

THE GLOBALIZATION OF MOTHERHOOD SYMPOSIUM
14-16 OCTOBER, 2008
INSTITUTE OF COMMONWEALTH STUDIES, LONDON

1. **Executive Summary**
2. **Symposium**
3. **Abstracts**
4. **Future Plans**

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1. Executive Summary

The convergence of dramatic declines in birth rates worldwide (aside from sub-Saharan Africa), the rise of untrammelled global movement of capital, people and information, and the rapid-fire dissemination of a host of new medical technologies has led to the “globalization of motherhood”. We use this term to highlight the transnational causes and consequences of the disaggregation of the biologic and care giving components of motherhood, specifically adoption, migration of nannies, and use of assisted reproductive technologies (ARTs). We focus here on the resulting transnational movements of people to perform or obtain childcare work (nannies), to relinquish or obtain babies (adoption) or to use ARTs (“reproductive tourism” for treatment, gametes or uteri). Progress towards gender equity in both employment and domestic responsibilities for women from the developed world relies, in part, on economic and gendered inequities confronting other groups of women. This interaction perpetuates gender- associated limitations for both, although neither equally, nor similarly. These transnational dynamics regarding biologic and social reproduction have consequences for health, human rights, the construct of family, and labor (Chavkin, 2007).

Fertility, mothering and caring labor are key elements of successful societies and buoyant economies. Developed nations face challenges around declining fertility, aging populations and the provision of caring labor as women’s paid work reshapes mothering care and decision-making. Developing nations face challenges around population health, poverty and care. These intersecting trends in the context of a rapidly globalizing world make women’s labor, both paid and unpaid, central to development, global movement, and global health. While women’s reproductive and caring labor has always been a cornerstone of national frameworks of care and development, current patterns of globalization mean that these caring labors, are integral to the processes and patterns of globalization that cross and shape national boundaries.

Women are highly mobile global citizens; and their movement is predicated on the gendered sexed services that they are transferring across national boundaries. While mobility through sex work has attracted significant academic, regulatory and human rights attention, the movement of babies, reproductive body parts and women’s caring and reproductive labor have neither been fully documented and examined, nor considered in relationship to one another. The *Globalization of Motherhood Symposium* brought together research from the Global North and the Global South to illuminate how contemporary motherhood is being changed by the processes of globalization. We examined the ways in which conception, gestation mothering labor and care are being mobilized across national boundaries and between different domains of technology, adoption and care work. Considering these multiple forms of caring and reproductive labor together allowed for an interrogation of the globalization of motherhood with a focus on the impacts on women who mother and enable others to do so.

2. The Symposium

The Globalization of Motherhood Symposium was convened in London in October 2008 by Wendy Chavkin and JaneMaree Maher with the following key objectives:

- Facilitate transnational dialogues regarding fertility rates, mothering care and the movement of caring labour, babies and reproductive body parts across national and familial borders, and allow for a thorough examination of the intersection of declining global birth rates, the movement of caring labour and capital across national borders;
- Identify key data relevant to interpretation and understanding these flows across national borders, and to inform policy makers;
- Examine the relationship between the rise of assisted reproductive technologies across the globe and patterns of fertility, adoption, medical tourism, caring and mothering in particular.

This symposium brought together scholars and activists from the Global North and the Global South to examine the ways in which contemporary motherhood is being altered by the processes of globalisation. At the centre of these processes are changes to global patterns of fertility, women's labour and mobility, the technologisation of birthing through assisted reproductive technologies, transnational adoptions and the exchange of caring labour across national borders. This symposium drew together demographers, sociologists, social theorists and medical and public health experts to examine these ways in which motherhood and mothering labour are being reshaped by these global shifts.

Attendees:

Wendy Chavkin, MD, MPH, Professor of Clinical Population and Family Health and Obstetrics-Gynecology, at the Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University (**Convenor**);

Dr JaneMaree Maher, LLB, PhD, Director of the Center for Women's Studies and Gender Research, Monash University (**Convenor**);

Reilly Anne Dempsey, JD MPH, consultant for DesignOptions in London, England;

Dr Jyotsna Gupta, PhD, Assistant Professor in Gender and Diversity at the University for Humanistics, Utrecht;

Gioconda Herrera, PhD, Director, Gender Studies; FLASCO, Ecuador;

Marcia Inhorn, PhD, MPH, William K. Lanman Jr. Professor of Anthropology and International Affairs and Chair of the Council on Middle East Studies (CMES) in the MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies at Harvard University;

Margaret Jolly, PhD, Head of the Gender Relations Centre in the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, College of Asia and the Pacific, Australian National University;

Priya Nanda PhD, Regional Asia Office Group Director for Social and Economic Development at the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW)

Peter Selman, PhD, Sociology, University of Newcastle;

Brenda Yeoh, D Phil Oxford, Professor, Department of Geography as well as the Head of Southeast Asian Studies Programme, National University of Singapore National University of Singapore;

Barbara Yngvesson, PhD, Professor of Anthropology, School of Social Science, Hampshire College

We explored the following three themes.

