

# GENDER AND GLOBALIZATION: FEMALE LABOR AND WOMEN'S MOBILIZATION

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This paper casts a gender perspective on globalization to illuminate the contradictory effects on women workers and on women's activism. The scope of the paper is global. The sources of data are UN publications, country-based data and newsletters from women's organizations as well as the author's fieldwork. The paper begins by examining the various dimensions of globalization—economic, political, and cultural—with a focus on their contradictory social-gender effects. These include inequalities in the global economy and the continued hegemony of the core, the feminization of labor, the withering away of the developmentalist/welfarist state, the rise of identity politics and other forms of particularism, the spread of concepts of human rights and women's rights, and the proliferation of women's organizations and transnational feminist networks. I argue that, although globalization has had dire economic effects, the process has created a new constituency—working women and organizing women—who may herald a potent anti-systemic movement. World-systems theory, social movement theory, and development studies should take account of female labor and of oppositional transnational feminist networks.

## DEFINING GLOBALIZATION

Globalization is a complex economic, political, cultural, and geographic process in which the mobility of capital, organizations, ideas, discourses, and peoples has taken on an increasingly global or transnational form. Much has been written on the subject from various disciplinary perspectives. Economic globalization pertains to deeper integration and more rapid interaction of economies through production, trade, and financial transactions by banks and multinational corporations, with an increased role for the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, as well as the more recent World Trade Organization. Although the capitalist system has always been

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globalizing and there have been various waves of globalization (e.g., the 1870-1914 period, which is well documented), it is said that the trade, capital flows, and technological advances and transfers since the 1970s are more intensive and extensive than in earlier periods.

Political globalization refers in part to an increasing trend toward multilateralism, in which the United Nations plays a key role, national non-governmental organizations act as watchdogs over governments, and international NGOs increase their activities and influence. Some have called this the making of a global civil society. Political scientists and sociologists have pondered the prospects of the nation-state and national sovereignty in a context of regionalization and globalization in which international financial institutions have increasing power over national economies and state decision-making. Some political scientists are also studying the trends toward democratic consolidation in terms of a global process of democratization.

Cultural globalization refers to worldwide cultural standardization—as in “Coca Colonization” and “McDonaldization”—but also to postcolonial culture, cultural pluralism, and “hybridization”. The various aspects of globalization have promoted growing contacts between different cultures, leading partly to greater understanding and cooperation and partly to the emergence of transnational communities and hybrid identities. But globalization has also hardened the opposition of different identities. This has taken the form of, *inter alia*, reactive movements such as fundamentalism, which seek to recuperate traditional patterns, including patriarchal gender relations, in reaction to the “westernizing” trends of globalization. Various forms of identity politics are the paradoxical outgrowth of globalization.

Consistent with the contradictory nature of globalization, the impact on women has been mixed. One feature of economic globalization has been the generation of jobs for women in export-processing, free trade zones, and world market factories. This has enabled women in many developing countries to earn and control income and to break away from the hold of patriarchal structures, including traditional household and familial relations. At the same time, however, much of the work available to women is badly paid, or demeaning, or insecure; moreover, women’s unemployment rates are higher than men’s almost everywhere. The feminization of poverty is another unwelcome feature of economic globalization.

The weakening of the nation-state and the national economy similarly

has contradictory effects. On the one hand, the withering away of the welfare state as a result of the neoliberal economic policy turn is a uniformly negative outcome for women, in advanced and developing regions alike. On the other hand, the globalization of concepts of human rights and of gender equality, and the activities of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), are emboldening women and creating space for women’s organizations to grow.

Although not much has been written on this subject, a counter-trend to the particularisms and the identity politics of contemporary globalization is the worldwide dissemination of concepts of women’s rights and the emergence of women’s movements on a global scale. The global nature of the women’s movement is both a cultural and a political aspect of globalization. Indeed, in my view, the singular achievement of globalization is the proliferation of women’s movements at the local level, the emergence of transnational feminist networks working at the global level, and the adoption of international conventions such as the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* and the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women*.

