account the increasingly formalized nature of migration. In another innovative account Goss and Lindquist argue for a mid-level concept, which they call a ‘migrant institution’ that articulates between various levels of analysis (Goss and Lindquist 1995: 317). This refers to an ensemble of social networks and intermediaries that represents a complex articulation of individuals, associations and organizations that extends the social action of and
interaction between these agents and agencies across time and space (Goss and Lindquist 1995: 319). Applying Giddens’s structuration thesis to migration from the Philippines, they argue that the key component of recent large-scale international migration, largely neglected in the literature, is the complex of international and national institutions that transcend the boundaries of states and locales, linking employers in the developed or rapidly developing economies with individuals in the furthest peripheries of the Third World (Goss and Lindquist 1995: 335). Recent evidence on women’s migration underlines the increasing importance of such institutions that connect the most remote village in a complex but highly efficient manner with work in affluent countries. In Chapter 5 we shall discuss this in relation to sex work and domestic work.

Goss and Lindquist argue that individuals ‘act strategically within the institution to further their interests, but the capacity for such action is differentially distributed according to knowledge or rules and access to resources, which in turn may be partially determined by their position within other social institutions’ (Goss and Lindquist 1995: 345). Thus they see structures as both constraining and enabling.

Emigration has become institutionalized in south-east Asia and to some extent, the Indian sub-continent, from state institutions downwards. Without the huge ensemble of recruitment agents, overseas employment promoters, manpower suppliers and a host of other legal and illegal intermediaries, Asian labour migration since the mid-1970s would not have reached such a massive scale (Lim and Oishi 1996: 90). However, this growth has a number of gender-specific implications. It coincided with the increased demand for labour in specifically female-dominated sectors such as domestic work and ‘entertainment’ (Truong 1996). Competition between Asian countries for the market share has contributed to the institutionalization of low wages in these female-dominated sectors (UN Secretariat 1995, quoted in Lim and Oishi 1996). It is likely that women are making more use than men of these recruitment agents, particularly those who will facilitate clandestine migration, because they have less access to information (Lim and Oishi 1996: 90). In exploring what they term ‘institutional theory’, Massey et al. (1993) maintain that the introduction of stringent immigration controls by affluent countries has created a lucrative economic niche for entrepreneurs and organizations who facilitate clandestine transnational population movements. Their activities include smuggling across orders, faking papers and arranging marriages. In turn, because these practices create a highly vulnerable underclass of migrants, new humanitarian organizations have been set up to provide a range of services such as legal advice, shelter, and help with obtaining papers.

Massey et al. conclude that these processes lead to a number of hypotheses that are completely different from those that emanate from micro-level decision-making models. They argue that as organizations develop to support, sustain and promote international movement:

the international flow of migrants becomes more and more institutionalized and independent of the factors that originally caused it. ... Governments have difficulty controlling migration flows once they have begun because the process of institutionalization is difficult to regulate.  

(Massey et al. 1993: 451)

This notion of ‘migrant institution’ represents a significant advance, in providing an account that can deal with the myriad of agencies and organizations now operating in the ‘business’ of migration and that have played a crucial role in the ‘feminization’ of labour migration at a global level since the mid-1970s. Goss and Lindquist’s work demonstrates its relevance in the case of Filipino and other Asian migrations where the process of migration has been to a large extent ‘institutionalized’ at the level of the state. While not all migration processes are as formally institutionalized, different kinds of channels and professional organizations facilitate and regulate contemporary migration flows, including those of skilled migrants.

A channel of migration refers to the ways in which migration is facilitated for individuals. It may range from the informality of relatives and friends to more official recruitment agencies and transnational corporations (Findlay and Li 1998; Gould 1988).

Little research on gender differences in the use of channels has been done beyond the world of corporations that tend to give few overseas assignments to their female staff (Adler 1994). Similarly, there is much to be done on the role of professional bodies as regulatory institutions for purposes of accreditation in the state of destination (Fredale 1997).

Our discussion suggests the importance of the link between structure and individual agency in understanding the migratory
process. We can distinguish analytically between three levels in order to characterize contemporary migration: (i) the migratory regime that includes the relations between the country of emigration and immigration, the conditions of entry and rights of residence, employment and so on, including the rights of family members; (ii) the migratory institution that includes formal state structures as well as mediators and facilitators, recruitment agencies and informal networks through which individuals and households negotiate migratory regimes; and (iii) individual migrants whose migration choices are conditioned by their own histories, social identities and resources as well as by the broader structural conditions. All three levels of analysis are highly gendered.

