

THE WOMEN, GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT READER

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edited by Nalini Visvanathan, Lynn Duggan,
Nan Wiegersma and Laurie Nisonoff

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26 | Globalization and the increase in transnational care work: the flip side¹

Jean L. Pyle

This chapter focuses on the relationship of the recent period of globalization with flows of transnational caring labor, looking specifically at who is (or is not) receiving care.² This issue has distinctly gendered dimensions and complicated inequities that also involve class, age, national origin, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, and culture. It has economic, political, social, ethical, and moral aspects and implications. It is a critical matter for all involved: the individuals migrating to provide caring labor, their families, the households and institutions in which they work, and both the sending and receiving countries. Caring labor – and who does or does not receive it – is also an essential concern for sustainable human development. As the United Nations Development Program points out:

Studies of globalization and its impact on people focus on incomes, employment, education and other opportunities. Less visible, and often neglected, is the impact on care and caring labour – the task of providing for dependants, for children, the sick, the elderly ... Human development is nourished not only by expanding incomes, schooling, health, empowerment and a clean environment but also by care. ... Care, sometimes referred to as social reproduction, is also essential for economic sustainability. (UNDP 1999: 77)

Typically, women from lower-income regions provide caring labor – domestic services, childcare, and healthcare services – to households in higher-income areas. It is, however, not necessarily the lowest-income women who migrate. For example, many Filipinas migrating are considered middle-class in the Philippines (Parreñas 2001b). They are often well educated and speak English (Lan 2003; Cheng 2004). Some leave their own children in the care of others, forming global care chains (Hochschild 2000; ILO 2004a). Their families become transnational families; their parenting must occur across national borders (Asis et al. 2004; Parreñas 2001a).

Governments often encourage workers to migrate for employment – particularly lower-income developing countries, often with large debt burdens. Women are a valuable ‘labor export’ since research indicates they are more likely to send remittances home than men (Blue 2004; Connell and Brown 2004; Samarasinghe 1998).

There is an extensive literature on domestic workers, focusing chiefly on Asia, the United States (USA), and western Europe. Research documents the perceived positive and negative aspects of migration (Pyle 2006). Other studies examine the often low wage levels and adverse working/living conditions. There are policy analyses that develop strategies to improve the situation of these workers (Heyzer and Wee 1994; Piper and Ball 2001; Villalba 2002; ILO 2003a, 2003b, 2004a; IOM 2005).

Some scholars explore how female transnational domestic workers reconstitute their identities and their relationships to their own families and establish themselves distinctly from their employers (Asis et al. 2004; Lan 2003; Yeoh and Huang 2000; Barber 2000; Cheng 2004). Some focus on how immigration alters gender relations between women and men (Menjívar 1999). Others reveal the problems these women encounter when they return home (Constable 1999; Siddiqui 2003; Surtees 2003).

In addition, some examine the representation of female domestic workers. They have been stereotyped as heroes or victims (Santos 2002; Gibson et al. 2001), as ‘others’ who are inferior (ILO 2003b; Cheng 2004), as immoral (Chin 1997; Chang and Groves 2000), as a drain on society (Chang 2000), and as commodities (Tyner 1996; Chin 1998, 1997). Representations are often used by a country in marketing its workers for employment in other countries (Tyner 1996) or by receiving-country brokers who channel women into different labor market segments by nationality (Loveband 2004). They are also a means to control the options workers face and deny them their due rights (Chin 1997).

Much research reveals the immigrants’ range of reactions to situations in which they find themselves – showing that these **workers, although on the disadvantaged side of unequal power relations, have varying degrees of agency** and creatively resist the constraints of their situations (Constable 1997; Yeoh and Huang 1998; Gamburd 2000; Barber 2000; Chang and Groves 2000; Lan 2003; Cheng 2004).

The different aspects of social reality explored in these widening literatures on workers are all important for understanding transnational caring labor. It is only within the last decade, however, that multilevel approaches to understanding the political economy of transnational migration for such work have been explored (Heyzer and Wee 1994; Pyle 2001; Pyle and Ward 2003; Parreñas 2001a, 2001b; Misra et al. 2006; Oishi 2005).