## ECONOMIC GLOBALIZATION AND FEMALE LABOR

The trade, capital flows and technological advances that characterize economic globalization entail new economic policies and production systems with important implications for national economies, such as skill requirements, labor market regulations, education policy, and employment. The new “flexible” or “post-Fordist” production systems are guided by the current neoliberal economic orthodoxy which also entails “structural adjustment policies” for developing countries as the only solution to economic crisis and the only path to economic growth. Structural adjustment policies, which aim to balance budgets and increase competitiveness through trade and price liberalization, include reduction of the public-sector wage bill and growth of the private sector, privatization of social services, encouragement of foreign investment, and the production of goods and services for export (“tradables”) through “flexible” labor processes. The international financial institutions, especially the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, are the chief instigators of this free-market policy shift. Structural adjustment policies were first implemented in some African and Latin

American countries as a result of the debt crisis of the early 1980s. They were extended to other countries in the mid-1980s and were adopted in a number of Middle East countries, including Jordan and Egypt, in the 1990s.

Structural adjustment has been a very controversial topic in the development-studies literature; some development economists find that it has worked in some places but not in others, while other economists have regarded the entire turn to be a disaster for national sovereignty and for people's well-being. The feminist literature on development has been especially critical, charging structural adjustment with carrying out its objectives on the backs of the poor and especially on poor women. Women have had to assume extra productive and reproductive activities in order to survive the austerities of adjustment and stabilization policies, including higher prices, and to compensate for the withdrawal or reduction of government subsidies of food and services.

The adverse effects of economic globalization have been felt within all regions, and especially by their respective labor forces. With increased trade, the prices of imported goods often compete with the prices of domestic products, forcing domestic capitalists to attempt to cut labor costs. In the developed countries, as plants relocate to sites elsewhere in search of cheaper costs of labor and production, jobs disappear and wages erode in the declining industrial sectors. As the developed countries shift from manufacturing to high-tech services, blue-collar unemployment grows, along with the expansion of part-time and temporary jobs. This has come at the expense of the kind of stable employment that men came to expect during "the golden age of capitalism" (Marglin and Schor, 1990), when World Real GDP grew by 4.6 per cent during 1964-73. Developing countries have seen a shift from internally oriented to externally oriented growth strategies and the shrinkage of large public sectors and nationalized industries. The result has been an expansion of informal sectors, self-employment, and temporary employment. In most of the former socialist world, restructuring has led to loss of output, the creation of unemployment, and increased poverty. In both developing and developed regions, the stable, organized, and mostly male labor force has become increasingly "flexible" and "feminized". Keeping the cost of labor low has encouraged the growth of demand for female labor, while declining household budgets have led to an increase in the supply of

job-seeking women.

Through institutions such as the transnational corporation and the state, the global economy generates capital largely through the exploitation of labor, but it is not indifferent to the gender and ethnicity of that labor. Gender and racial ideologies have been deployed to favor white male workers and exclude others, but they have also been used to integrate and exploit the labor power of women and of members of disadvantaged racial and ethnic groups in the interest of profit-making. In the current global environment of open economies, new trade regimes, and competitive export industries, global accumulation relies heavily on the work of women, both waged and unwaged, in formal sectors and in the home, in manufacturing, and in public and private services. This phenomenon has been termed the "feminization of labor." Guy Standing (1989) has hypothesized that the increasing globalization of production and the pursuit of flexible forms of labor to retain or increase competitiveness, as well as changing job structures in industrial enterprises, favor the "feminization of employment" in the dual sense of an increase in the numbers of women in the labor force and a deterioration of work conditions (labor standards, income, and employment status). Women have been gaining an increasing share of many kinds of jobs, but in the context of a decline in the social power of labor and growing unemployment, their labor-market participation has not been accompanied by a redistribution of domestic, household, and childcare responsibilities. Moreover, women are still disadvantaged in the new labor markets, in terms of wages, training, and occupational segregation. They are also disproportionately involved in forms of employment increasingly used to maximize profits: temporary, part-time, casual, and home-based work. Generally speaking, the situation is better or worse for women depending on the type of state and the strength of the economy. Women workers in the welfare states of northern Europe fare best, followed by women in other strong Western economies. In Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, the economic status of working women changed dramatically for the worse following the collapse of communism. In much of the developing world, a class of women professionals and workers employed in the public sector and in the private sector has certainly emerged due to rising educational attainment, changing aspirations, economic need, and the demand for relatively cheap labor. However, vast numbers of economically active women in the developing

world lack formal training, work in the informal sector, have no access to social security, and live in poverty.

### PROLETARIANIZATION AND PROFESSIONALIZATION: INDUSTRY AND SERVICES

As world markets have expanded, a process of female proletarianization has taken place. In developing countries -- and especially in southeast and east Asia, parts of Latin America and the Caribbean, and Tunisia and Morocco -- more and more women have been drawn into the labor-intensive and low-wage textile and garment industries, as well as into electronics and pharmaceuticals, which produce both for the home market and for export. The surge in women's waged employment in developing countries began in the 1970s, following an earlier period of capitalist development and economic growth that was characterized by the displacement of labor and craft work, commercialization of agriculture, and rural-urban migration (see Bosserup, 1970). Some have called the marginalization of women "housewife-ization" (Mies, 1986); others have described it as the "U pattern" of female labor-force participation in early modernization.