So far we have concentrated on some of the problems we encounter with existing migration theory and have tried to provide a more adequate gendered account. We now turn to the connection between migration flows and developments in feminist theory on race and ethnic studies.

**Linking migration and ethnicity?**

The theorization of migration has become increasingly divorced from that of ethnic relations and this separation has limited our understanding of both. A substantial literature that has developed on the causes of refugee flows and processes of resettlement has also tended to remain somewhat distinct from migration research.

The 'ethnic relations' literature has become preoccupied with diasporic communities (Cohen 1997), multiculturalism and hybrid identities (Webbner and Modood 1997) in settled communities. The interest in cartographies of diasporas is related to a more complex system of migration, often consisting of multiple moves by an individual leading to the scattering of families across states and continents (Bhachu 1993; Brah 1996a), though not necessarily looking back to a fixed homeland as implied by the usual definition of a diaspora (Anthias 1997). In fact, recent literature on diaspora has increasingly argued that the experiences of those who have migrated once differs significantly from those who are multiple migrants. This literature has also tended to emphasize the cultural dimension of hybrid and transnational identities. Some have celebrated the potential of border zones whereas others (Bhabha 1994) maintain that hybrid subject positions occupying in-between spaces are best located to resist hegemonic practices. However, not all migrants find this border zone liberatory. For many, this space is one dominated by the 'terrorizing experience of border crossings' (Mitchell 1997).

Besides, as Heitlinger (1999) argues, the degree to which highly cosmopolitan identities are easily acquired will depend on class position, education and facility with a world language and may be contrasted with the difficulties faced by the undocumented and the majority of asylum seekers. This class divide has troubled and kept apart academic work on migration from that on hybridities. These developments have meant that the links between migratory processes and the development of 'ethnic minority communities' have tended to be neglected. In the following chapters we attempt to develop some of these links, focusing on the ways in which immigration legislation and formal citizenship status impact on access to rights and therefore shapes the ways in which communities are formed and identities constructed. In particular, we examine the gendered hierarchy of citizenship rights in relation to employment, welfare and political action.

At the same time, although there has been an increasing recognition of the importance of female migration, the main trend within feminist theory has been an increasing preoccupation with questions of identity and the body. The very real material inequalities that women's different positionings at a global level represent have, at times, been relegated to second place behind issues of individual identity. In the following paragraphs we suggest ways in which some of these cultural understandings of gender and race can help inform our understanding of these material inequalities.

In the early 1980s, debates within feminism began to shift with an acknowledgement of the complex interactions between categories of class, 'race' and gender and the identities that they give rise to. An important marker for this shift was the intervention of Black and ethnic minority feminists in the USA and UK who began to question what they considered to be the false priorities of the women's movement, and the tendency of feminist theory to universalize White women's experiences in the affluent countries of the world. Key writers of this period were Angela Davis (1982) and bell hooks (1981) in the USA and Hazel Carby (1982) in the UK. The lively debate that followed has certainly not just been an academic one and is by no means over. It demonstrated, amongst other things, that the concept 'Black' as a way of categorizing all 'non-White' women's experiences is just as problematic as the all
encompassing category of ‘woman’. But this recognition of the huge range of ‘differences’ has spawned its own problems. As Mary Maynard has argued, if we accept that the bases of difference and diversity are endless, then we obscure the possibility of analysing the material inequalities between individuals that this diversity represents and, at the same time, fail to explore what experiences individuals might have in common (Maynard 1996: 20). Feminism risks falling into the same trap as multiculturalism, which Malik suggests ‘represents not a means to an equal society, but an alternative to one, where equality has given way to the toleration of difference and indeed of inequality’ (Malik 1996: 170).