1. The tension between the radical challenges to gendered ideologies implicit in globalization and their perpetuation - including *notions of normative good mothering* as they shape women's work across the globe reinforcing gendered burdens of care (failures to renegotiate care burdens within societies generating the movement of care across the world); *notions of marriage, lineage, membership in family and nation* through women's responsibility for nation building; *male preference* and patterns of gender inequality; *notions of kin* as new conditions of employment have changed the practices of caregiving and family formation.

2. The role of states in preserving and enforcing notions of family and national identity including *family reunification* and the regulations around family movement, rise of economic migration, families without documents; *legal and normative fictions re adoption and lineage* and the conflict between affective and economic accounts of the development of these relationships; *obligations of kin despite severance and repudiation* and the roles of remittances in supporting home communities; and *state commitments to care and the value of care* including support for childcare, regulation of childcare systems, value of waged labour for women in local context, and the movement of carework in and out of the public sphere.

3. Biological expansion of possibility and commodification including *reproductive tourism* as women's global wage inequalities shape the delivery of these services, the need for them, and the role of nation states in regulating delivery; and *changes to the most intimate of human activities and commodification of love and bodily components* configured by the complex and different effects of globalization in different geopolitical locations.

3. Abstracts

All papers were circulated for reading in advance and were presented during the 3 day conference.

DOMESTIC LABOUR

Mothers on the Move: Children's Education and Transnational Mobility in Global-City Singapore

Brenda S.A. Yeoh and Shirlena Huang

Amidst the unevenness and unpredictability of change wrought by globalization, women's roles and identities as mothers, are being transformed, yet expectations of what constitutes 'good motherhood' have remained ideologically entrenched. Central to idealized notions of the 'good mother' and her pivotal role in raising 'quality children' and pervasive in East Asian countries such as Japan, South Korea and Singapore is the expectation of the mother to act not just as the children's primary nurturer and caregiver, but as the educational agent, especially in societies where educational success is perceived to provide the primary route to scale the socio-economic ladder for the family. At the confluence of multiple transnational flows of people, global-city Singapore is an ideal site for investigating how different groups of women negotiating transnational mobility develop strategies to advance their children's education. We focus on three distinct groups of mothers. These are, the Chinese *pei du ma ma* (or 'study mother') who exemplify '**mobile mothering**' as they have accompanied school-age children in transnational moves in search of better educational opportunities often at the cost of temporarily splitting the family (since fathers and other siblings are usually 'left behind'). A second social form is that of '**synchronised mothering**', as embodied in the Singaporean 'frequent flyer' mother who is regularly physically absent from home on work-related trips and whose mothering strategies involve carefully synchronizing time and space to allow selected mothering tasks (particularly related to educational projects) to be carried out while delegating other tasks (particularly those involving physical care) to the foreign domestic workers (often mothers themselves). This Filipino/Indonesian 'domestic worker' mother represents a third category that involves '**long-distance mothering**'. These women undertake reproductive labour abroad on a paid basis to provide financially for their own children's education and carry out mothering labour through long-distance communication with their children back in the Philippines or Indonesia. These different modes of mothering demonstrate the flexibility with which differently situated women respond to varied/specific contexts and constraints and adapt their mothering strategies to a globalizing world.

States, Frontiers and Transnational Mothering: the Ecuadorian Experience

Gioconda Herrera

This paper examines the interaction between State policies and transnational mothering among Ecuadorian immigrant women in Spain and the United States. It will look at how certain immigration policies such as the ones related to family reunification, and labor and social integration policies structure the options and trajectories of immigrants mothers and shape the way they organize their social reproduction transnationally. At the same time, the ways women respond, react, skirt or adopt to these policies will be considered.