During the 1970s, it was observed that export-processing zones along the U.S.-Mexico border and in southeast Asia, established by transnational corporations to take advantage of low labor costs in developing countries, were hiring mainly women (Elson and Pearson, 1981; Nash and Fernandez-Kelly, 1983; Lim 1985). By the early 1980s, it was clear that the new industrialization in what was then called the Third World was drawing heavily on women workers. Many studies by women-in-development specialists and socialist-feminists centered on the role played by the available pool of relatively cheap female labor. Gender ideologies emphasizing the "nimble fingers" of young women workers and their capacity for hard work, especially in the southeast Asian economies, facilitated the recruitment of women for unskilled and semi-skilled work in labor-intensive industries at wages lower than men would accept, and in conditions that unions would not permit. In Latin America, women entered the labor force at a time when average wages were falling dramatically. Around the world, women's share of total industrial labor rarely exceeds 30-40 percent, but "the percentage of women workers in export processing factories producing textiles, electronics components and garments is much higher, with figures as high as 90% in some cases"

(Pearson, 1992: 231). One study concluded that "exports of manufactures from developing countries have been made up in the main of the kinds of goods normally produced by female labor: industrialization in the post-war period has been as much *female* led as *export* led" (Joekes/INSTRAW, 1987: 81).

The process of the feminization of labor continued throughout the recessionary 1980s, not only in the manufacturing sector, but also in public services, where throughout the world women's share has grown to 30-50 percent -- at a time when public-sector wages, like industrial wages, have been declining. In Iran, Egypt, and Turkey, women's share of public-service employment (including jobs as teachers and university professors in public schools and state universities, nurses and doctors in state hospitals, and workers and administrators across the ministries) has increased. This has occurred at a time when salaries have eroded tremendously and more men are gravitating toward the more lucrative and expanding private sector (Moghadam, 1997a).

The proletarianization and professionalization of women have cultural repercussions and sometimes entail gender conflicts. During the 1980s the increasing participation of women in the labor force in Middle Eastern countries was accompanied by subtle and overt pressures on them to conform to religious dictates concerning dress. Hence in Egypt, many professional women came to don modest dress and to cover their heads. One may hypothesize that in the earlier stage of the Islamist movement, the influx of women in the work force raised fears of competition with men, leading to calls for the redomestication of women, as occurred immediately after the Iranian revolution. In the current stage, with the labor-force participation of women now a *fait accompli*, Islamists in Turkey, Iran, Egypt, Sudan, and Yemen are not calling on women to withdraw from the labor force -- indeed, many of their female adherents are educated and employed -- but they do insist on veiling and on spatial and functional segregation. Only the most determined and secular women resist these pressures, as they seek employment in public and private services.

As world trade in services has increased and global firms engage in outsourcing, the involvement of women in various occupations and professions of the services sector has grown. Women around the world have made impressive inroads into professional services such as law, banking, account-

ing, computing, and architecture; in tourism-related occupations; and in the information services, including offshore airline booking, mail order, credit cards, word-processing for publishers, telephone operators, and so on. The world trade in services also favors women's labor migration, in contrast to the demand for men manufacturing workers during the earlier periods of industrialization in Europe and the United States. Mexican, Central American, and Caribbean women have migrated to the United States to work as nurses, nannies, or domestics; Filipinas and Sri Lankans to neighboring countries as well as to the Middle East to work as waitresses, nurses, nannies, or domestics; Argentine women to Italy to work as nurses; and an increasing number of Moroccan, Tunisian, and Algerian women migrating alone to work in various occupations in France, Italy and Spain.

The surge in women's employment is characteristic not only of developing countries. In 16 European countries, the increase in the number of women in the labor force over the period 1983-91 was quite dramatic, whereas it was relatively modest for men. In six countries the number of employed men actually fell over the period, most significantly by 3.4 percent in Belgium (*Employment Observatory*, 1994: 11-14). The Nordic countries, including Finland, now have the highest rate of employment among women, with North America following close behind. Moreover, the feminization of labor denotes not only the influx of women into relatively low-paying jobs, but the growth of part-time and temporary work among *men*, especially in New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands, mainly in retail trade, hotels and catering, banking, and insurance (UN, 1991: 190). Indeed, in the Netherlands, men's part-time work in 1992 was as high as 13.4 percent of total male employment, up from 5.5 percent in 1979.

