CHAPTER 2

Economic Globalization and Its Effects on Labor

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This chapter examines contemporary labor trends in the United States and elsewhere as they are shaped by economic globalization. Globalization is a term currently used to refer to everything from international trade, migration, and tourism, to the distribution of American popular culture to the rest of the world. Globalization and the strong economic connections between various regions of the globe are not a new phenomenon. What is new is the fact that since the 1970s most preexisting economic, social, cultural, and political connections between various nations are intensifying as the movement of goods, services, capital, culture, and people across national boundaries is speeding up at an unprecedented rate [1, 2]. In other words, globalization at the moment is marked by unprecedented global interconnectivity, integration, and interdependence in all realms, including the economy, social life, technology and information, culture, politics, and ecology [3].

Some of the key features of economic globalization include: the development of international organizations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the International Finance Corporation (IFC), all working to ensure the economic vitality of nation-states around the world; the majority of the world's economic activity orchestrated by transnational corporations and taking place in the regions of North America, Western Europe, Japan, and Southeast Asia; a dramatic increase in the number of capital investments and the rate by which they cross the globe; a great increase in the dependency of economically developing countries on industrialized coun- tries; and the restructuring of labor markets in industrialized and industrializing regions [cf. 4, 5].

Economic globalization as it is experienced today is deeply seated in the political and economic philosophy and practices of neoliberalism which "emphasizes the primacy of markets over government, and which advocates policies that have led to the deregulation of labor markets, and the dismantling of the social protections and redistributive policies of the earlier welfare state" (see chapter 3, p. 41). Since the 1970s, neoliberal thinking has fueled the principal policy commitments proposed primarily by the American international financial institutions mentioned above as a "global model" that should be adopted by all countries wishing for economic growth and political stability. Also known as the "Washington Consensus," these policies strive to produce a global economic reality which operates with very little state inter- vention and regulation. Moreover, according to these policies, governing states are prompted to minimize the public sector and privatize all social services. Finally, labor markets should be "flexible," i.e., accommodate the fluctuating needs of various industries but without the safety net of long-term secure employment (the meaning of flexibility will be discussed in detail shortly) [6].

Neoliberal thought and the American-based economic policies it has inspired have steadily impacted the global economy, and especially the international division of labor. Since the 1970s, key changes in labor trends in the United States and Northern Europe have included a decline in manufacturing jobs, the loss of high-wage jobs in management, an increase in low-wage occupations in the service sector, and an overall increase in unemployment rates, especially in Europe [7, 8]. As American and Northern European wage earners have been struggling to stay in the labor market, new labor markets have been forming in the industrializing regions of the world.

Another important labor trend, and an outcome of neoliberal economic policies, has been a qualitative change of steady, unionized labor into "flexible" labor, i.e., more and more jobs, whether requiring skilled or unskilled labor1 have been steadily transformed from long-term, contractual and with benefits and union representation, to contingent, part-time, and non-contractual [5, 6, 9]. This trend, in addition to the increase of women's participation in the labor force globally, has been identified as the "feminization" of the workforce [10, 11]. In addition to the increase of women's participation in the workforce worldwide, the feminization of labor also refers to the changing nature of jobs to have characteristics more closely associated with those typifying jobs historically performed by women [12, pp. 22-30].

Characteristics of women's work include low wages, low status, low levels of training, less stable work, less powerful jobs, emotional labor, and a lack of skills development or occupational development. Overall, the feminization of labor is directly associated with much greater social and economic insecurity [11, 12]. In other words, the feminization of labor also refers to the increase in part-time and temporary contractual work, lower wages, and lower skilled workers replacing more highly skilled workers [12].

These changes in global labor trends correspond to the shift toward flexible business practices employed by corporations and manufacturers and the decline of unionized workforces in industrialized countries since the 1970s. For instance, such practices include off-shoring, outsourcing, and subcontracting. While off- shoring refers to the relocation of business processes such as production, manufacturing, or services from one country to another, outsourcing involves the assigning of selected company operations to an outside entity that specializes in the management of the outsourced operations often at a significantly reduced cost. Both off-shoring and outsourcing may involve subcontracting. Retailers such as Wal-Mart, Sears Roebuck, J. C. Penney, Nike, Reebok, and Liz Claiborne, while they design and market their brand-name products, they habitually use middlemen in regions such as Southeast Asia, China, and India to allocate the production of their goods [10].

