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Gender, Development and Global Householding

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That issues related to migration and global householding are finally being taken seriously by mainstream development institutions is clear from the focus of the United Nation's 2009 *Human Development Report*. Subtitled *Overcoming Barriers: Human Mobility and Development*, it is the first major intergovernmental organization publication to view transnational mobility as integral to human development. The report makes a strong case for recognizing that the impact of migration in relation to development aims is significant for both sending and receiving countries. As the report states repeatedly, the old nation-centered growth and antipoverty frameworks and policies no longer fit when migrants work in one country yet send remittances that reduce poverty and promote human development in another country. Similarly, global householding — the reconfiguration of household and family arrangements as people move across national boundaries — necessitates new frameworks for understanding human livelihood strategies at the micro level. In addition to making the case for taking transnational mobility seriously in development policy, the report offers a set of recommendations that are centered on migration management, regularization, and liberalization policies, such as bilateral temporary workers' agreements that allow nations to enhance growth and competitiveness while simultaneously securing their borders.

Overcoming Barriers acknowledges that contemporary discussions of migration and global householding often take place against a backdrop of significant popular skepticism, and its reported research findings and policy conclusions appear to be specifically aimed at containing this

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skepticism. Migrants have become convenient targets of anger among those displaced or disadvantaged by deindustrialization in countries such as the United States. Policy debates in the wealthier countries often revolve around the idea that increased migration is causing local wages to fall and putting undue pressure on social services. In the developing countries, people worry about how global inequalities are fueling migration, contributing to "brain drain." There is significant concern about global householding creating separated, unstable families and a "care drain" in which families left behind do not receive sufficient caring labor. In contrast, the report contends that migrants should be viewed neither as "villains" who flood across borders that have not been adequately securitized, "stealing the jobs" of locals, nor "victims" of the global economy. Instead, migration is best viewed as a win-win proposition, particularly if it can be managed through appropriate governance channels (UNDP 2009, 3). Allowing enough foreign labor into the domestic market through policies such as circular worker's agreements, reduction of migration's transactions costs, and other mechanisms promotes efficiency and growth. Further, the report argues that mobility generally benefits individual migrants themselves through earnings, as well as their families through remittances.

Remittances, as it turns out, are no small part of the migration/development nexus explored in the UNDP report. Official remittance flowing to less developed countries totaled $338 billion in 2008, an amount that is more than twice as large as official aid (World Bank 2009, 1). As some of these remittance funds spill over into the community in the form of investment, they serve as an "engine of development" and growth, as according to a recent World Bank study (2007, xii). While neither the World Bank nor the United Nations views remittances as a substitute for aid, these institutions clearly view them as an important and growing private solution to the problem of underdevelopment (UNDP 2009, 12; World Bank 2007). Remittances are also presented as a key to improving the well-being of the households in the home country, and are said to strengthen families (UNDP 2009, 12).

It is heartening to find a challenge to the racism and nationalism of much popular antimigration discourse in *Overcoming Barriers*. Further, its emphasis on regularizing and improving the conditions under which workers migrate is welcome. The report addresses some of the human rights issues that bedevil current processes. Still, its overarching project is to spell out a neoliberal governance approach to the management of migration in order to enhance market efficiency, and it downplays many

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of the other elements of migration and global householding, including the impact on nonmarket social reproductive labor. Global neoliberal restructuring has increased the availability and desire for migrants as relatively cheap reserve labor in host countries, and the policies recommended in the report aim to improve and regularize access to that reserve labor pool. Further, the policies recommended in the report underwrite the formation of transnational households that, through remittances, will make up for the reduced funding and support for public antipoverty and development initiatives that many poor countries now face. The loss of unpaid social reproductive labor as more workers and particularly women migrate is not even registered in this market-centered approach. The general message of the report, then, reflects a broader set of efforts at creating a new managerialism in international development that focuses on reorganizing institutional structures, social relations, and even individual behaviors in order to enhance market efficiency defined in largely neoclassical terms. This is evident in the report's tendency to emphasize the individual choice and self-empowerment aspects of migration that enhance market efficiency, while simultaneously downplaying the role of inequalities, nonmarket reproductive work, social dislocations, and power dynamics in these processes.