Maynard’s critique reflects a more general comment on the way in which many disciplines have moved away from a concern with the material to a preoccupation with the ‘cultural’. While endorsing her concern, we would argue that it is important for us to look at the ways in which so-called ‘cultural’ issues, such as concerns with the body, sexuality and representation, might also be significant for a gendered account of migration. For instance, if we try to answer a seemingly ‘material’ question: ‘why is domestic and sex work increasingly regarded as work that migrant women do?’, we can provide a set of answers that rests largely within the material. That these are jobs that have traditionally been regarded as within the private sphere, are done by women, and to which little or no value has been attached. But this answer begs a whole range of other questions: Is it simply a question that migrant women can be paid less? Part of the answer is ‘yes’ but this is not sufficient. To provide a more adequate answer we have to look at how different racialized and gendered identities have been constructed over time and how those identities have been changing.

There is now a large literature that shows how, for instance, Black African women’s identities were both racialized and sexualized in specific ways in the process of colonization and enslavement. Patricia Hill Collins argues that the portrayal of the ‘Jezebel’, or sexually aggressive Black woman under slavery, had a number of functions. On the one hand, their sexuality had to be controlled by forcing them to work alongside men, yet on the other hand they could also be expected to breed a new generation of slave labour power. The alternative image was the ‘mammy’, an asexual (always fat) woman who would wetnurse White children and ‘slaveowners effectively tied the controlling images of Jezebel and Mammy to the economic exploitation inherent in the institution of slavery’ (Collins 1990: 77). From the earliest travelogues of Africa to the contemporary film and music industry, Black women have been represented in highly sexualized ways. Other enslaved and colonized women were deemed ‘exotic’, but their eroticization was built on understandings of their being ‘primitive’, ‘uncivilized’, the ‘other’. Pseudo-scientific arguments developed in the mid-nineteenth century claimed that one could divide the world’s population into distinct and permanent ‘racial’ types and that these types represented a hierarchy of superiority and inferiority. ‘Natives’ were deemed capable of carrying out certain types of manual work for their colonizers, but nothing more. Writing in 1814 of Aboriginal people in Australia, the then governor argued ‘it seems only to require the fostering Hand of Time, gentle Means and Conciliatory Manners, to bring these poor Unenlightened People into an important Degree of Civilisation’ (quoted in Miles 1987: 189). But this racial hierarchy was also sexualized, with White European women literally ‘put on a pedestal’ in contrast to the alleged physical and moral inferiority of the ‘other’ (Bhattacharya 1997).

Considerable evidence has subsequently been amassed to disprove these notions of racial type and hierarchy. The study of genetics, for instance has shown that individuals of supposedly different ‘races’ may genetically be more alike than individuals of the alleged ‘same race’ (Goldberg 1994: 67). In spite of the evidence, this legacy is powerful in both material and cultural terms. Collins argues that contemporary pornographic images of African-American women nearly always represent bondage and slavery, the woman submissive to the power of White men (Collins 1990: 169). The sexualization of ‘foreign’ women and the embodiment of racism are crucial in answering the above question. The submissive but erotic ‘other’ can be treated differently: their cultural representation has real material effects.

This brings us back to several other threads that have yet to be successfully woven together in a more adequate gendered account of migration: the uneasy relationship between concepts of ‘race’, ethnicity and culture. These concepts are not merely the subject of heated academic debate, they are deeply embedded in policy and political action throughout the world. We cannot begin here to do justice to the scale of these issues, but we can at least address some of the academic traditions that they draw on and their implications
for a gendered account of migration. So far we have used terms such as ‘racial hierarchy’, ‘racialized’ and ‘racism’ without defining them. All of these terms are drawn from a tradition that after the second world war witnessed a rapid development in the United States and Britain, but to a lesser extent in other parts of Europe. This difference has taken a much clearer form in the last decade: the use of the term ‘race’ has virtually disappeared in academic discourse in Europe, but not in the UK and USA.

Academics interested in the question of migration in Europe have on the whole been keen to move away from a form of analysis that has cast post-war migration as creating a situation where people of different ‘races’ were brought into relation with one another. Many felt that the continued use by social scientists of a discredited term such as ‘race’, because people act on perceptions of ‘racial’ difference, confers a kind of fixed analytical status on what is a social construction. The use of ‘race’ and analysis of racism differs markedly between European states. In Germany in the post-World War II years, it has been associated with the Holocaust so that discrimination against foreigners is reduced to the term ‘hostility against foreigners’ and there is little serious study of racism (Piper 1998). In France, although the discussion of immigration and racism only emerged recently, Guillamin (1972, 1995) had already in the 1960s critiqued the notion that we could categorize populations into racial groups. For her ‘race’ is a product of racist ideology; she identified a specific constellation of historical factors that assigned a given nature to individuals and that was formed in the course of the nineteenth century at a time of rapid and radical political, social and economic change. By the end of the century, the theory of difference and inequalities, enshrined in the superiority and inferiority of groups, had passed into social and institutional practice.