Furthermore, no overarching analysis of the relationship of globalization to who *is* or *is not* receiving care has been undertaken. In this article, I initiate this project. I examine the flip side of the increased flow of transnational caring labor into higher-income areas. At the same time women migrate to provide caring labor, there are deficiencies in the levels of care they and their families obtain – a care deficit.³ This can undermine health, violate human rights and dignity, and undercut possibilities for sustainable development.

In the next two sections, I examine the dual aspects of the flip side. First, I provide an overview of the research on the working and living conditions of transnational migrant care workers (domestic workers and healthcare workers), showing the care deficit that most encounter.⁴ Second, I survey research on the experiences of their families – looking at the economic and psychological aspects of the care that family members receive when women emigrate. In the third section, I examine the double bind that many national governments encounter as they seek to balance the advantages of having women emigrate with the need to counter the adverse conditions the migrants may encounter. I examine several different approaches to female migration, ranging from relatively open migration to very restrictive, and critique governments' ways of addressing the abuse of migrating women. In the last section, I outline initiatives at the international level begun since 2000 to address the problems migrant workers face (up to 2006 publication date). I point out that what is missing in these approaches is an understanding of how forces of globalization and the international power structure have shaped migrant flows – the actual numbers and their gender, class, and other demographic characteristics.

The flip side: female transnational workers – what care do they receive?

Economic issues are a primary reason for women workers to emigrate. Women typically earn a wage abroad that exceeds their alternatives at home. Others leave to escape oppressive home situations and feel empowered. Some view migration as an opportunity to see more of the world and meet people from other cultures (Villalba 2002; ILO 2004a; Oishi 2005).

These benefits notwithstanding, there is, however, wide evidence that many transnational care workers find themselves in situations where others possess most of the power, leaving them limited grounds to negotiate the terms of their employment and existence (ILO 2003b). They face wide-ranging problems that affect their mental and physical health. There are countless examples of how they strive to improve their circumstances, but the level of care they experience in their own lives is often seriously deficient.

What women migrating for caring labor experience and the actions they take in response are complex and shaped by many dimensions of social reality, including the particular economic, social, political, legal, and cultural conditions of the receiving countries. Women originating from the same country encounter similarities and differences across host countries. On one level, Parreñas (2001b) found that Filipina domestic workers in the different contexts of Los Angeles and Rome experienced similar problems – painful separation from their families, reduced occupational status, social exclusion from host communities, and quasi-citizenship. On a more micro level, Filipinas had better protections in Hong Kong than in Singapore, although the latter is

considered somewhat more democratic (Bell 2001; Buckman and Saywell 2004). Not surprisingly, they preferred working in Hong Kong. But their experiences also differed within Hong Kong, depending on whether they worked in Chinese or Western households. They believed Western employers offered better work environments with more equal treatment and personal space (Cheung and Mok 1998). Nurses also experienced sharply different circumstances. Ball (2004) compared Filipina nurses' access to institutionalized ways of raising concerns (at the workplace or societal levels) in Saudi Arabia and the USA, finding much less recourse in Saudi Arabia.

Multiple types of workplace discrimination Discrimination affects health and well-being and is therefore a major factor in the levels of care people experience in their lives. Women migrating transnationally for caring labor can experience multiple forms of discrimination⁵ – based on ethnicity, race, nationality, class, religion, perceived morality, gender, or because they are undocumented or trafficked workers (ILO 2003a, 2003b). Instead of building bridges across nations, migration can reinforce and augment many forms of inequality (Cheng 2004; Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002). For example, Ball (2004) documented how Filipina nurses in Saudi Arabia are multiply disadvantaged: as foreign nationals, as women, and as females in occupations that cross taboos of touching between unmarried members of opposite sexes. To resist, they move to other countries for work once they gain experience in transnational employment.