One telling aspect of the report in this regard is its rather generic conception of the individual migrant. With the exception of a few strategically placed human interest stories, global householding is presented as a standard economic choice under constraint. For example, given the enormous literature on the gendered aspects of transnational migration and global householding that has been generated over the past 15 years — including the ways that gender intersects with race, class, and sexuality to produce particular sorts of vulnerabilities for certain groups of migrant workers — one would expect significant attention paid to gender relations as a factor in understanding and achieving the goals of human development. Yet while it is noted that nearly 50% of the world's 200 million transnational migrants are women, neither gender nor the specific circumstances of these women are discussed in any depth in the report. There is a brief, one-paragraph account of how migrant workers provide complementary labor to rich countries in the form of child care, elder care, and domestic work that helps increase the labor force participation rate among locally born women, but the gender of the migrant workers doing this work is not mentioned, even though many studies have demonstrated that these services are provided mostly by female migrants (UNDP 2009, 85).

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The "global care chains" (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003) in which working women migrate in order to contribute to the reproduction of families and communities in the host country, as well as to their own families back home through remittances, are thus rendered invisible, as is the loss of nonmarket care work when these women migrate from the home country. The report also notes the increase in women as remittance senders in recent years, and cites a small study that suggests that women tend to send a larger percentage of their income home (UNDP 2009, 86). However, no mention is made of how this behavior is related to burdens and pressures that reflect dominant gendered and heteronormative expectations that women should be responsible for social reproduction and caring for their families.

Only in two small paragraphs on the ways in which migration affects gender relations at home do we see some attention to gender and power dynamics. Here, however, the report tends to view power and gender inequality as something that exists outside of global labor markets, as if markets are gender and power neutral and the problem is the traditional realm of local patriarchal culture. The report stresses the positive relationship between migration and gender empowerment in which global householding and integration into international labor markets break down local patriarchal forms. For instance, it states that when women migrate, they are empowered by having more income. When men migrate, women are empowered by their absence (UNDP 2009, 76). Migration of women or men is touted for promoting gender equity through the adoption of new norms that migrants learn in wealthy countries, such as higher age at marriage and greater educational expectations for girls (UNDP 2009, 87). Thus, from the perspective of the UN report, not only is global householding good for market efficiency; the globalizing of households through migration also promotes human development by empowering women as well as through contact with markets and the modern gender values of the North.

In many cases, women certainly benefit from opportunities to migrate, secure improved well-being for their families, and experience migration and global householding as empowering. But the approach taken in the UN report fails to adequately address the myriad ways that the formation of transnational households is changing women's lives within them, or how development is implicated in these processes. In fact, it pushes aside many of the uncomfortable realities that connect development to global householding. For example, the report does not address the failures of development in the countries that migrants leave behind. Yet in many

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cases, development policies have created economic inequalities and insecurities that have served as push factors for migrant workers. For instance, in Mexico, structural adjustment policies have led to the displacement of more than half a million agricultural labor force members, which served as a powerful impetus to migrate (Larudee 1998). In the Philippines, structural adjustment and a balance-of-payments crisis contributed greatly to the massive outflow of migrants from that country, particularly women — who by the 1990s made up 90% of all migrant contract laborers. The Philippine government's Overseas Employment Program places citizens in jobs overseas in order to address the balance-of-payments crisis (Parreñas 2001). This strategy has been replicated and used by other countries, such as India and Thailand, for the same purpose.

Countries that receive remittances often have a strong incentive to keep families separated in order to maintain the flow of funds from abroad. Failures related to development policy have served as pull factors for migration into the host countries as well, and this uncomfortable fact is also glossed over in the report. Some migration that takes place among the developing countries of the South, for instance, involves the movement of care workers from relatively poorer nations in order to provide a privatized solution to social reproduction, such as child care and elder care, due to deep cuts in social support in countries undergoing liberalization and fiscal austerity programs (Aslanbeigui and Summerfield 2006).

The effects of development policies that push migrants are themselves based on gendered access to resources and gender assumptions about social reproduction that underlie policymaking. In many cases, women who lost their positions in paid care work when state subsidies were cut through structural adjustment are the ones choosing to migrate from places like the Philippines. Cuts in government support for social reproduction have been based on the assumption that women would take on the newly privatized care tasks formerly supported by the state. In this context, as Diane Elson put it so well, women's supply of nonmarket labor was assumed to be "infinitely elastic" (1998, 71). These women often face a double burden of both increased social reproduction responsibilities at home and the need to find a job overseas because their former care-work jobs in the home country have been downsized or privatized. The UNDP report fails to capture those realities in which women are uniquely situated at the crossroads of production and reproduction in the overlapping contexts of migration and development.