#### *The Informal Sector, the Income Gap, Unemployment*

At the same time that women have been entering the formal labor force in record numbers in the developed countries, much of the increase in female labor-force participation in developing countries has occurred in the informal sectors of the economy. Unregistered and small-scale urban enterprises, home-based work and self-employment may fall into this category, and they include an array of commercial and productive activities. (The extent of the urban informal sector and its links to the formal sector are matters of dispute, and women's involvement in it has not always been captured in the

official statistics.) In the urban areas of developing countries, many formal jobs have become "informalized" as employers seek to increase "flexibility" and lower labor and production costs through subcontracting, as Beneria and Roldan (1987) showed in their study of Mexico City. The growth of informalization is observed also in developed countries. Drawing on existing gender ideologies regarding women's roles, their attachment to family, and the perceived lower value of their work, subcontracting arrangements encourage the persistence of home-based work (Boris and Prugel 1996). Many women accept this kind of work—with its insecurity, low wages, and absence of benefits—as a convenient form of income-generation that allows them to carry out domestic responsibilities and care for children. Fernandez-Kelly (1989: 613) emphasizes "the process whereby employers seeking competitive edges in domestic and international markets can tap into not only 'cheap labor', which is both female and male, but also into a substratum of labor, predominately female, that is outside of formal relationships".

The social relations of gender account for the pervasive income gap between men and women workers, a gap that is detrimental to women but lucrative to employers. On average women earn 75 percent of men's wages (UNDP, 1995: 36), with Sweden, Sri Lanka, and Viet Nam at the upper and more egalitarian end (90 percent), and Bangladesh, Chile, China, Cyprus, South Korea, the Philippines, and Syria at the lower and more unequal end (42-61 percent). The gender-based income gap is found mainly in the private sector, whereas the public sector tends to reward women more equitably. Some of the income difference in the incomes gap is certainly based on lower education and intermittent employment among women workers. Yet gender bias accounts for much of the difference in earnings. In some countries (e.g., Ecuador, Jamaica, the Philippines), women earn less than men despite higher qualifications, a problem that is especially acute in the private sector (World Bank, 1995: 45). Labor-market segmentation along gender lines perpetuates the income gap. For example, in the computing and information processing sectors, the majority of high-skilled jobs go to male workers, while women are concentrated in the low-skilled ones (Pearson and Mitter, 1993: 50).

Considering the social relations of gender and the function of gender ideologies, it should come as no surprise that despite women's key role in the global economy, unemployment rates of women are very high. Global unem-

ployment is partly a function of the nature of global economic restructuring itself, which has entailed massive retrenchment of labor in many developing countries, in the former socialist countries now undergoing marketization, and in the developed countries. Unemployment rates are especially high in Algeria, Jamaica, Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, Nicaragua, Poland, the Slovak Republic, and Turkey (World Bank, 1995: 29)—but they are often higher for women than for men (Moghadam, 1995). In many developing countries unemployed women are new entrants to the labor force, who are seeking but not finding jobs (as in Egypt, Iran, Turkey, and Chile, where women's unemployment can be as high as 30 percent, compared with 10 percent for men); in certain countries where restructuring has occurred in enterprises employing large numbers of women, or in export sectors that have lost markets, the unemployment rates of women may also reflect job losses by previously-employed women -- as in Malaysia in the mid-1980s, Viet Nam in the late 1980s, Poland, Bulgaria and Russia in the early 1990s, and Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey more recently.

In some cases, women experience job loss as a result of technological advances in the workplace. As has been noted above, many enterprises producing textiles and electronics, especially those for export, rely heavily on women workers. And yet as more sophisticated technology is used to produce these goods, women workers tend to be replaced by men or recruited at a slower pace, as appears to have been occurring in the Mexican *maquiladoras* (Sklair, 1993), and in the textiles industries of Spain and Italy.

In all regions, high unemployment represents the downside of economic globalization, especially for women workers, who must contend with not only the class biases but also the gender biases of free-market economics. The feminization of unemployment, therefore, is as much a characteristic of the global economy as is the feminization of labor.