In terms of ethnicity, Gamburd (1999) described how local agencies placing Sri Lankan women abroad charged higher fees for Sinhala women than Muslim women. Hierarchies based on race and nationality disadvantage many. For example, Indonesian women in Taiwan are channeled into the more demanding jobs (caring for the very sick and elderly), while the Filipinas receive the easier domestic positions (Loveband 2004). Filipina domestic workers in Singapore received one or two days off a month, Sri Lankans one or none, and Indonesian domestic workers none (Yeoh and Huang 1998). McNeil-Walsh reported nurses of the racial minority may be assigned less desirable shifts and have fewer opportunities for training and promotion (2004). Immigrant nurses in the USA and Saudi Arabia often felt talked down to by patients and colleagues – and were reprimanded in circumstances that would not result in criticism of a white colleague (Ball 2004). Although workers are aware of these injustices, their vulnerability makes them reluctant to report them.

Class differences between employer and domestic worker can be reinforced by either maternalism (the female employer intruding on workers' personal lives or disclosing her personal life to the domestic worker) or the creation of a more distant hierarchical relationship. Both can control and demean the domestic worker. Although in the less powerful position, workers can

influence the employer–employee boundary by refusing to share details of their personal lives (Lan 2003).

Oishi (2005) reminds us that employers may seek domestic employees of the same religion. Arab households prefer Muslim domestic workers, even though those of other faiths may be readily available, because they don't want their children exposed to different value systems.

Discourse has also centered on the morality and sexuality of domestic workers. Responses and resistance of groups of transnational migrants vary. For example, some Filipinas challenged the portrayal of them as prostitutes by establishing organizations with ethical rules for domestic workers' behavior, thus hiding sexuality; others flaunted their sexuality to mock the accusers (Chang and Groves 2000).

Gender is, however, a major basis upon which discrimination occurs, often overlapping these other forms of discrimination. In most countries, cultural and traditional attitudes devalue women and restrict their economic and political rights, their social and cultural roles, and their opportunities for education and access to information and resources (ILO 2003a). Gendered hierarchies exist (Wee and Sim 2004). Transnational women domestic workers typically have few occupational choices in the gender-stratified labor markets, limited mobility between employers, and often must live at their workplace. Migrating nurses may encounter barriers regarding licensing, fees, language tests, and approval of their qualifications (Bach 2003; Hawthorne 2001; ILO 2003b).

Although women often migrate because higher wages are promised abroad, nevertheless many receive relatively low hourly pay and find their wages withheld for months (Lim and Oishi 1996; Surtees 2003; Buckman and Saywell 2004). Recruitment agencies, arguing that they must recoup the costs of placing the women abroad, often garnish wages for the first few months on the job (Perlez 2004). Wage hierarchies exist (ILO 2004a). Gender, race, and nationality interact in ways that disadvantage many. Female domestic workers from countries such as Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, and Nepal, for example, earn less than Filipinas in Singapore and Hong Kong (Buckman and Saywell 2004; Oishi 2005). Women have begun resisting. Wee and Sim (2004) describe how Filipinas in Hong Kong have more power to negotiate with employers – many have networks of family and friends already employed there, numbers of Filipino-dominated NGOs have been established in Hong Kong, and many workers have cell phones, facilitating organizing. Filipina nurses in the USA have challenged discrimination by filing lawsuits under US equal employment law (Ball 2004).

Women often take jobs of lower status than the occupations for which they trained (Piper 2005). This is commonly the case for Filipinas who become domestic workers. Moving lower in the occupational hierarchy diminishes their class status, fosters alienation, and can result in loss of skills (Parreñas

2001b). The skills of trained healthcare workers are also often underutilized (ILO 2004a). Bach (2003) highlighted the ways they are deskilled – some visas curtail job options and past experience and skills are often overlooked in assigning jobs and setting pay rates. McNeil-Walsh (2004) reported that healthcare workers from South Africa are treated as 'different' and staffed in positions that underutilize their skills.