A biologically determinist notion of ‘race’ need not necessarily be the basis for racist beliefs, but as Yuval-Davis (1997b: 49) has argued ‘every racist construction has at least some dimension of a mythical embodiment of the “other”’. This embodiment is always sexualized, and often in contradictory ways. Of equal importance is what Barker (1981) has termed a ‘pseudo-biological culturalism’ that has nothing to do with notions of biological superiority or inferiority, but with notions of difference and the defence of separate cultures and identities as ‘natural’. Stolcke (1995) argues that ‘cultural fundamentalism’ has in fact replaced the more traditional racist rhetoric of the political Right in Europe. Racialization reproduces social relations through a number of areas such as notions of sexuality, ideological discourses on nation and community, construction of socio-cultural norms and legal rules of immigration and nationality (Brah 1993a, this book Chapter 4).

- Gender relations and sexuality are crucial in defining cultural boundaries and binary opposition between modernist European standards and ‘unacceptable’ traditional models, which are incapable of being incorporated within the nation. Religion has become the key signifier of incompatible differences. Islamic groups, regulated by patriarchal structures, are singled out as being too distinctive in their daily lives and social norms to be able to cohabit with groups whose practices are derived from Christian traditions (Pieterse 1991). This dichotomy is expressed in its most extreme variant by the Far Right in France, but it is by no means absent from the mainstream media and political discourse. The French National Front castigate the submissiveness of Islamic women imprisoned in the private sphere, on the one hand, and warn against the rampant sexuality of North African men preying on French women, on the other (Kofman 1997). This is an integral aspect of the defensive discourse of ‘Europism’ in which a pure Europe territory is symbolically cleansed of ‘foreign and uncivilized elements’ (Essed cited by Lutz 1997).

- It is thus important to look at the ways in which racism works, why it is that certain groups are set apart from others through the attribution of certain negatively evaluated features, beliefs or actions, which are then used to justify their exclusion from equal access to certain resources including political rights. In an early attempt to answer that question, Rex argued (1970, 1973) that our search should begin with an analysis of colonialism and colonial societies where production based on unfree labour predominated and where the colonizers developed discourses alleging the innate inferiority of the colonized. He goes on to consider the legacy that these discourses have for the perception and treatment of migrant labour from colonies or ex-colonies. Curtis (1984) has shown how the Irish have been ‘racialized’ throughout the history of colonialism. At the height of ‘scientific’ racism the need to control the Irish was ‘explained’ in terms of supposedly smaller skulls than the Anglo-Saxon ‘ideal’. Racial stereotypes of the Irish persist in Britain,
although because Ireland is a member of the European Community, Irish people partake in the privileges of free movement with Europe. Miles (1989) has been one of the few British theorists to have rejected the exclusive use of a colonial model, typical of much of the British and American theorizing of the relationship between capitalism and racism, in explaining much of European racism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As in many countries, racist ideology was early on directed against the Jews. The first Aliens Act in the UK was passed in 1905 to control the flow of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe.

Since the late 1980s, the relationship between immigration, racism and national identity has generated a number of comparative studies (Wrench and Solomos 1993; Wieviorka 1994). Such studies raise the problem of terminology. Race relations, an exclusively British term, cannot thus be easily exported (Neveu 1994). Wieviorka’s analysis of the three dimensions contributing to the resurgence of racism and xenophobia has been highly influential in comparative studies. The first aspect is the social or the way in which a society is structured and stratified. Racism finds a fertile terrain in a society where social movements are breaking down and unemployment is increasing. A second set of conditions involves the State and the degree to which it ensures principles of equality and social redistribution and the functioning of its institutions, e.g. police, schools, immigration service, etc. He argues that a state that reduces welfare provision and enacts racist immigration legislation is likely to exacerbate populist racist tendencies. A third set of conditions relates to the issue of identities, especially national identities. Racism tends to embed itself in appeals for cultural and social homogeneity; it flourishes in periods where the nation either seems to be threatened or is in an expansive phase.