Globalization is not a new phenomenon and its proponents have attributed to it the creation of wealth, improved health, as well as the global transference of democratic political structures, laws, social movements, international aid organizations, and the progression of new information technologies which have arguably had much positive impact throughout the world. However, the impact of economic globalization on labor trends, individual workers, communities, and nations is a subject of contentious debate. The proponents of economic globalization advocate that the moving of factory and other business operations around the globe has and will continue to create new work opportunities for the unemployed and will thus allow all regions of the world to develop economically, and decrease poverty, unemployment rates, disease, and gender inequality.2 One famous proponent of this stance is American economist Jeffrey Sachs. In his best-selling book on how to end world poverty, Sachs advocates that the financial investing of developed countries in developing ones, and the subsequent creation of new jobs, is the necessary solution to pull all people out of poverty. Although he recognizes that many workers in these areas are suffering from a lack of governmental regulations and workplace rights, he sees this circumstance as a necessary evil that will eventually lead to growth for all [13].

However, many others see the new trends in the global labor market as deeply problematic. Despite the optimism of the globalization hopefuls, at the moment some three billion people—that is about half the number on the globe—live on under two dollars a day and 86% of the world's resources are still consumed by the world's wealthiest 20%.3 Thus, critics of economic globalization argue that the last two decades of market growth on a global level have mainly assisted the growth of economies in the already industrialized countries rather than those of peripheral regions. While enabling transnational corporations to remain profitable, economic globalization is creating new global inequalities for individuals and communities along economic, racial, and gender lines [4, 14, 15]. According to The Institute of Management's Flexible Patterns of Work (1986), the new global labor market consists of a small core and ever-expanding peripheries. For the most part, the core
2 See IMF "The Impact of Globalization on Workers and Their Trade Unions" (http://www.imf.org) is comprised of workers who are employed full-time and are important for the future of the corporation. This segment, which is constantly decreasing in all indus- trialized countries, also enjoys employment stability and retirement benefits. The first periphery is comprised of full-time workers with "easy-to-acquire-and-find" abilities and is marked by high turnover. The second periphery, which is the fastest growing labor segment at present, is comprised of workers who are part-time or temporary, for the most part have no collective representation, and have very little employment security or benefits [16].

The economic inequality that has resulted from this new international division of labor is also related to the significant wage differences that exist between workers in the industrialized world versus the industrializing ones. For instance, while in 1975 the highest average manufacturing wage was less than two and a half times the lowest average wage (Sweden, $7.18 per hour vs. Japan, $3.00), in 2002 the ratio between the highest wage and the lowest was 27 to 1 (Germany, $24.31 vs. China $0.90) [17].

In addition to the increase of global economic inequality and the steady replacement of secure employment with insecure and flexible labor, neoliberal economic and political policies and the global economic restructuring that has resulted from them have dangerously challenged workers' representational politics and voice worldwide [6]. Whereas union membership in the 1950s was about a third of the workforce, in 1983 it had fallen to 20%. Today, union membership has declined to about 12% of the workforce, because of job losses and despite recent gains in some industries and regions such as California.4 As argued by Annycke, Bonnet, Dasgupta, Figueiredo, Khan, Rosskam, and Standing, in the 2004 ILO report Economic Security for a Better World, since the 1980s there has been a global decline in collective voice, particularly as it manifests itself in union membership. Collective voice is necessary for maintaining employment security and a check on company and other policies that undermine the welfare of workers. Nonetheless, all hope is not lost as there are a number of emerging forms of collective voice worldwide (for details, see [6]).

This chapter briefly examines first, the historical events that have led to contemporary patterns in economic globalization and global market trends; then it will explore the specific characteristics of the changes in labor in the indus- trialized and industrializing world, the rise of flexible labor worldwide, and the feminization of labor.

THE ECONOMIC CRISIS OF THE 1970S AND THE MOVE TO FLEXIBLE LABOR

The new flexible business strategies that are impacting the current state of the global division of labor, such as off-shoring and so forth, are the direct outcome of changes in the global flow of capital since World War II. The U.S. effort to rebuild the war-destroyed economies of Western Europe and Japan aided its post-war boom with the expansion of U.S.-based corporations in these regions and elsewhere. However, by the mid-1960s as European and Japanese economies had recuperated and their markets had become saturated by products made in the United States, they were ready to establish export markets of their own. At this time, the United States was faced with the overproduction of mass produced standardized products that were not absorbed as readily in the international market as they had been previously.