Migrating domestic workers may have few labor rights – limits on hours worked or overtime, specified days off and vacation time, a minimum wage, or the right to organize – because they are typically in occupations not covered by labor laws (ILO 2003a, 2003b; Abu-Habib 1998; Silvey 2004). Furthermore, there may be no contract stipulating the terms of their employment or they may have been forced to sign a document that restricts their rights. If a contract exists, it may not be enforced, allowing widespread violations. Women typically have few welfare rights and health benefits. They may be in forced labor or bound to an employer by debt.

In addition, domestic workers may be exploited by recruitment agencies. Wee and Sim (2004) document the differences Filipinas and Indonesian women experience during the recruitment process, with the latter encountering more abusive conditions. Surtees (2003) observed the long confinement of Indonesian women in crowded 'holding centres' awaiting emigration. She also pointed out how return migrants may be extorted by immigration officials and charged high rates for currency exchange or transportation home. Bangladeshi women traveling through the airport to their homes have been harassed, extorted, robbed, even killed (Siddiqui 2003). To avoid the abuses of private agencies and some official channels, Sri Lankan women established recruitment structures that worked through personal networks (Gamburd 2000).

In the event of an economic crisis, immigrant women are particularly vulnerable. After the Asian economic crisis of 1997, both Thailand and Malaysia wanted to expel 500,000-plus foreign emigrants (Lund and Panda 2000).

Households – the domestic black box In some cases, women migrate with their families and live separately from their workplaces. Nevertheless, problems can arise in their own households. Menjivar's research (1999) on largely undocumented El Salvadoran and Guatemalan immigrants in California revealed that women often have better chances of finding employment (in households, where they are not seen) than the men. The men, frustrated by not fulfilling their cultural roles as 'male provider,' often drink excessively and beat their wives/partners. Such outcomes temper the argument that a woman's bargaining power and position in the household will be enhanced in the short run by earning money.

Women migrating alone transnationally for live-in domestic work may be discriminated against because they are isolated within households, with their

living and working conditions hidden from view. They are reduced from whole social beings to commodified labor (Yeoh and Huang 1998). Working conditions vary, depending on how the domestic workers are regarded in the household. According to Chin (1997), many Malaysian employers view their domestic workers as 'girl-slaves.' In sharp contrast, the Filipina and Indonesian migrants in Malaysia wanted to 'be perceived and treated as human beings deserving of respect'. Cheng (2004) tells how Filipina domestic workers and their Taiwanese female employers struggle to reconstitute their respective identities around ideologies of domesticity, womanhood, and motherhood. Each woman in the employer-employee dyad tries to enhance her own self-image, the way the other sees her, and her image in the larger society.

Domestic workers may experience poor working conditions that include excessive work demands or being on call continuously, with little time to themselves (Constable 1997). Yeoh and Huang's (1998) interviews with employers and immigrant domestic workers in Singapore, a nation considered modern, showed how the government and the employer severely limit employees' time and ability to go outside the household (by lack of regulations, by guiding them into 'appropriate' activities on their day off such as dressmaking, and by verbal suasion, couched paternalistically in terms of 'protecting' the workers from the 'ills' of society). Workers resisted by meeting on playgrounds while caring for small children, at churches (an employer-approved activity), or by ignoring the employer's warnings and frequenting public areas where their compatriots gather on any day off acquired. Similarly, Chin's research (1997) revealed that Malaysian employers sought to curtail their domestic workers' movement outside the home, fearing the women would pick up 'bad habits.' Workers resisted, adopting a more stylish persona on days off to demonstrate an identity distinct from that of a domestic worker (*ibid.*).

Transnational domestic workers are typically unable to change employers because a national (i.e. the employer) must sponsor their visa (ILO 2003a). What occurs in households is often outside the purview of the law. For example, Silvey reported, in her study of Indonesian women domestic workers in Saudi Arabia, that both the Indonesian and Saudi governments considered the household 'beyond their respective jurisdictional scopes' (2004). Given such isolation, immigrant domestic workers often endure health and safety risks that include verbal abuse, physical or sexual violence, and harmful exposures (Chin 1998; Lim and Oishi 1996; Villalba 2002; ILO 2004a). Employers' criticism is common and domestics even experience humiliating treatment from the children they care for (Cheng 2004). Many have been beaten by employers; some have been murdered or died under suspicious circumstances (Rosca 1995; Buckman and Saywell 2004; US Department of State 2005). The Indonesian embassy in Saudi Arabia documented '1105 migrant workers who suffered physical abuse, 2182 who were abused psychologically and 612 who were sexually