TRANSNATIONAL ADOPTION

The Movement of Children for Transnational Adoption

Peter Selman

This paper will examine trends in transnational adoption from 2000 to 2006, based on data for 22 receiving States. Estimates of the number of children sent by States of origin will be made using this same data. In the first five years of the new century there was a rapid rise in global numbers with a peak of over 45,000 in 2004, followed by two years of decline (Selman 2006). Half of the children moving in 2006 went to the United States and a further third to 4 countries, Spain, France, Italy and Canada. But for each of these countries the “source” of children differed: China was top country for the US, Spain and Canada but sent no children to Italy; Vietnam and Haiti were the most important source for France; Russia and Brazil for Italy. Guatemala was the second most important sending country for the United States, sending over 4,000 children or 97% of Guatemalan adoptees, but sent few children to other countries. Some very specific flows are found in countries receiving smaller numbers – e.g. 68 per cent of overseas adoptions in New Zealand in 2004 were from Samoa or Western Samoa. Many of these are thought to be “relative” adoptions and it is in such adoptions that specific flows are most evident. Movements between sub-areas of countries are also found.

Such variations have attracted little attention in the analysis of intercountry adoption as a migratory process (Lovelock 2000; Selman 2002; Weil 1984) and one aim of this paper will be to explore further the movement of children between specific countries and the extent to which this mirrors flows between countries in other types of transnational migration. This paper will also examine the reversal of growth from 2004 and consider whether it heralds an end to transnational adoption.

Remittances and Returns in Transnational Adoption

Barbara Yngvesson

The movement of children in transnational adoption from global South to global North began in the 1950s and 1960s in the aftermath of the Korean War. The numbers of children involved rose gradually in the following decades, as adoption from Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Eastern Europe became a solution to childlessness for Euro-American nations with dropping fertility rates, and provided an opportunity for states with certain kinds of “excess” children (poor, female, dark, sick, fatherless) to transform this excess into resources of various kinds. The movement of children in adoption is made possible by a series of legal fictions: the “orphan status” of the child; the “voluntary consent” of its mother to the child’s abandonment; and the instantiation of a legal “clean break” that separates the adoptive from the pre-adoptive history of the child. In this way, adoption is constituted as a new start and the adoptive family as the only family of the child.

In the past two decades the legal fictions that constitute adoptive families have been tested as increasing numbers of adoptees return to their nations of birth and in some cases re-establish contact with pre-adoptive kin. In this paper I focus on these reconnections and their implications for our understanding of motherhood, the (re)configuration of family life, and the meaning of adoptive kinship, as adoptees become an important support system for families, communities, and nations that were left behind.

Indian Women's Reproductive Bodies in the Free Market of a Globalised World

Jyotsna Agnihotri Gupta

Certain aspects of globalisation, such as erosion of boundaries, convergences and intersections and market forces, are significant for the study of the globalisation of reproductive technologies. This is particularly so in the case of assisted reproduction technologies (ARTs). While most reproductive technologies were first developed and used in the West, they soon became internationalised. Pharmaceutical companies that develop and market these technologies operate internationally and infertility specialists often trained in the West provide these services even in developing countries. The provision of infertility services has become an expanding and lucrative billion dollar 'industry' which has given rise to a more recent phenomenon of international 'reproductive tourism'.

In the free market of a globalised world, women's reproductive bodies and their body parts (such as eggs, embryos and uteruses) have been turned into commodities that are donated or traded, either for use by infertility specialists or research scientists and aspiring infertile parents. Centres all over the world, mainly in the US and Europe, but also in India, are dealing in reproductive body parts. Poor women from developing countries and from the underclass in the developed world are reproducing for the world market and for the more privileged classes, as well as providing the raw material for stem-cell research and cloning

This paper will discuss how Indian women are participating as (re)producers in the 'outsourcing' taking place in this field, a phenomenon generally associated with economic globalisation in capitalist production. High class medical facilities, the low cost of treatment and lack of legislation on surrogacy is turning India into the surrogacy outsourcing capital of the world. While advocates of surrogacy point out the advantages for both childless couples and surrogates, arguing for its regulation to prevent malpractice including exploitation of surrogates and protect the interests of the child, women's health and rights advocates argue that the practice commodifies women and is just another form of trafficking in women which should be legally banned. These developments and competing frameworks of analysis pose new challenges for researchers on the family, women's rights advocates, health policy makers, legislators and bioethicists.

