SEEING GENDER IN MIGRATION: AN INTRODUCTION

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"Gender is deeply embedded in determining who moves, how those moves take place, and the resultant futures of migrant women and families."
(Boyd and Grieco 2013)

It is well known that, for a long time, gender was absent from studies of migration. Migrants were men and any mention of women or children was in the context of trailing spouses and other dependents or unskilled and often exploited and/or sexual workers. In general, women were, and to much extent still are, absent from economic data since much of women's labour is done within the domestic sphere and is not perceived as economic activity. Even when this labour is done outside of the woman's own home it is invisible to public view. It was only recently that women even entered the public migration narrative. When the "feminization of migration" coincided with feminist and post-modernist movements in social sciences, including anthropology, gender became a primary subject of migration studies.

Over the last fifty years, we have seen two dramatic shifts in women as part of the global labour and consequently migration market. First, globalization ignited the feminization of migrant labour by simultaneously demanding low-wage labour of Third World women from the export processing zones of developing countries and in the manufacturing and service sectors in developed, capitalist countries (Sassen-Koob 1984; Sassen 1998). Although low-wage labour includes productive manual labour, women often find work in the reproductive labour sphere as hotel housekeepers, nursing aides, and domestic workers, replicating gendered power structures through division of labour. As Bridget Anderson (2000: 113) argues, "Paid domestic workers reproduce people and social relations not just in what they do (polishing silver, ironing), but also in the very doing of it (the foil to the household manager). In this respect the paid domestic worker is herself, in her very essence, a means of reproduction." Feminization of the labour market not only means an increase in women in that market but also an increased commodification of reproductive labour (Parrenas 2012) which leads to the second phenomenon.

In the 1970s, an historically significant global shift occurred in the ways in which women gained access to the professional labour force (Hawthorne 2001: 214). Women in wealthy countries, usually in the global north and west, shifted from the feminized domestic and "pink collar" labour spheres into the "formerly male-only terrain" of the labour market (Howe 1977: 12). Essentially, the increase in women's rights, including education and contraception, led to a broader employment market for women in economically advanced countries. Consequently, as new opportunities began to open for Western women outside the traditionally feminized labour sector and more women began to enter the general work population, they left space in the traditional female labour sectors (both publically and domestically) and began to rely on women from the global south to move in and take over the "women's work" that they no longer wanted or were able to do (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003: 3). Wealthy women who work in the public sphere can "hire a wife" to take over their physical and emotional domestic labours (Enloe 2000; Romero 2002).[1] The globalization of labour, specifically wage and reproductive labour, has given rise to the "global care chain" which refers to "a series of personal links between people across the globe based on the paid or unpaid work of caring" (Hochschild 2000: 131). A typical chain consists of an older daughter from a poor family caring for her siblings while her mother goes abroad to work as a nanny or domestic worker for a woman in a richer country. This chain has become increasingly global in the past forty years, resting on advances of women in wealthy countries.

As women have become more mobile in global labour, "an increasing proportion of women have sought employment throughout Asia, the Middle East, and a select range of Western countries as 'nurses, doctors, teachers, and secretaries – the feminized occupations' – despite the persistent image of women as unskilled workers or 'trailing spouses'" (Hawthorne 2001: 214). Although much of migrant women's labour takes place in private homes and is somewhat invisible, women have become increasingly visible across the broader global economy (Sassen 1998: 82) and migration studies.

It is not surprising that much of the research on gender and migration privileges care work. While Mahler and Pessar (2006) questioned the privileging of gender, or giving gender attention above that which is deserved, we question the apparent privilege of care work in gendered migration studies. Three of the five

1 Much of the literature on migration of domestic workers concerns the racial division of reproductive labor (Nakano Glenn 1992; Parrenas 2012; Romero 2002).

articles in this special issue concern care work. Although it is the area of our own research interests, we cannot ignore the profusion of research on care workers. One reason is that because women have been segregated into and have found opportunities in the particular caring occupations, as described above, it is the area where a large proportion of women work. Secondly, migrant women take part in large scale institutionalized global movements for care work which has become visible to public perception, especially in countries such as the Philippines that have broad foreign worker "export" programs. It is estimated that, at any one point in time, over 250,000 Filipino women are working in care work somewhere around the world. In order to understand gender, we must see it operating it (Mahler and Pessar 2006: 29) and we see gender blatantly in the care arena.