abused' from 1994 to 1997 (Surtees 2003: 102, citing a 2002 report). Waldman (2005) reported that the bodies of 100 Sri Lankan women a year were returned home; many others were raped. Prosecution is infrequent and penalties tend to be light. For example, the US Department of State (2005) reported that the Lebanese government did not look into suspicious deaths of Philippine and Ethiopian domestic workers or prosecute employers, even though evidence of their sexual or physical abuse of domestic workers existed. Working conditions can be dangerous in other ways. Almost a hundred maids a year died in falls from high-rises in Singapore. Although some were believed to have committed suicide, many slipped while washing windows or hanging laundry (Buckman and Saywell 2004).

In addition, although they reside in relatively affluent households, domestic workers may not be provided adequate food, a healthful place and enough time to sleep, or personal privacy to maintain their own lives and customs. For example, Lan (2003) said Filipinas in Taiwan typically are allotted a small, poorly ventilated room in the attic or basement of homes that have spacious bedrooms. Chin (1998) reported Malaysian employers want domestics to work long work hours, with little time for eating or sleeping. Constable revealed that domestic workers in Hong Kong were told to eat less and lose weight when they requested more food (Constable 1997). Sri Lankan domestic workers that Abu-Habib (1998) interviewed in Lebanon stated the food was unfamiliar and they were often unable to practice their own religious customs.

The flip side: their families – what care do they receive?

In evaluating the 'flip side' of the flows of transnational caring labor, we must also assess the impact on the levels of care received by care workers' families. Many women migrate transnationally because they believe their increased earnings will allow them to better provide for their families or communities. They hope to fund improved housing for their families, finance a small family business, reduce family debts, or furnish children with a better education (Barber 2000; Gamburd 2000; Frank 2001). They feel positively about such contributions (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002). In doing this, however, they are supplying important domestic services and giving daily care to the children of *others* – which can be painful emotionally when there is a long separation from their own children (Hochschild 2002; Parreñas 2002; Yeoh and Huang 2000).

Women may be away from their families for years (DeAlwis 2002; ILO 2003a). The way they are evaluated 'back home' can be both positive and negative. This evaluation, in turn, affects their psychological and physical well-being. On the one hand, they may be thought of positively because they remit significant amounts of money and therefore 'care' for their families (including children, spouses, parents, siblings, and even wider familial networks). This type of care is skewed to the material and away from care provided face to face.

On the other hand, those migrating transnationally for caring work are often accused of neglecting their care-giving roles at home. Women are deemed responsible for the well-being of their families, even though hundreds of miles away for extended periods of time. They are blamed for the adverse things their family members do (or that happen to them) in their absence (Parreñas 2002; ILO 2004a; Oishi 2005). The evaluations of married/partnered women with children often are contradictory. Women are simultaneously expected to be on-site mothers as well as helpmates to their husbands/partners (earning money if necessary, migrating to do so if that is the best option). If children remain at home, grandmothers may be overburdened by being substitute care-givers (DeAlwis 2002). Children may suffer emotionally (Hochschild 2002), be sick more often, be abused, or 'go astray' in the absence of a mother (lag in their schoolwork or drop out, get involved with drugs, enter the labor market too young) (ILO 2003a). Other studies, however, suggest that some mothers and children maintain linkages that overcome the problems of distance (Asis et al. 2004; Parreñas 2002).

Women are often seen as corrupted by their new lives (DeAlwis 2002; Gamburd 1999). In spite of the fact that many Bangladeshi husbands or fathers made the decision that women in their family should work abroad, the men infer that returning women are a cause of the spread of HIV/AIDS. They believe that women tend to become part-time sex workers (Dasgupta 2003).