#### *Structural Adjustment and Women*

As mentioned above, structural adjustment policies have been controversial in the development community. The now-classic UNICEF study, *Adjustment with a Human Face* (Cornia, Jolly, and Stewart, 1987), highlighted the social costs of adjustment and provided empirical evidence of the deterioration of social conditions in ten countries undergoing adjustment. Subsequent studies found that there have been differential impacts on the various

categories of the poor, including the "chronic" poor, "borderline" poor, and the "new" or "working poor". In the early 1980s, critical voices argued that adjustment and stabilization programs in developing countries were having particularly adverse effects on women. Da Gama Santos (1985) recognized that the gender division of labor and the differential positions of women and men in the spheres of production and reproduction would mean that the new policy shifts would lead to very different outcomes for women and men, although these gender differences would differ further by social class and by economic sector. Others have found that the burden of adjustment falls on the urban poor; the working class; and women (Elson, 1991; Sparr, 1995).

In many ways, the women of the working class and urban poor have been the "shock absorbers" of neoliberal economic policies. Structural adjustment policies -- with their attendant price increases, elimination of subsidies, social-service decreases, and introduction or increase of "user fees" for "cost recovery" in the provision of schooling and health care -- heighten the risk and vulnerability of women and children in households where the distribution of consumption and the provision of health care and education favor men or income-earning adults. Structural adjustment causes women to bear most of the responsibility of coping with increased prices and shrinking incomes, since in most instances they are responsible for household budgeting and maintenance. Rising unemployment and reduced wages for men in a given household lead to increased economic activity on the part of women and children. This occurs also in households headed by women, an increasing proportion of all households in most regions. Household survival strategies include increases in the unpaid as well as paid labor of women, as discussed in the previous section. In the Philippines, mean household size increased, as relatives pooled their resources. One study found that the combined effects of economic crisis and structural adjustment in Peru led to a significant increase in poverty, with worse outcomes for households headed by women. Structural adjustment policies and other forms of neoliberalism are said to be a major factor behind the "feminization of poverty" (see Moghadam, 1997b).

Why do economic crises and structural adjustment hurt women more than they do men? The reasons have to do with both the social relations of gender and the nature of market reforms.

• Customary biases and intrahousehold inequalities lead to lower con-

sumption by and fewer benefits for women and girls among lower-income groups.

- The mobility of labor that is assumed by free-market economics and encouraged by structural adjustment policies does not take into account the fact that women's geographic and occupational mobility is constrained by family and childrearing responsibilities.
- The legal and regulatory framework often does not treat women as autonomous citizens but rather as dependents or minors -- with the result that in many countries, women cannot own or inherit property, or seek a job or take out a loan without the permission of husband or father.
- Structural adjustment policies over-stretch women's labor time by increasing women's productive activities (higher labor-force participation due to economic need and household survival strategy) and reproductive burdens (in that women have to compensate in care-giving for cutbacks in social services). Working-class women and urban poor women are particularly hard hit.

- Because of women's concentration in government jobs in many developing countries, and because the private sector discriminates against women or is otherwise "unfriendly" to women and unwilling to provide support structures for working mothers, middle-class women may suffer disproportionately from policies that aim to contract the public-sector wage bill by slowing down public-sector hiring.
- Industrial restructuring or privatization adversely affect women, as women tend to be laid off first because of gender bias, but also because women workers tend to be concentrated in the lower rungs of the occupational ladder, in unskilled production jobs, or in overstuffed administrative and clerical positions.

- The poverty-inducing aspect of structural adjustment hits women hard and is especially hard on female-headed households with children.
- Labor-market discrimination and job segregation result in women being concentrated in the low-wage employment sectors, in the informal sector, and in the contingent of "flexible labor".

The above discussion highlights the ways in which women have been incorporated into the global economy as a source of relatively cheap labor, and

the social-gender effects of economic globalization. The simultaneous emergence and expansion of formal and informal employment among women can be explained in terms of labor-market segmentation, various management strategies to extract surplus-value or increase profitability, and (thus far) the depressed status of unions. I have argued that the global economy is maintained by *gendered* labor, with definitions of skill, allocation of resources, occupational distribution, and modes of remuneration shaped by asymmetrical gender relations and by gender ideologies defining the roles and rights of men and women and of the relative value of their labor. But the effects have not been uniformly negative, for there have been unintended consequences of women's economic participation. Tiano (1994) and Kim (1997) provide detailed accounts of how women workers in the Mexican maquilas and in a South Korean free export zone, respectively, accommodate and resist the dominating forces of global capitalism and patriarchy. Others have shown that the entry of women into the labor force in such large numbers has important implications for changes in gender relations and ideologies within the household and the larger society, and for women's gender consciousness and activism (Safa 1996).