Additionally, the excess of U.S. governmental funds and the few opportunities for capital investment and growth abroad resulted in a period of economic recession. It was exacerbated by the oil crisis of the early 1970s brought on by the raising of oil prices by the Gulf States. The decision of the member states of OPEC (Organization of Oil-Exporting Countries) to restrict the production of oil resulted in the doubling of the previously inexpensive oil prices on which the U.S. economy depended. Since Japan, England, and France had developed more energy-efficient technologies, in contrast to the hard-hit U.S. economy, they were not affected as much [16, 18].

The U.S. economy responded to the culminating economic crisis of the 1970s with a 15-year period of intense economic, social, and political restructuring and economic readjustment. As a result, the existing model of capitalist production and accumulation, known to economists as Fordism, was succeeded by a new economic model called flexible accumulation.5 As explained by cultural geographer David Harvey, unlike Fordism, flexible accumulation emphasizes "the emergence of entirely new sectors of production, new ways of providing financial services, new markets, and above all, greatly intensified rates of commercial, technological, and organizational innovation" [16]. The shift from Fordism to flexible accumulation has been the key force behind the contemporary restructuring of the new inter- national labor trends [7].

As U.S., Northern European, and East Asian manufacturers have strived to produce affordable new commodity trends and innovative products to keep mostly North American and European consumers interested and always buying, they have been on a constant quest for locating cheaper and unregulated labor markets in other world regions, resorting to outsourcing manufacturing production and sub-contracting practices. Former colonies of North America and Europe, in their effort to pay their economic development debts to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, have been identified as promising labor markets. Consequently, over the last 40 years they became the primary locales for the outsourcing of manufacturing by recruiting their young and mostly unskilled populations. For instance, countries such as the Philippines, Mexico, China, and India, to name a few, have established several industrial areas called Free Trade Zones (FTZ), also known as Export Processing Zones. These are usually designated manufacturing territories of the host country located on the outside of large urban centers and when possible, on the banks of rivers.

FTZs have been very attractive to foreign investors because they are usually for the most part exempt from any existing government regulations regarding labor costs and contracts. Tax codes instituted in the United States have allowed many industrialists to avoid paying taxes on the profits they make overseas in these industrial zones. Since the 1970s, FTZs have been integral to the international division of labor. According to Millen, "by the mid-1990s, over 200 EPZs employed over two million workers in more than 50 countries. Around 80% of the workforce in EPZs are women, the majority of whom are single and between the ages of 18 and 25" [10, p. 188].

The off-shoring of manufacturing jobs has been succeeded by the off-shoring of service work. For instance, U.S. firms are steadily moving a variety of service jobs, such as programming, customer service call centers, and entry-level word-processing jobs to India, the Barbados, and other countries with lower wages than the United States, and an ample supply of what is considered "unspecialized labor." This trend of moving service jobs abroad has been enabled in part because of technological advances which allow information to move rapidly about the globe. Currently, occupations in the United States that are targeted for offshore service production include medical receptionists, diagnostic support services, paralegals, financial support, computer and math professionals, and office support [19].

CONTEMPORARY LABOR TRENDS Job Loss in the United States and Other Industrial Regions

There have been two recent waves of job loss in the United States and other industrialized countries due to global economic restructuring: one among manufacturing workers in the 1980s, and the other among white-collar workers in manufacturing, wholesale, retail trade, and public and private services in the early 1990s [20]. While in 1970 manufacturing engaged 69.7 million workers in the United States, Australia, France, Italy, Sweden, Canada, Japan, Germany, The Netherlands, and England, by 1997 it employed only 63.7 million. The overall greatest loss of manufacturing jobs has occurred in England, from 8.5 million in 1970 to 4.9 million in 1992 [21]. In the United States, the loss of factory jobs has been continuous. Between 1991 and 1992, 5.5 million factory workers were laid off [21]. In the three-year period between 1999 and 2001, 1.3 million were terminated from their jobs [22] while in the 2003-2005 time period another 1.1 million factory workers were out of work, constituting the highest percentage of laid-off workers in U.S. history [23].