Masculine identities may be threatened. Some husbands drink, philander, or squander the money their wives send home (Gamburd 2000; Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002). Issues regarding the gendered division of labor within households surface in the immigrants' households as well as the employers' homes. There are mixed conclusions regarding whether men pick up the housekeeping and childcare duties when the wife/mother migrates. According to Parreñas (2002) and Gamburd (2000) respectively, few Filipino or Sri Lankan men took over childcare and household responsibilities when their wives migrated. Asis et al. (2004) found, however, that all husbands in their small sample assumed domestic duties when their wives migrated from the Philippines to Singapore.

The lack of demographic information on women migrating presents obstacles for understanding the problems. Ogaya (2004) says the emphasis on women with children may not be truly representative since she believes single women predominate. She argues that the focus on mothers distorted the discourse. Chin (1997) found that Filipinas in Malaysia in the mid-1990s were largely single, but suggested that the marital status of migrants may change over time. More longitudinal data – that includes gender, marital status, occupation, age, and number of children – would provide a clearer portrait of who is migrating.

In sum, the increasing flow of women moving transnationally to provide

caring labor is, ironically, often accompanied by *diminished* levels of care in the lives of the migrating workers. Although many find innovative ways to actively resist the negative aspects of migration, nevertheless many experience deterioration in their own physical or psychological health. Their families may also suffer. There are very different stressors in the lives of those buying care, those providing it, and the families of the care-givers. There are also dramatic disparities in whose fundamental rights are preserved or violated in this process (ILO 2003a).

The state's double bind

Redress for the problems of emigrants typically involves the national level, whether a government alone or in agreements with other countries. Although many non-governmental organizations (NGOs), ranging from local to regional in scope, assist migrants, they operate within the constraints of the legal frameworks of national governments.

To examine how the state addresses emigration problems it is critical to use a gendered perspective. Many governments experience a double bind. On the one hand, they have strong economic incentives to encourage emigration. They can stave off social unrest by exporting labor, thereby reducing unemployment or underemployment. In addition, emigrants' remittances provide funds to support family members at home as well as the foreign exchange needed to improve the balance of payments and service the debt owed large international financial institutions. In many cases, given occupational segregation, it is female labor that is wanted abroad. Because these economic reasons to encourage out-migration are compelling, labor export often appears in countries' multi-year economic development plans. However, economic reasons can be problematic at the social level. The ILO recognizes that the state's desire to increase foreign exchange may 'leave migrant workers exposed to exploitation and abuse' (ILO 2003a).

Therefore, on the other hand, a government may be pushed to regulate emigration. It has the putative goal of protecting the rights of citizens who become migrant workers *and* its public image may require steps in this direction, especially given the often well-publicized abuse of its citizens abroad. A government may also want to protect society's perception of 'family' and keep women home. Governments address abuses female emigrants experience in several ways – by banning women's emigration to 'protect' the women (or to force receiving countries into adopting protective policies), by promoting male migration, by training programs to teach a few occupational, language, and coping skills, or by attempts at bilateral or multilateral agreements to establish better standards for treatment of foreign workers. These strategies range from weak and ineffectual to misleading and discriminatory. They can also have unintended consequences.⁶

It has been economically expedient for some countries to export women. In some cases, female migrants are more 'marketable' abroad than men. But abuses occur. Governments' strategies to address the abuses are problematic. Governments have either tried to change the gender composition of the emigrant stream by bans or by incentives, attempted to shift responsibility for welfare and economic outcomes onto the individuals migrating, or tried to develop bilateral or multilateral agreements.

First, banning female emigration to 'protect' the women often results in protests by the women themselves (who need to migrate to earn incomes in spite of the risks) and challenges from recruiting agencies and NGOs. Workers prevented from emigrating by protective policies may leave through illegal channels where the probability of abuse is greater (Alegado 1997; Oishi 2005; Siddiqui 2003). Bans are discriminatory to women; men do not encounter similar obstacles. Although not as blatant, promoting only male migration also disadvantages women.