## WOMEN'S RESPONSES TO GLOBALIZATION

It should come as no surprise that the massive entry of women into the work force around the world, whether as professionals or as proletarians, has coincided with the political mobilization of women and the expansion of women's organizations of all types. In this section I will discuss two types of women's mobilization: as workers (in unions) and as critics of neoliberalism in transnational feminist networks.

### *Women and Unionization*

In a number of advanced industrialized countries (the United States, Australia, the Nordic countries) women are the largest growing union constituency. In Japan, the Asian Women Workers' Center studies and promotes the rights of women workers throughout east and southeast Asia and publishes a newsletter called *Resources Materials on Women's Labor in Japan*. In Taiwan the Grassroots Women Workers Centre, established in 1988, engages in various activities, including defense of the rights of immigrant women workers, and publishes a newsletter called *Female Workers in Taiwan*.



According to its Spring 1994 newsletter: "The Centre intends to provide opportunities for factory women and family subcontractors to reform the male-dominated workers' union, and to develop women workers' unions and workers' movements through the promotion of feminism". Similar activities and goals are shared by the Committee for Asian Women in Hong Kong. In Morocco, feminist groups have come to the assistance of factory women who went on strike over sexual harassment. In Guatemala, women workers at an export shirt-making factory won a union contract, the first in a Guatemala *maquiladora*. In India, the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) operates as a trade union and a consciousness-raising feminist organization. In Israel, Arab women workers ignored by the Histadrut formed the Arab Women Workers Project.

In the Middle East and North Africa, the involvement of women in paid employment has resulted in the politicization of women and of gender issues. In Tunisia, the National Commission on Working Women was created in July 1991 within the Tunisian General Federation of Workers. The Commission has 27 branches throughout Tunisia, and carries out surveys and studies pertaining to women and the workplace. In Morocco, a Roundtable on the Rights of Workers was organized in 1995 by the Democratic League of Women's Rights, and a committee structure was subsequently formed, consisting of 12 participating organizations. The group seeks to revise the labor code to take into account women's conditions, to include domestic workers in the definition of wage-workers and the delineation of their rights and benefits, to set the minimum work age at 15, and to provide workers on maternity leave with full salary and a job-back guarantee. In November 1995, some 500 women textile workers employed by the Manufature du Maroc factory outside Rabat went on strike for two weeks to protest "repeated violence" against several women employees. This included the arbitrary dismissal of the general secretary of the factory's union of women workers, her subsequent rape by a foreman, and the firing of 17 women workers who protested the union leader's dismissal and rape. Morocco's Association of Democratic Women then set out to "mobilize human rights organizations and all the women's organizations" in defense of the women workers. The incident not only shows the vulnerability of women at the workplace, but the capacity of women workers to fight in defense of their

rights, and the ability of the feminist organizations to mobilize support for women workers.

Historically, the labor movement has been constituted largely by men, and the culture of the labor movement and of unions has been rather masculine. In many countries, particularly in northern Europe, Italy, Australia, and North America, union membership is taking on a female face (Eaton, 1992; Hastings and Coleman, 1992). During the last decade, women have made their way into positions of power in Australian trade unions at a time when overall union membership began to decline. The numbers of women on the national peak council, the Australian Council of Trade Unions, rose from zero to one-third; in the State of South Australia the three major white collar unions (teachers, nurses, public servants) are all currently led by women. All these gains have been made since the mid-1980s (Franzway, 1994). The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and the Public Services International (PSI) have active women's departments—and now, so does the AFL-CIO.

In global terms, the highest union density is found in northern Europe—Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden—where women's participation as workers and as union officials is the greatest. In those countries, union density is very high in community, social and personal services (68-87 percent), in trade, restaurants, and hotels (47-49 percent), and in manufacturing (80-100 percent), in both the public and private sectors. Women are making up an increasing share of union membership, especially in services, with the most impressive figures found in Denmark. Danish women represent 42 and 62 percent of the two main union federations; they are 30 and 39 percent of the delegates to the union Congress and 13 and 41 percent of members of leading committees, as well as 10 and 30 percent of leaders of individual unions (see Hastings and Coleman, 1992; Klausen, 1997). On at least one occasion that I know of during the 1990s, the Danish labor movement sent an all-woman delegation to the annual Congress of the International Labour Organization in Geneva. In Finland women comprise 45 percent of the membership of one of the two labor confederations (SAK); they also constitute about 37.5 percent of delegates to the SAK Congress, and 40 percent of the union council. The proportions of women in union leadership positions are also increasing in Germany, Portugal, Italy, the



Netherlands, France, and England.

