



“Summary of article by Lourdes Benería: Gender and the Global Economy”
in Frontier Issues in Economic Thought, Volume 4: The Changing Nature
of Work. Island Press: Washington DC, 1998. pp. 98-101

Social Science Library: Frontier Thinking in Sustainable Development and Human Well-being

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[A]s the globalization of economic relations proceeds, the need to understand the role of gender from a global perspective emerges with greater intensity. Where are women located in the new international division of labor? Can we assume that women's labor force participation is increasing worldwide? As international capitalism expands, how are class and gender integrated in the face of a rapidly changing economic landscape? What are the major issues emerging with respect to how gender is used in the global economy?[242]

The internationalization of the economy intersects with the economic and social position of women in complex ways. This paper offers an overview and an assessment of major global trends affecting women's experience of work.

IS THERE A FEMINIZATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL LABOR FORCE?

This question exemplifies the difficulties that arise because trends differ by geographic area and economic sector. Some trends are contradictory, and good statistical information is not always available. Furthermore, women's work in subsistence and family labor is often undercounted. When official statistics show an increase in women's labor force participation, they may really reflect a shift of women from agricultural or household production to more formal and "visible" work.[243]

In industrialized countries, there has been a large measured increase in women's labor force participation rates which reached beyond fifty percent in most OECD countries by 1980. In developing countries the pattern is less clear, with some countries witnessing increases, while others did not. Unlike industrialized countries where most women entered the service sector, in the newly industrializing areas of the developing world the greatest increase in women's employment has been in the industrial sector. What is therefore becoming clearer is the trend toward the feminization of wage labor.

Recent attention to the new international division of labor may have exaggerated the scale of employment of women in less developed countries by transnational corporations, especially when we are reminded that the large majority of third world women are not working with multinational capital; for example, even in the industrializing economies of Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, seventy percent of women in the labor force still work in agriculture. (Women in Latin America, however, tend to work in the service or informal sectors.)

However, while international firms directly employ less than one percent of the female labor force in the developing world, multinational investment is nevertheless a significant factor in the growth of many newly industrializing countries, and has a wide influence on employment patterns in host countries. Many women work for suppliers in subcontracting chains linked to multinational corporations. In some countries, women's share of employment in export processing zones can reach eighty to ninety percent. Local firms may mimic the employment practices of large foreign companies, increasing the demand for female labor even more.

WOMEN'S WORK AND WAGES

In the 1960s, the introduction of large scale industry to developing countries often drove family-based industries out of business and deprived women of work opportunities, a pattern documented in a well known study by Ester Boserup published in 1970. This pattern no longer holds true now that women, particularly young, single, relatively well educated women, are desirable employees for low wage, labor intensive production. The fact that women are highly segregated by occupation all over the world makes it easier to segment the wage structure; women's wages are generally lower than men's. While occupational segregation is common, what is defined as women's work differs from one country to another. For example, 80 percent of clerical workers in the U.S. were women in 1986, while only 2 percent were women in Togo in 1981. These gender constructions are changeable, and when a male occupation becomes feminized its relative wages generally decline.

It is not only because of low wages, however, that women workers are sought in newly expanding economies. Women are also regarded as more docile, more malleable, and easier to control. In some cases, women are considered to be more dexterous in manipulating small objects and therefore more productive for many kinds of assembly work. Women also provide a source of flexible labor, taking part-time or unstable work assignments when demand oscillates.

PROSTITUTION AND SEX-RELATED TOURISM

A different kind of work associated with internationalization is the expansion of sex-related tourism. Several Southeast Asian countries (e.g., Thailand, South Korea, and the Philippines) are well known for state-licensed prostitution. Sexual "hospitality services" are part of the global tourist trade, but are also connected to the presence of foreign military bases and to international business travel. Prostitution in some countries has become a significant source of foreign currency and is used by corporate and government interests to promote business ventures. In Bangkok the estimated number of prostitutes in 1981 accounted for 10 per cent of employment by multinationals.

Poverty among women in many rural areas and city slums translates into low prices for prostitutes and is also related to the docility and servility perceived and sought after by visiting men. "What a perfect symbol this is of the connections between the pleasures of international jet-setting and the survival pains of everyday life in the global economy." [252]

CHANGE AND ACTION

What is the significance of the increasing visibility of women in the global economy? The answers must depend on both labor market and household circumstances. In the industrialized world (and probably some other areas as well), women's participation in the global economy represents growing labor force attachment and economic autonomy. In the newly industrialized countries, however, many women face unstable labor markets as multinational corporations shift from country to country in search of lower wages. As one commentator in a January 1987 issue of *The Economist* put it, when young women lose jobs in Malaysia, "Will, as the cynics say, the pretty ones become bar girls and the plain ones turn to Islam?"[254] In spite of such comments, the acceptance of women as paid workers has generally increased and is generally followed (with some lag) by more equality and a gradual breakdown of gender stereotypes.

With respect to household work, the double burden for women remains widespread. However, there are hopeful signs -- difficult to capture but worthy of further research -- that point to increasingly egalitarian family structures. Evidence exists that, for women in high income countries, hours spent in domestic work are dropping and men are sharing more chores in the home. One researcher even noted a challenge to patriarchal authority in countries like Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, where women's contribution to family income has taken on greater importance.

The existence of a large pool of female labor at a world scale is being used to deal with the pressures of international competition, profitability crises, and economic restructuring that characterize the current reorganization of production.[250]

Forces of multinational investment draw women into the industrial labor force, but often through informal or casualized channels. Women's work in the home is intensified when the debt crisis in developing countries throws economies into disarray and forces the poor to rely on their own meager resources. Increased participation in paid employment might result in greater autonomy for women and more equality between the sexes. "On the other hand, these changes are based on inequalities that are likely to persist stubbornly precisely because they are instrumental in the current functioning of the global economy." [255]

Structural adjustment policies in many developing countries has made austerity a way of life, straining household budgets and particularly those of the poor. Women bear a large share of the burden of coping with lower incomes and deteriorating access to resources. In order to use what is available more efficiently, or to generate new resources, households may change their patterns of purchasing, preparation, and consumption; produce more at home; rely on extended families; send more family members (most likely to be women and children) into the labor force; or migrate. In some areas women have been key in collective coping strategies like communal kitchens.

Other possible responses at a more macro scale include the use of traditional channels of action such as trade unions or minimum wage enforcement. Governments can provide or enact policies with respect to health care, reproductive rights, maternity leave, day care, equal pay for equal work, and working conditions affecting women. Unfortunately, progressive organizations often do not incorporate women's issues into their agendas when the class dimension is not clearly

identified, and traditional paths of action may not be effective. Women's organizations are important to exert pressure on trade unions, political organizations, and governments: but they should recognize the class dimensions that influence women's condition. This lack of integration of issues is a loss to movements for social change. Some commentators have called for a new politics; however, in order for solidarity among different groups to be useful to women, gender issues must play a fundamental role.