While all sectors of manufacturing have been downsized, certain sectors have been altered more due to the movement of factories to FTZs or elsewhere in the developing world. Beginning in the 1970s, American steel companies began changing their investment strategies and business operations resulting in the shrinking of this industry. By 1984, 20% of all steel companies' productive capacity was eliminated and 40% of all steelworkers were laid off. American rubber workers have faced the same fate. Whereas in the 1950s, American-based companies produced 75% of the country's tires and 50% of the country's other non-tire rubber goods, today half of U.S. tire manufacturing is conducted offshore. Also, while in the 1960s General Motors and Ford produced more than 50% of all the cars in the world, by 1992 their output accounted for only 20.9%, and in 2006 output was only 16%. Overall, within the last 30 years, employment in the U.S. car industry has declined by 25% [24], despite concerted efforts by the UAW and other unions to stem the tide of layoffs. As a result, union membership in manufacturing overall continues to fall, from 11.7% in 2006 to 11.3% in 2007, compared to small gains in the private health and education sectors from 8.3% to 8.8% between 2006 and 2007.6

According to the Office of Aerospace Automotive Industries, although jobs in the automotive industry increased by 8% between 1991 and 2005, looking at this trend alone "hides a significant and dramatic downturn that has decimated the industry since the year 2000. In that year, employment reached a peak of 1,313,600 workers, but the drop from that peak over the ensuing five years to 2005's level represents a decline of 16%, with a total loss of 215,000 jobs" [25].7 Other manu- facturing sectors that moved overseas include consumer electronics, the garment industry, and the semiconductor industry [24].

In the 1990s, white-collar workers, believing their jobs were safe and stable, also began losing their jobs to downsizing, off-shoring, and subcontracting. For instance, companies such as AT&T, Delta Airlines, and Eastman Kodak laid off thousands of middle management and higher-paid employees in order to remain profitable. Sears, Roebuck and Company let 50,000 employees go [20].

Facing Unemployment

The availability of cheaper labor costs abroad has resulted in unemployment and non-traditional work arrangements for U.S. and Northern European workers. In the 1990s the overall number of unemployed workers in all developed countries was measured at 36 million [26]. The rates of unemployment have been greater in Europe than, for instance, the United States and Japan. In 1996 unemployment in the countries that are part of the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) was 7.5% while in the European Union it was 11.3%, and in Eastern Europe it was 11.8%. In 1997 Eurostat reported an estimated 18 million unemployed E.U. citizens [26]. Ten years later, unemployment rates have decreased, in the European Union to 7.3% and in the OECD to 5.4% [27-29].

Unemployment in industrialized countries has been greater among women and the young than men. In the European Union in 1997, 12.6% of women and 21.1% of people under the age of 25 were unemployed. In contrast, the industrializing countries belonging to the APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation), such as China, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Korea, Thailand, and Singapore, have had an overall unemployment rate of only 3% or lower. In 1996, the Philippines had the highest rate at 8.6% [26].

The material and psychological effects of losing one's job are varied and their severity cannot be underestimated. These effects can range from depression, the dissolution of personal relationships, alcohol and drug abuse, and even suicide [30]. When, in 1982, an RCA television cabinet-making factory in Indiana moved its operations overseas, 850 factory workers had to come to grips with unemployment and the realization that they had been "dumped" from the "middle class" [31]. As one laid-off employee stated:

We are down to rock bottom and will probably have to sell the house to live or exist until I find a job here or somewhere else. I have been everywhere looking in Cass, White, and Carroll counties. We have had no help except when the electric company was going to shut off the utilities in March and the Trustee [County Welfare] paid that $141. My sister-in-law helps us sometimes with money she's saved back or with food she canned last summer [31, p. 64].

As reported by the U.S. Labor Department, only 26% of manufacturing workers in the United States who have lost their jobs have found new jobs paying the same or more than their previous one [26]. Overall, the reemployment rate for factory workers who have lost their jobs has been lower than that of workers displaced from other industries. During the 2003-2005 period the reemployment rate for manufacturing workers was 65% lower than the overall reemployment rate for all displaced laborers [23]. Currently, industrial jobs are being replaced by jobs in the service sector such as educational services, health care and social assistance, and professional and business services. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, these services represent the industry sectors with the strongest employment growth and are projected to grow more than twice as fast as the overall economy.8

The Development of New Labor Markets

As manufacturing and other jobs have been decreasing in the United States and other industrialized countries, new job markets have been forming and employing workers in industrializing regions of the world. American and Northern European consumer goods are now made all over the world in diverse localities such as Sri Lanka, Indonesia, the Philippines, Belarus, Moldova, Haiti, and the Marianna Islands. According to the United Nations Development Program's 1999 Human Development Report, the majority of transnational corporations invest in countries with an ample supply of what is often considered unskilled labor, loose work regulations, and with the most political stability. An example of such a top choice of countries at the moment is China.