#### *Transnational Feminist Networks*

Contemporary women's movements constitute one of the most prodigious areas of feminist research in the disciplines of sociology and political science. Jacquette shows how women's movements in Latin America were centrally involved in the democratic transitions. A cross-regional perspective on women's movements is found in Basu (1995). India's dynamic women's movement and myriad women's organizations have long been the subject of scholarly and political inquiry, with valuable studies published by Indian scholars and by Western scholars. I have researched the emergence of women's movements in the Middle East and North Africa (Moghadam, 1997a, ch. 9). Many studies have sought to explain the rise of women's movements in terms of women's growing educational attainment and participation in the paid labor force, as well as in terms of the contours of political cultures. Few have examined the rise of transnational feminist networks in an era of globalization (but see Moghadam, 1996a). In my view, the emergence of transnational feminism—*notwithstanding* cultural, class, and ideological differences among the women of the world—is the logical result of the existence of a capitalist world-economy in an era of globalization, and the universal fact of gender inequality.

Interaction among feminist groups has been facilitated by four world conferences on women between 1975 and 1995, numerous regional preparatory meetings, the participation of many women's non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the UN conferences of the 1990s, concerns over increasingly harsh economic realities, and use of the new information and communication technologies. Feminist groups and women's organizations remain rooted in local issues, but their vocabulary, strategies and objectives have much in common with each other. They engage in information exchange, mutual support, and a combination of lobbying, advocacy and direct action towards the realization of their goals of equality and empowerment for women and social justice and societal democratization. Two examples may illustrate this. First, concerted action since the late 1980s of networks including DAWN and WIDE in opposition to structural adjustment policies and the activities of the international financial institutions in developing countries, has forced the World Bank to make important conces-

sions on gender and social issues. Second, pressure from WAPHA, NOW and the Feminist Majority was instrumental in preventing U.S. recognition of the Taleban regime in Afghanistan.

Contrary to the assertions of certain analysts of "new social movements", women's movements and organizations are not necessarily non-economic and identity-focused. The transnational feminist networks I've described organize around issues pertaining to the economy, the political system, and foreign policy, as well as reproductive rights and violence against women. One reason may be the left-wing background of some of the leading figures in the networks; another reason may be precisely the fact that these networks link developing and developed countries. They have arisen in the context of economic, political, and cultural globalization—and they are tackling both the particularistic and the hegemonic trends of globalization. They are advancing criticisms of inequalities and forms of oppression, neoliberal economic policies, unsustainable economic growth and consumption, As Sen and Grown put it in a now-classic publication:

We know now from our own research that the subordination of women has a long history and is deeply ingrained in economic, political, and cultural processes. What we have managed to do in the last few years is to forge grassroots women's movements and world-wide networks such as never existed before, to begin to transform that subordination and in the process to break down other oppressive structures as well (Sen and Grown 1987, p.22.)

Transnational feminist networks include Network Women in Development Europe (WIDE), based in Brussels and consisting of 12 national branches; Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), based in the Caribbean and with active branches in Latin America and South Asia; Women Working Worldwide, a coordinating group based in London; the International Association for Feminist Economics and the International Women's Tribune Center, both based in the United States; the Asia-Pacific Research and Resource Organization for Women (ARROW), based in Kuala Lumpur; Women Living Under Muslim Laws, based in Montpellier, France, and with an active branch, Shirkat Gab, in Lahore, Pakistan; ISIS International Women's Information and Communication Service, with one center in Quezon City, Philippines, and another in Santiago, Chile.

**DAWN.** Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era was formed in 1985 and consists of individuals and groups in Latin America,

the Caribbean, South Asia, and Southeast Asia. Leading figures are Peggy Antrobus in Jamaica, Gita Sen in India, and Neuma Aguiar in Rio de Janeiro. Two of the founding members of DAWN now have senior positions in the United Nations system: Noleen Heyzer of Malaysia is the head of UNIFEM, and Lourdez Arizpe of Mexico is an assistant director-general at UNESCO. DAWN has focused much of its activity on two issues: economic policy (especially its critique of structural adjustment and the international financial institutions) and reproductive rights and population policy. DAWN has also published a number of books on the above such issues. Members of DAWN are very active in international economic circles, where they try to influence economic decision-making.