Immigration legislation has been and continues to be a particularly important aspect of the institutionalization of racism. In the USA and Europe, immigration legislation and rules may not have been couched in racially discriminatory terms, but they have had that effect. They either keep out certain categories of people or restrict the further entry of particular groups. As Goldberg has argued, these immigration restrictions ‘though not for the most part racially explicit in formulation … discriminatorily restrict entry or labour of members of those population groups considered undesirable – those who are identified, if only silently, in racial terms’ (Goldberg 1994: 56). By banning the further entry to Europe of certain groups post-World War II migrant labour, those same groups are officially branded ‘surplus to requirements’. Whatever the measures that are then introduced to ‘integrate’ those already resident, and particularly the second and subsequent generations born in Europe, they have already been defined as a ‘problem’ and become the objects of racially exclusionary practice, even violence (Phizacklea 1994). When the freedom of movement provision of the single European market became operable in 1992 it also meant that the external borders had to be secured from what the British Prime Minister, John Major, described as the ‘rising tide’ of undocumented migrants and asylum seekers. As Stuart Hall has suggested, ‘European prosperity is a strictly European affair, designed exclusively for what every self-respecting Euro-politician is calling “our populations”’ (1992: 2). In the late 1990s, refugees and asylum seekers have become a major target of this kind of racism in Europe, portrayed as ‘scroungers’ and ‘economic migrants’ (Bloch and Levy 1999). These attacks have been particularly virulent in relation to asylum seekers from areas of Europe outside the EU, such as Albanians and Roma people from Romania.

In the accounts of migration inspired by Marxist political economy, which we briefly considered earlier in this chapter, race was often viewed as an essential mechanism for the ‘over exploitation of the so-called under-developed peoples’ and for keeping the latter in a constant state of fear (Meillassoux 1981: 121). Such accounts, it was argued by some, ignored the social and cultural heterogeneity of migrant groups and ‘the significance of the actor’s perception of his situation, his orientation and perceptions were underplayed’ (Khan 1977: 58). The focus of these critics was, instead, on the migrant as actor and as self-designated member of an ‘ethnic’ group that has self-maintained boundaries based on criteria of culture and ancestral descent. Khan, while admitting that understanding the internal dynamics of an ethnic minority group involved ‘studying the process of interaction or reaction of these cultural preferences and patterns of behaviour with external determinants’ (Khan 1977: 58), was criticized for not in fact doing so. A counter-attack developed that claimed that the position of ethnic minorities could not be understood primarily in cultural terms, and that the impact of class, racism and the activities of what was described as an ‘authoritarian’ state on the position of ethnic
minorities were absent from these accounts (Muir 1980; CCCS 1983).

Ethnicity and the culture of ethnic minority groups have often been seen in static and essentialist terms. Morokvasic (1983: 13) has argued that migrant women have been analysed in predominantly cultural terms in much of the migration literature and are seen as the bearers of tradition and many children. We prefer a more dynamic notion of ethnicity: ethnic groupings are constructed in relation to specific social process, in response to their interaction with those outside the group as well as to internal conflict. Resistance to racist exclusionary practice may take many forms: economic, such as the workplace, or cultural, in music or dress for instance. Brah describes how in Britain:

African Caribbean and Asian young women seem to be constructing diasporic identities that simultaneously assert a sense of belonging to the locality in which they have grown up, as well as proclaiming a ‘difference’ that references the specificity of the historical experience of being ‘Black’, or ‘Asian’, or ‘Muslim’. All of these are changing subject positions. The precise ways and with what outcomes such identities are mobilised is variable. But they speak as ‘British’ identities with all the complexity, contradiction, and difficulty this term implies.

(Brah 1993b: 26)

Phoenix’s research with male and female adolescents indicates that while Black young people are overt in their positioning themselves as possessing a racialized identity, White adolescents are not. Few White youngsters presented themselves as possessing a ‘White identity’ and were quick to deny that colour of an individual was of any significance to them. Nevertheless, Phoenix argues that, at the same time: “they gave accounts which were broadly essentialist, of Black people as the ‘other’” (Phoenix 1997: 111).