Mirjana Morokvasic (1984), in an early review of women migrants, stated that examining gender illustrates the variety of ways that women are not merely dependent or exploited sojourners but agents. Twenty years later, another special issue of the International Migration Review (Donato, et al. 2006), a compilation of the Gender and Migration Working Group of the International Migration Program of the Social Science Research Council, demonstrated that women-centred research has shifted toward a more gendered analysis in recent decades. While we agree with this analysis, we also know that gender is still marginalized (Mahler and Pessar 2006) and, more interestingly, that men have become marginalized in gendered analyses of migration. Like in much of gender studies, masculinity has been left out of the conversation. Unfortunately, this special issue follows that trend, despite specifically stating an interest in articles concerning masculinities in migration. However, we feel that our contribution of this issue does help us to better understand the migrant struggle to perform expectations of gendered behaviour (Donato et al. 2006). The articles in this issue work together as a reflection of gender power in the process of migration. First, the theme of patriarchy and the hierarchy of power and male domination of social resources affect where and when migration takes place (Boyd and Grieco 2013). Secondly, many of the articles in this issue explore interactions between female migrants and their male counterparts and other family members. In other words, how are gender roles and family relations reconstructed through migration processes?

Although limited in quantity, the European university-based contributors to this issue cover a wide range of geographical locations and ties. Central Europe, Southeast Asia, and east Africa provide the backdrops of migrant behaviour. The authors in this issue use these locales as settings in which they explore historical, colonial and post-socialist legacies. Although care work is privileged as a topic

here, the articles in this issue examine the migrant decision-making process, cultural flows of ideologies and migration as forms of agency. The contributors represent the fields of social anthropology, sociology, psychology and political science. An interdisciplinary approach is typical for migration studies. All of the articles share a qualitative methodological paradigm including participant observation, semi-structured interviews and group interviews.

Pavla Redlová gives us a classic example of Filipina domestic workers but with the twist of a post-socialist context in which they represent a newfound symbol of cosmopolitanism and wealth. In an environment where state services once provided child care, individuals now must find ways to take care of themselves and do so in a way that draws on their socialist past of working around the system. The commodification of care is at the centre of her analysis of transnational domestic workers. Similarly, Martina Sekulová examines the ways Slovakian women try to fulfil their roles as mothers while commuting to Austria for brief work sojourns as domestic caregivers to elderly individuals. Sekulová broadens the migrant narrative through her discussion of the "transnational family." She illustrates the decision-making that takes place in the family as well as different ways that gender roles shift and change with the short-term regular presence and absence of the mother. In her article, Sekulová links gender to age, specifically the age of the migrant's children as a variable in family dynamics. We also see a different form of migration in this piece, where migrants return home and leave at regular and somewhat brief interludes allowing women to maintain care for the family. Sekulová maintains a paradox of care migration – women look for self-expression and self-realization through gendered work in an environment of asymmetric power relations – families in Austria. This problem of negotiating gender power is also the central argument in Julten Abdelhalim's article on the representation of religiosity and identity through forms of dress (*pardha*) in Kerala, India. This article represents the continued linkages that earlier migrants and migration chains have on the contemporary, as well as the ways that present migration patterns create agency for women. Abdelhalim argues that *pardha* was enforced as a marker of identity, but at the same time created emancipatory tools in traditional patriarchal society in the Keralite society.

To round out our trio of care work studies, Adéla Souralová provides not only a twist on the construction of family but on the paradigm of care worker and migrant. When colonial migrants and other wealthy Westerners travelled to other places it was not uncommon to hire local people as servants and care givers. Today, we see that it is also very common for people from less wealthy

nations to travel to wealthier nations to find work as care workers. In her article, Souralová describes the mixture of old and new practices when Vietnamese immigrant families hire local women in the Czech Republic to work as nannies. At the core of this study is the role that the nannies play within the family, such as "grandmother" or "aunt." The role of fictive kin is a different perspective of the commodification of care than we have seen in recent studies. Positioning the nanny as part of the migrant family relies on the cultural "ideal of relatives in family life" and flow of ideologies of childcare and family dynamics which links this article to the remaining two in this issue.

Finally, rural to urban migration is represented by Stefania Giada Meda's work in Nairobi, Kenya. Her article leads us to the discussion of migration as a form of and result of modernization and colonialism. Whether left in rural areas and filling necessary roles left by migrant men or migrating to the urban areas, women must find new ways to negotiate family. Those in the urban areas find a Western ideology that is based more on the individual and often find themselves single mothers. This weakens the traditional role played by the extended families in socialising and strengthens the role of other agents-peers, formal education and the media. According to Meda's article this migration implies a loss for the cultural patrimony and social cohesion in the Kenyan society.

We conclude this issue with a number of book and conference reviews to further demonstrate the direction of gender and migration research – focus on care migration, transnational flows, influence of postcolonial studies and the impact of cultural and social ideologies on gender agency. On its own, this special issue is itself a representation of transnationalism and gendered perspectives. Countless on-line chats and e-mails drove the transatlantic academic collaboration not only between the co-editors of this issue but among the contributors as well. Over the past few months, as we have negotiated our own gendered and professional roles to edit this special issue, it has been impossible not to see our own reflections in the work presented here.

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