The Chinese government, anticipating foreign investment, began establishing "special economic zones" along its coastal regions in the 1980s. By the mid-1990s, Korean and Taiwanese investors preferred investing in China instead of their own countries, since it was viewed as a primary source of new pools of cheap labor. In 1995, the ratio of factory wages in China compared to South Korea, Taiwan, and Japan was approximately 1:30. Between 1985 and 1996, the portion of Chinese exports from foreign-owned plants grew 40%. During the 1990s, China took 45% of direct foreign investment in Asia. China now produces about half of the world's shoes and a proliferating array of electronic items, toys, and garments for the global economy [32].

In order to accommodate the new industrialization efforts of the government, farms and rice paddies became the grounds where new factories were built, thus resulting in the loss of the primary means of independent subsistence for large numbers of the rural population. Many local farmers now live off the rents from the factories, while literally millions of migrants from China's poorer rural areas have left their homes and families and have migrated to the new industrialized areas. Unlike factory workers in the United States who are still protected by labor laws and work an average 40 hours per week, China's factory workers often labor through 12-hour shifts, 7 days a week, under the disciplinary quota-watchful eye of foreign supervisors and managers [32].

In their discussion of the working conditions in 54 non-state-run Chinese footwear factories, Chan and Xiaoyang argue that "the management practices at workplaces in the PRC [People's Republic of China] are no less authoritarian, disciplinary, and punitive than their counterparts in England in the period of the Industrial

Revolution" [33, p. 561]. The researchers found that workers were forced to work overtime in addition to the already long work hours they completed on a daily basis, had their bathroom visits monitored, and were even physically punished when management thought appropriate. While men workers were more likely to be fined for breaking factory rules such as not wearing an identification badge, wearing the wrong shoes, drinking water during production hours, talking while working, and so on, women were mostly penalized by having to work overtime [33]. On occasion, violating one of the factories' regulations would be punishable by docking one's pay for half a day to up to several days.

Extreme discipline is only one of the ongoing issues Chinese factory workers have to face. Ongoing sweatshop working conditions, the absence of necessary safety precautions, very low wages, and labor violations are constantly issues reported and monitored by China Labor Watch.9 Being migrants from rural areas, most workers are also plagued with the alienation and hardship that comes from being removed from close-knit communities and kin [31, 34].

The Rise of Flexible Work

The trend toward "flexible labor" results partly from declines in union power and union membership. In the United States, union membership has declined considerably over the last 50 years, despite tiny gains in 2007, particularly in California which saw 200,000 more union members. The trend was in the opposite direction for manu- facturing workers.10 U.S. and Northern European manufacturing workers who have lost their jobs because of outsourcing, if not left unemployed, mostly have to settle for what are defined as non-traditional and flexible work arrangements, i.e., part- time, lower paying, non-unionized service jobs without benefits, and fixed-term contracts. As reported by the U.S. Labor Department, only 26% of manufacturing workers in the United States who have lost their jobs have found new jobs paying the same or more than their previous one [22] (see chapter 5).

The part-time employment numbers differ much from country to country. For instance, in 1996, countries with high levels of part-time employment were the Netherlands (36.5%), Ireland (27.9%), and Switzerland (27.4%), while part-time employment was relatively low in Hungary (4.9%), Greece (5%), and Italy (6.6%). In the European Union, 32% of the part-time labor market was dominated by women while only 5% was comprised by men. In the United States in 1997, 18% of all wage and salaried employees worked part-time, that is 22.0 million out of 119.5 million full-time workers. In 1995, part-time labor comprised two-fifths of the Canadian labor market and has been the growing type of labor in this country [35].

Automobile producers such as Toyota, Nissan, and Honda provide a clear picture of the fate of temporary workers. While hiring an average of 2,000 people to staff their production line, only 1,200 workers may enjoy permanent status at one time. The other 800 are categorized as temporary or contingent laborers who are hired by temporary work agencies such as Manpower. In the event of an economic downturn, the temporary workers are the first to go without ever receiving any type of compensation.