The relationship between ethnicity and ‘culture’ is often presented in essentialist terms in the burgeoning literature of so-called, ‘ethnic minority entrepreneurship’ and the use of ‘ethnicities’ as a resource. A key question that this literature has addressed is why it is that certain migrant groups are more likely than others to become entrepreneurs. Edna Bonacich argued that certain groups (e.g. Jews, Chinese and Indians) are, regardless of context, more likely to concentrate in what she terms as a ‘middleman’ category. Seeing themselves as ‘sojourners’ they concentrate on trade and liquidatable lines, promoting hard work and risk taking and the retention of ‘ethnic solidarity’ (Bonacich 1973; Bonacich and Modell 1980). Other theories are more cultural in form arguing that certain ethnic groups have an elective affinity with business.

There are numerous problems with most of this theorising: at worst it falls into an essentialist trap, at best it provides a gloss on what are complex situations. As we shall show in the chapter on employment, the much applauded hard work and risk taking of so-called ‘ethnic minority’ entrepreneurs is often nothing more than a hand-to-mouth survival strategy in the face of unemployment and could not function without recourse to largely unpaid female ‘family’ labour. While such businesses may simply represent a move from the ‘lumpenproletariat’ to the ‘lumpenbourgeoisie’, their existence viewed in traditional class terms contradicts the notion that migrants in Europe predominantly occupy an ‘underclass’ position. The more successful businesses on the other hand operate arm-in-arm with peripheral capitalism and do not become the spaces of resistance that the hybridity literature would lead us to believe (Mitchell 1997; Raghuram and Hardill 1998).

Ethnic minority business involves complex articulations between class, gender, racism and citizenship status. Apart from the small numbers of entrepreneurs who do make it from ‘rags to Mercedes’, most will occupy what Marx would have described as a ‘petit bourgeois’ class position. But this status means little if earnings are in fact less than they were in wage-earning days, if one’s livelihood is dictated by under-cutting one’s competitors in order to get orders from multinationals or the local hyper-market, and if one’s working day is 18 hours. Few women are entrepreneurs, but many women work long hours, often unpaid, in family businesses. Social class categories that define women’s position according to that of the (male) head of household are always unsatisfactory, but in this instance are virtually meaningless. The increasing importance of the ‘ethnic economy’ in Europe demands that we look more closely at the gender relations that underpin so many of these enterprises.
Conclusion

Gender roles, ideologies and practices are an integral part of all social structures and face-to-face encounters, and impact upon all aspects of transnational population movements. This element needs to be incorporated into every level of analysis if we are to provide a rounded and convincing explanation of international migration. In this chapter we have raised some of the problems that have arisen from gender blindness in the existing literature on migration, and from one field of scholarship being deaf to developments in other fields. One of the keys to understanding migration is the link between structure and agency. We therefore proposed a three-tier conceptualization of the migratory process in which the migratory institution mediated between the broader migratory regime and the individual migrant. We have also argued that the migratory process should not be seen in isolation from the formation of ethnic communities in the migration setting and from the social structures in which these take place.

Some of the relevant literature has been left out of our discussion: we have for instance paid scant attention to feminist work in development studies, which also forms a necessary element in a gendered account of migration. One of the most encouraging developments is the research and writing that is emanating from Asia, a major site of female migration. Asian women scholars are addressing issues around women’s migration that are sensitive to the concerns voiced by migrant women themselves and to their everyday realities.

The growing literature on female migration has had little impact on policy makers, on mass media presentation, and also on the main body of migration literature where the male bias has continued to persist in spite of the growing evidence of women’s overwhelming participation in migratory movements. Many questions of relevance to the theory of migration remain unanswered simply because they are never asked. Like Thadani and Todaro (1984) we are concerned with the efficacy of the research in altering women migrants’ lived experiences.

In the chapters that follow we will develop the issues that have been addressed in this chapter in a somewhat abstract way. Chapters 3 and 4 will be primarily concerned with the migratory process and conditions of entry to Europe, whereas Chapters 5–7 address the conditions under which migrants are able to live, work and act collectively within the country of migration. In doing so we hope that we can move from a critique of existing theories towards a better understanding of key dimensions of migrant women’s experience in Europe.