Second, the approach of addressing abuse by shifting responsibility onto individuals migrating is often disingenuous. Domestic workers are trained in basic skills, at least partly to avoid angering employers. This can lead maids to the misleading conclusion that abuse may be their own fault. Changing the rhetoric to convince migrating workers they are overseas foreign investors transforms 'citizens with rights into entrepreneurs who can be held responsible for their own failures' (Weekley 2004).

Last, countries can try to negotiate agreements with receiving countries that include worker protections. Sending governments have little incentive or leverage to accomplish this, however, since they are trying to promote their workers abroad and face competition in the labor export industry. There are other governments willing to send workers without seeking protection for them (Alegado 1997; Oishi 2005). Sri Lanka has expressed such fears of Indonesia and the Philippines (Gamburd 1999; Waldman 2005). Given the double bind just discussed, it is unlikely that governments will enforce policies (if they even formulate them) to substantially address the inequities faced by transnational care workers. Policies may be more for public relations.

In short, none of these strategies allows women the same access to emigration as men and none provides a transnational environment that ensures their rights to safe work.

Conclusion: what are the options?

We have seen how women's transnational migration to provide caring labor has a flip side. Flows of care are not symmetrical. Women migrating provide care but, in return, they and their families often experience care deficits. Migrating women can encounter a range of economic, social, and political abuses that involve discrimination based on ethnicity, race, nationality, class,

religion, and age. They resist these injustices but have limited power. The state is often in a double bind and ineffective in addressing abuses. What can be done?

At the broadest international level, there has been increased attention to migration issues since 2000. The goal is to manage migration in a way that addresses the concerns of migrants and those of sending and receiving countries, while contributing to growth and development (ILO 2004a, 2004b).

Some suggest a multilevel approach (local, national, and international) that strives for policy coherence among economic and social policies relating to migration (GCIM 2005; ILO 2003a, 2004b). This requires policy coordination across nations, among international organizations with different but overlapping mandates, as well as coordination among levels. It also requires large organizations such as the UN and the ILO to have integrated internal approaches to migration (ILO 2004a). Policy coherence is a step toward a global consensus on migration, although the process is complicated, fraught with unintended consequences, and even more difficult post-9/11 when security issues regarding migrants became prominent.

This approach is part of a wider movement advocating a fair globalization, in which benefits of globalization would be distributed more justly. The ILO's World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization argued that to be sustainable, globalization must meet the needs of people. There is a global economy but not a global society. Economic benefits and social costs are not distributed equally among groups. It is critical to see the human side of globalization and focus on the social as well as economic aspects (ILO 2004b).

The human side is fundamentally based on human rights, including the right to a safe livelihood and to migrate (Jolly 2003). Many ILO and UN documents or conventions uphold migrant workers' human rights, often specifying women or even domestic workers (GCIM 2005; ILO 2004a, 2003a; Oishi 2005).⁷ Two key examples are the UN Migrant Workers Convention,⁸ adopted in 1990, which sets standards for both documented and undocumented workers and their families (few countries ratified it at first, so it became effective only in 2003) and the UN Resolution on Violence Against Women Migrant Workers, adopted in 2000 (Oishi 2005). The conventions are, however, widely ignored.

Several other global initiatives on migration have been launched since 2000. The Berne Initiative of 2001 helped governments develop effective migration policies and structures. The Declaration of the Hague on the Future of Refugee and Migration Policy advocated including civil society, the private sector, and academia in the discussion. Many international organizations made migration a major theme of conferences or action. The Global Commission on International Migration's final report urged countries of origin and destination to revise their national laws, policies, and practices so migrants can exercise the human rights that international law grants them (GCIM 2005). It recommended

that the UN form an international agency focused on migration, recognizing that too many organizations have a role in addressing migration issues; policies are piecemeal, sometimes conflict, and gaps exist (ibid.). Most recently, the UN General Assembly scheduled a High-Level Dialogue on Migration and Development for September 2006 to develop ways to maximize the benefits of migration and reduce its adverse aspects.