In 1996, one in four persons in the American labor force was a contingent, temporary, or part-time worker. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2005 contingent workers accounted for 1.8 to 4.1% of all U.S. employment.11 Such laborers included typists, secretaries, engineers, computer specialists, lawyers, or managers. Their salaries were paid by an employment agency and excluded any benefits packages [36].

Whether working for a factory or an office, temporary work takes a toll on individuals [8]. In her work, called "Just a Temp," Jackie Rogers notes how temporary workers in addition to receiving low wages and engaging in contingent employment, also experience alienation on multiple levels: first, in relation to the other more permanent workers; second, in relation to the work itself; and third, in terms of their sense of self-identity as valuable members of the workforce. Temps she interviewed referred to the work they had to do as "monotonous, mindless, and even robotic" [8, p. 205]. As one of her informants noted, "I worked in a bank and stuffed envelopes for five days straight. He delegated me these huge boxes to stuff, so like I would only have to go to him two days later. I'd just go to him when I ran out of stuff to stuff" [8, p. 206]. In terms of their alienation from other permanent workers, one informant puts it in perspective:

And there was no Christmas present for you under the tree like the rest of the company would get. . . . There were some places where it was just blatant, just terribly blatant. Whenever there was going to be a company party or something, the temps had to stay and work. You know, cover the phones so the regular people got to go. You could tell where the second-class citizenship started [8, p. 208].

Temps also struggled with their identity as workers. Workers noted that they could not be themselves but instead they figured they had to "have a pretty strong personality so that you can be adaptable and you have to be political . . . be very pliable [and] mold to any situation . . ." [8, p. 21, emphasis in original].

The Feminization of Labor

The new trends shaping labor around the world have impacted all workers but have affected women laborers in specifically gendered and racialized ways. Women in industrialized countries are the main labor force for the growing service sector. In 1991, two-thirds of employed women in the United States worked as teachers, nurses, clerks in sales, and in other services. U.S. women workers on average make only 70% of what men make. There has been a solid increase in the ratio of women's income to men's income, but only because men's income has been on the decline.

While women in the United States and other industrialized countries are mainly working in service industries, Third World women workers have been incorporated in the international division of labor as workers in agriculture, large-scale manufacturing of goods such as handicrafts and food processing, and as workers in the sex and tourist industries [11]. Much of the world's 27 million laborers working in FTZs are young women. In Bangladesh, 80% of the garment workers are women. And while both men and women off-shore workers are considered cheap laborers by foreign investors, women fare even worse in terms of compensation than their fellow male laborers. Women workers living and working in the so-called "Third World" tend to get hired in the lower paying industries known as "light" industries, such as those manufacturing textiles, garments, food processing, cigarettes, toys, shoes, electronics, and data entry. Men in the same regions tend to be preferred as workers in the higher paying "heavy" industries of steel, automobile, chemical and petrochemical, aircraft and aerospace, shipbuilding, and machinery [37].

Women and more often young girls with minimal formal schooling are preferred as workers of the global assembly line because of dominant ideologies rooted in patriarchy. They tend to construct females as easier to discipline than men workers, and thus easier to control by a mostly male-dominated management. They are also the preferred work pool because as women, they are viewed as dependents of fathers, brothers, or husbands and as such, it is deemed justifiable that they get paid less than their male counterparts. For the most part, their work is constructed as temporary, unskilled, and easily replaceable [38].

Anthropologist Aihwa Ong's work on Malaysian women workers of the elec- tronics industry is a case in point. Her ethnography of Malaysia's Free Trade Zones' employment practices shows that girls from the age of 16 were the main recruits for work producing electronics components. In this context, there are many gendered and racial assumptions shaping the preference of young women workers over local men laborers. For one, as Muslims these young women are perceived by foreign managers of the plants as "docile," "obedient," and thus easily controlled and directed. Their fingers are considered to be more "agile" and "nimble" than men's and thus "naturally suited" for the delicate handling of electronic components. Working only till the age of 24, these workers are regularly replaced with new young women workers because of serious burnout and persistent health issues, such as chronic fatigue, irreversible eyestrain, and poisoning due to overexposure to chemicals, and so forth [39].