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The crisis of social reproduction has been the subject of much feminist scholarship on development and globalization (Bakker 2007; Bakker and Gill 2003), and yet the link among global political economy, global householding, and this social reproduction crisis is all but ignored in mainstream development accounts, such as *Overcoming Barriers*.

The realities of moving across borders and setting up global households, as Wendy Harcourt notes, cannot be explained in cut-and-dried economic terms (2007, 1). For instance, not all women leave for economic gain, thus making a pure economic calculus a poor indicator of what motivates migration choice. Sometimes women migrate as a way to leave an unhappy or violent marriage, or to escape the confines of local gender and sexual norms. Further, migrant work, particularly the care work done by women, often takes place in contexts where this work is naturalized and thus devalued (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003), which contributes to migrant women's exposure to vulnerable and exploited situations. Care-work studies show that women must often negotiate different arrangements in the households that they join in the host country, and that varying levels of inequality, uncertainty, and violence dominate migrant women's experiences (see, for example, Chang and Ling, n.d.; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001).

Utilizing a feminist theoretical framework, such as V. Spike Peterson's reproductive, productive, and virtual economies (RPV) framing, highlights these aspects of global householding that are ignored in mainstream development accounts. Peterson insists that making sense of gender in the global political economy rests upon viewing economic factors as embedded in wider social relations, and that gender, race, class, sexuality, and national inequalities are structural features of the economy, rather than something that exists "outside" of it as the UN report portrays things (Peterson 2003). Much of her work focuses on the ways that the discursive, symbolic privileging of masculinity — not necessarily men — naturalizes power dynamics that contribute to subordination, particularly for those who are associated with such "feminine" forms of work as social reproductive labor. Using this framework allows us to unravel the forms of inequality that are related to shifting gendered/classed/raced subjectivities at the nexus of development and global householding in myriad ways.

One interesting example of these processes at work is found in a recent research study of global householding patterns in Mexico (Kunz, n.d.) that utilizes Peterson's RPV framing to make sense of gender power dynamics. Kunz demonstrates that male migrants are viewed as the "heroes of the

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nation" in Mexico for sending back remittances, while in contrast, the family members who stay behind and are engaged in social reproduction activities are viewed as "unproductive." In fact, the World Bank–funded Opportunidades program aims to integrate the women in these global households into paid labor so that they may make a productive contribution to the nation. The result, according to Kunz, is that the emigration of male family members means that women are increasingly taking on the double burden of both productive and reproductive work. In an interesting parallel in the case of the Philippines, Rhacel Parreñas (2001) notes that although women migrants are viewed as the "heroes of the nation" for sending back remittances, those migrants who are mothers are also viewed as "unnatural" for leaving their families behind. This, as Parreñas shows, contributes to feelings of extreme social dislocation and disempowerment on the part of many of these migrant women.

In conclusion, when we bring a feminist analysis to bear on the understanding of gender and human flourishing at the nexus of development and global householding, and start to unravel the ways that women's location at the crossroads of production and social reproduction structures their opportunities and inequalities in particular ways, a very different picture emerges from the one offered in the UNDP study. A feminist analysis suggests that both the human development and gender empowerment issues faced by women at the nexus of global householding and development are not solvable through liberalizing markets or "governing migration" alone.

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Gender Politics and Global Householding in International Student/Scholar Families

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Global householding encompasses a variety of (re)configurations of family and household arrangements due to people on the move across national boundaries (Douglass 2006). My essay focuses on global householding associated with educational migration, and in particular, the flow of students and scholars from Asia to the United States.[1]

The practice of study-abroad programs for preuniversity students has drawn much attention for its transnational family arrangements, but

1. See Piper and Roces (2003) on Asian women and migration and Asis (2006) for an overview of gender dimensions of international migration in Asia. See Coles and Fechter (2007) for an account of gender and global householding arrangements in a relatively underexamined migration flow: professional individuals and their families moving from the global North to the global South. Regarding international students' spouses, see De Verthelyi (1995), Kim (2006), and Martens and Grant (2008). Gu's (2006) study on Taiwanese immigrants pays attention to gender relations through a "nonimmigrant" stage.

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