At a gendered level, some international institutions have focused on the problems female labor migrants face (ibid.; ILO 2003a, 2003b; ILO 2004a; UNIFEM 2005). The UN's publication *The World's Women 2005* called for better migration data by gender. The ILO and UNIFEM advocate multilevel approaches. The ILO's comprehensive document *An Information Guide – Preventing Discrimination, Exploitation and Abuse of Women Migrant Workers* (2003a) espouses a rights-based, gender-sensitive approach. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM 2005) specifies several other important components of an effective approach – unionization, public awareness campaigns, and provision of services.

While it is encouraging that migration has become a prominent issue and some helpful strategies have been developed, there are problems with these approaches to improving migrants' conditions, particularly female transnational care workers. First, developing coordinated policies across countries may be very difficult given many nations' double bind regarding women's migration, the inequities in relative power among nations, and the sometimes conflicting goals among social actors (government, recruiters, women migrants, and their families). Enforcing policies is even harder, especially when workers are isolated in households.

Second, a larger context is missing here – recognition of the structure of power internationally and the effect globalization has on factors influencing women's migration. The goal of these approaches is only to *manage* the flows that occur. They do not address or alter the dimensions of globalization that shape the numbers migrating and their demographic characteristics (gender, class, age, or nationality). The ILO (2003a) states it is important to focus on the reasons underlying the demand for and supply of migrant workers, but merely lists a few causal factors without exploring them further. To fully understand and address transnational workers' lives and concerns, these factors must be analyzed.

This project is underway. I have argued elsewhere that women have been increasingly drawn into several types of work, including domestic labor and the migration often necessitated for it, because of characteristics of this period of globalization: the increasing role of markets and correspondingly diminished role of governments in many of the world's economies; the 'opening up' of nations internationally as many developing countries adopted export-oriented strategies and liberalized financial markets; the spread of multi-

national corporations (MNCs) into new tiers of countries and sectors; and the widespread adoption of structural adjustment policies (SAPs) required by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as a condition for granting countries loans. Each of these characteristics has affected women. (Pyle 1999, 2001, 2005).

In addition, I pointed out that the structure of power internationally has shifted dramatically, with an increase in the influence of institutions that profess to support market-determined economic outcomes (MNCs, IMF, World Bank, and the World Trade Organization, WTO) relative to those that are more people-centered and concerned with sustainable human development [non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and many United Nations agencies, particularly the International Labour Organization] (Pyle and Ward 2003; Pyle 2005). The language of 'free markets' and 'liberalization' hides the reality that markets are not free and competitive, but are dominated by powerful institutions whose goals are profit-making or repayment of loans. In fact, rather than freely choosing, many national governments have been pushed to embrace these four aspects of globalization outlined above by powerful international institutions (IMF, World Bank, WTO, and MNCs) (Pyle and Ward 2003).

We must develop our multilevel approach within the larger context of the global political economy. Successful strategies to improve the lives of transnational migrants require a realistic understanding of the structure of power internationally and the impact of globalization on the gendering of labor migration. If we do not shift to this new way of thinking and take actions to strengthen the power of organizations focused on sustainable human development, we may have limited success. Working within the existing power structure may result in marginal gains and not fundamentally address the inequities that foster much migration.

Notes

¹ Reprinted from *Globalizations*, 3(3), 2006, pp. 297–315. The original version had additional text incorporating issues regarding women who had been trafficked.

² I refer to the last three and a half to four decades. Other periods include the latter nineteenth century to World War I and the period after World War II.

³ Which Hochschild identified (1995; Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002).

⁴ Given that the literature on female domestic workers is substantial and space is limited, I focus mainly on those migrating from Asian countries.

⁵ The ILO Convention entitled *Discrimination (Employment and*

Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), defines discrimination as 'any distinction, exclusion or preference made on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin, which has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity or treatment in employment or occupation' (ILO 2003a).

⁶ These conflicts and the gender inequalities that arise are illustrated by the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. These three cases are examined in the original article.

⁷ The foundations of a human rights approach rest in documents such as the UN charter, the UN Universal Declaration

of Human Rights (1948), seven UN human rights treaties, and various conventions on refugees, trafficking, and crime (GCIM 2005; ILO 2004b).

8 The full name is The 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.

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