Feminization of Work and Migration

Economic globalization has also impacted the trends of global migration. As argued by sociologist Saskia Sassen, "globalization has produced a new kind of migration, with new conditions and dynamic of its own" [40, p. 255]. Unlike the migrations of the past where it was mostly men laborers migrating in search of work, currently much of the migrating labor force is constituted by women. For instance, in "1946, women were fewer than 3% of the Algerians and Moroccans living in France; by

1990, they were more than 40%. Overall, half of the world's 120 million legal and illegal migrants are now believed to be women" [41, p. 5].

The new feminization of the migration of women from industrializing regions to industrialized ones has a direct correlation to the increase of the entrance into the paid labor market by North American and Northern European women. Unable to keep up with the double-shift of household work in addition to paid labor, many American and Northern European women have since the 1970s become more and more dependent on the domestic labor of migrant nannies, maids, and nurses from places such as the Philippines and Latin America, to name a few [41].

Living and working abroad, having often left their own children in the care of relatives, women migrant workers often face many challenges: adapting to new cultural demands, long and unregulated hours of work, and in many cases, abusive working conditions [42-45]. Regretfully, in addition to the women who migrate voluntarily to do mostly domestic work, there are also large numbers of women who find themselves unwillingly trafficked as sex workers and sex slaves. As this economic activity is part of the underground global economy there are no official figures on this type of migration, only speculation. According to Kevin Bales, president of Free the Slaves, America's largest anti-slavery organization, there are at least 30,000 to 50,000 sex slaves in captivity in the United States at any given time [46].

THINKING ABOUT HEALTH IN THE NEW GLOBAL ECONOMY

As discussed, economic globalization, as it has been unfolding since the 1970s, has indeed impacted people's work experiences in the United States and else- where. An issue that needs to be addressed further is how the neoliberal economic policies and the actions of transnational corporations shaping economic global- ization are impacting workers' health. As the contributors of this book show, among others, "globalization has a complex influence on health" [47, p. 834].

Critics of economic globalization argue that as transnational corporations reach all over the globe looking for new territories to set up shop, there is strong evidence that they play a great role in impacting the health of workers and communities around the globe—mostly in a negative way. Indirectly, because transnational corporations are involved in manufacturing, they impact the environment through the waste they discharge into lakes, rivers, oceans, ground, and the atmosphere. Furthermore, transnational corporations "can have a detrimental impact on health and well- being through their aggressive advertising and promotion of products such as infant formula, cigarettes, pesticides, pharmaceuticals, and weapons" [10, p. 178].

In industrializing regions, low wages that do not allow for regular access to health care, poor working conditions that often do not comply with safety regu- lations, noxious work organizations that create psychosocial stressors, long work hours without adequate rest, all have direct and negative impact on the health of millions of factory workers. The full impact of globalization in creating these deleterious working conditions that impact on the mental and physical well-being of working people has yet to be fully determined. Yet others see some promise in globalization improving the health of people around the globe. As argued by Cornia, "if properly managed, globalization can lead to important health gains" [47, p. 534]. In his work on the relationships between health and globalization, he argues that:

In countries that have met most of the domestic conditions for opening up and have led access to international markets at fairly unconstrained conditions, a judicious mix of unorthodox domestic policies and managed globalization has contributed to rapid growth, a rise in living standards, and gains in health status, In this connection, the experiences of China, Costa Rica, the countries of the East Asian "tiger economies," India, Viet Nam, and a few other countries should be distilled and the related lessons learned [47, pp. 534-535].

Yet, even when optimistic, Cornia admits that, "the domestic and international conditions for successful globalization have been met in relatively few countries. In several countries, growth has been hindered and improvement in health has been slowed down by premature, unselective, and poorly sequenced globalization" [47, p. 535].

The growth of inequality and poverty around the world is bad for population health [28, 48]. While some health indicators are improving in developing countries, in countries like the United States which is experiencing growing inequality, the improvements in health are in fact reversing, as can be seen in the worsening of U.S. infant mortality rates.12 The goal of this chapter has been to orient the reader to the labor trends arising internationally as a consequence of neoliberal ideology and contemporary patterns of economic globalization. These trends are affecting workers worldwide in adverse ways, and, as the chapters following suggest, they are also having an influence "locally" in terms of promoting greater inequality within the United States, as well as on the organization of work and its effects on the health of American workers.

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