**WLUML.** Women Living Under Muslim Laws was also formed in 1985 and is an international network of individuals and groups that monitors the status of women in Muslim countries, as well as Muslim women living elsewhere. It is a secular, anti-fundamentalist organization that largely emphasizes women's human rights issues. It disseminates action alerts from France and a News Sheet from Pakistan, along with other publications. Its leading figures, including Marie-Aimée Hélié-Lucas (born in Algeria) and Farida Shaheed (Pakistani) are often invited to expert-group meetings held by the UN or by European governments.

**WIDE.** Network Women in Development Europe was also established in 1985; its members are women's groups in the European countries, and its secretariat is in Brussels. Its focus is on development assistance and the global economy, with a feminist critique of economic theory and of European and U.S. trade and foreign aid policies. In 1995 its president, Helen O'Connell, was accredited to the official conference in Beijing and presented a statement during the General Exchange of Views. Despite its critique of European policy it has obtained considerable funding from the European Union.

**WEDO.** Women's Environment and Development Organization was co-founded by the late Bella Abzug in the period before the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, and is now led by Susan Davis and based in New York. Its goal is "to make women more visible as equal participants, experts and leaders in policy-making from the community to the international level, and in formulating alternative, healthy, and peaceful solutions to world problems." WEDO co-chairs are based in Brazil, Guyana, Norway, Egypt, Kenya,

Nigeria, Costa Rica, India, and New Zealand. WEDO is currently engaged in monitoring the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action around the world.

Transnational feminist networks are the organizational expression of the transnational women's movement, or global feminism. Global feminism may be defined as the discourse and movement of women aimed at advancing the status of women through greater access to resources, through legal measures to effect gender equality, and through the self-empowerment of women within national boundaries but through transnational forms of organizing and mobilizing. A vivid demonstration of "global feminism on the ground" was the myriad preparatory activities around the world for the Fourth World Conference on Women, and of course the participation of numerous women's NGOs at the conference itself. *The Beijing Declaration* and *Platform for Action* may be regarded as the "manifesto" of global feminism (Moghadam, 1996a).

## THEORETICAL AND POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

Inasmuch as women have been organizing and mobilizing against the particularistic and hegemonic aspects of globalization, there are political implications to what I have discussed in this paper. In addition, there are theoretical implications for development studies, world-systems analysis, and social-movement theory.

I have argued that the capitalist world-economy functions by means of the deployment of labor that is waged and non-waged, formal and informal, male and female. In recent decades, the involvement of women in various kinds of labor arrangements has been striking. Capitalist accumulation is achieved through the surplus-extraction of labor, and this includes the female-headed households. The various forms of the deployment of female labor reflect asymmetrical gender relations and patriarchal gender ideologies. Global accumulation as the driving force of the world-system not only hinges on class and regional differences across economic zones, it is a gendered process as well, predicated upon gender differences in the spheres of production and reproduction. In an era of economic globalization, the pressure for greater competitiveness through lower labor and production costs encourages the demand for and supply of female labor.

However, in a reflection of the contradictions of capitalism and of exploitation, the involvement of women in the global economy and in national labor forces has also served to interrogate and modify gender relations and ideologies. Organized and mobilized women—both nationally and transnationally—are raising questions about social and gender arrangements and making demands on employers, governments, and international financial institutions. Many feminist organizations are middle-class and often elite, but class lines are increasingly blurred as women professionals and women proletarians find common cause around personal, economic, and social issues, including violence against women, poverty, job security, land rights, the redistribution and socialization of domestic work, reproductive health and rights, and women's roles in decision-making.

In this connection, the study of gender and globalization has implications for social-movement theory as well—a theory that thus far has been West-centered, gender-blind, and focused on national events. First, transnational feminist networks have emerged in a multifaceted context of opportunities and constraints: (a) a growing population of educated, employed, mobile, and politically-aware women around the world; (b) increasing opportunities afforded by UN conferences; (c) economic crisis and restructuring; (d) continued discrimination, oppression, and gender inequality; and (e) economic, political, and cultural globalization. Second, transnational feminist networks suggest that social movements and social movement organizations may occupy a supra-national or global space. This calls into question theorizing that begins and ends with single societies. One may continue to argue the need for nationally-oriented research and point out the continued salience of nation-states and domestic organizations. But nation-states, national economies, and cultural formations—including social movements and organizations—are increasingly affected by globalization, with the result that the appropriate unit of analysis must combine global and local. Specifically, transnational feminism suggests that social movements may form, and organizations may mobilize, under a set of global conditions, and not only in the context of national opportunities and constraints.

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