"Assisted" Motherhood in Global Dubai: Reproductive Tourists and Their Nannies

Marcia C. Inhorn

In the contemporary Middle East, more and more elite women achieve normative motherhood through various forms of "assistance." This paper examines two such forms of "assisted motherhood"—namely, technological assistance via in vitro fertilization (IVF) and its variants, and social assistance via the employment of maids and nannies, who often relieve elite women of their motherhood responsibilities. The interconnection between these two forms of assisted motherhood will be examined within the context of Dubai, the glimmering "city of gold" on the Arabian peninsula and the current site of intense globalization and global "flows" of people. Among the people pouring into this cosmopolitan emirate are "reproductive tourists," who travel from other parts of the Middle East, Africa, and Europe to access assisted reproductive technologies. Many of these global elites hope to achieve motherhood of a test-tube baby, which they will then turn over to the care of non-elite nannies, who are imported from poorer countries in Africa, South, and Southeast Asia. This contemporary configuration of Middle Eastern "assisted" motherhood highlights numerous inequalities and oppressive intersections based on nation, class, gender, race, and religion. The disturbing realities of assisted motherhood will be described, based on intensive fieldwork carried out in the United Arab Emirates during 2007.

The preference for sons?: ARTs and sex determination across borders

Priya Nanda

The paper discusses changes in the availability of advanced reproductive technologies, within the context of societies characterized by their preference for sons, and fertility decline. Specifically the context of technologies for sex determination has moved from ultrasonography to in-house sex determination (pre- and post-conception) techniques. While there seem to be hardly any debates on the access to reproductive technology via internet, sex selection kits are insidiously creating their own niche market across the globe. Ultrasonography has its complexities since monitoring use for sex selection is difficult, and the diagnostic is essential for many critical medical procedures. Ill-consequences of the rampant availability of these techniques are illustrated by the adverse Infant and Child sex ratios in a number of South Asian countries such as India, China, Vietnam, South Korea among others. The author will explore how easy availability of advanced reproductive technologies has enabled societies to interfere with the biological outcomes of reproduction, in order to realize socially constructed norms around preference for sons.

CONCLUDING PAPERS

After Nature and Before? Reflections on the Globalization of Motherhood

Margaret Jolly

In the contemporary era we witness a globalization of motherhood apparent in the transnational movements of women associated with childcare, adoption and access to assisted reproductive technologies. This seems linked to the heightened disarticulation of maternal nature and nurture accompanying ARTs and the stark global inequalities between women associated with different configurations of fertility. But when and where were the 'biologic and the caregiving components of motherhood' so aggregated? This paper will consider ethnographic and historical material from Oceania alongside the corpus of Marilyn Strathern and her collaborators in a consideration of how far changing fertility regimes, new technologies and globalized inequalities between women have challenged notions of 'mothers by nature'? The fundamental question is what distinguishes the present era of globalization from earlier periods in the 'simultaneously intimate and global ways in which people configure parenthood and family life'.

The Human Rights Context

Lynn Freedman and Reilly Anne Dempsey

Every country has regulations pertaining to reproduction and sexuality, parenthood and children, which combine the protection of rights with policing functions. There is a fraught tradition around the legal protection of motherhood, with widespread ramifications regarding work, race, poverty, gender and other dimensions of social citizenship. The diverse formal legal principles that apply to these domains become more tangled when considered in the light of the disaggregation of motherhood and across national boundaries. Do the national and international laws surrounding the practices examined in this volume need to be reconsidered through a human rights lens? This paper will lay out the laws, covenants and human rights principles that could apply to transnational adoption, reproductive tourism and the transnational migration of women to care for others' children, and suggest a frame for moving forwards.

4. Future Plans

1. Formation of a Research Network

The symposium group resolved to form a research network, the *Globalization of Motherhood Research Network* to focus on the important intersections of care labour, adoption and assisted reproduction. This will allow for the continuing flow of research information and the development of collaborations to support targeted research into these questions, and begin to develop a policy agenda.

(website to come)

2. Publication of the proceedings in an edited volume

The papers presented at the Symposium will form the core of an edited volume; publication planned for late 2009/2010 with Routledge Press.

3. Moving towards 'The Globalization of Fatherhood'

The symposium group resolved to meet again with a specific focus on fatherhood. This interlinked investigation into the ways in which the contemporary conditions of globalization are changing family formation, gender roles and parenting will advance insights into how family roles and gender equality are being challenged and reshaped in the contemporary global environment.