The Global Migration Systems of Domestic and Care Workers Conference  
York University, November 13-14, 2008  
Preliminary Program

November 12, 2008

Opening Dinner – 6-9 pm  
Chancellor’s Room, York University  
Keynote Speaker: Dr. Sedef Arat-Koc  
“No Longer an Anomaly? Migrant Labour Status, Domestic in Canada and Strategies for Organizing”

November 13, 2008

9:00-10:30 am

Historical views of the migration of domestic workers in an era of decolonization

Maerike Koenig, GHI, Paris  
Dirk Hoerder with C. Harzig¹, Arizona State University  
Shelly Chan, University of California, Santa Cruz

Maerike Koenig  
Historical Views of the Migration of German Domestic workers in Paris (1850-1914)

Abstract:
The paper summarizes the research on historic domestics migrations with its main questions and main problems (i.e. sources). It will then discuss the migration of German domestic servants to Paris in the second half of the 19th century. Due to the image of Paris as a city of culture and modernity thousands of young women migrated to the French capital in order to find work and personal freedom. Whereas the sources of the German parishes in Paris often present these women as victims, letters of domestics show that they actively used the networks created by social organizations but also created networks themselves. A comparison with the migration of German domestics to other countries will underline the special situation of Germans in Paris.

¹ Dr. Christiane Harzig is now deceased. The paper to be presented by Dirk Hoerder draws on notes prepared prior to her death when she was organizing this conference.
Christiane Harzig† and Dirk Hoerder
Femina migrans: Agency of European Women Migrating to Domestic Work in North America, 1880s to 1950s

Abstract:
After a theoretical introduction, this paper will place domestics' migrations in Europe, first, in a long-range historical perspective. It will, second, deal with women's migration to the United States and Canada and the role of domestic service as protected labour market for women's post-migration insertion. We will argue that – whether working conditions were exploitative or fair – domestic service provided a stepping stone to the migrants' aspirations. In this sense the women's Otherness appears as a resource in an ethnically determined labour market. Next we turn to the end of the European – i.e. white – migration in the years after 1945 when, for a few years, women were recruited from Displaced Persons camps. In conclusion we point to the shift from European to Caribbean – white to "black" – women, still in an Atlantic and post-imperial context from the mid-1950s on. We argue that this initial recruitment was an intermediate phase towards the post-colonial mobility of femina migrans/. We discuss how women established their own long-distance migration routes and, even in service positions, developed independent life projects.

Shelly Chen
Traveling Domesticity: Chinese Amahs, Revolutionaries, and Wives, 1900-1966

Abstract:
This paper broadens the term “domestic labor” as work performed within the home by providing a traveling history of three groups of Chinese women in 1900-1966—maids who worked in European colonies, revolutionaries who went to Tokyo, and rural women whose husbands migrated overseas. First, it reviews scholarship on “amahs” who resisted marriage in the 1920s-30s and came to embody colonial notions of “traditional Chinese virtues.” Second, it examines how domestic work was central to the invention of female political subjectivities in the early 1900s. It focuses on He Xiangning, who joined Sun Yat-sen’s Revolutionary Alliance and trained herself to cook and wash for the men, an experience that she treated as crucial to her transformation from an upper-class lady into a maid of revolution. Finally, this paper discusses Communist efforts to transform family relations in the 1950s. As the state granted women new rights to divorce and mobilized them for production, it also portrayed women whose husbands emigrated as “remittance-dependent, “labor-eschewing,” stuck in “feudal” marriages, and were therefore objects of rescue and reform.
Felicitas Hillmann
Domestic work as a structuring constant of female migration: Volume and profile of female migration in Germany

Abstract:
Around half of all migrants worldwide are female – in some regions female migrants are even on the majority. My presentation will focus on the feminization of migration and will concentrate on the relationship of feminization of migration and domestic care work. I argue that there is a quantitative dimension of the feminization of migration and will thus analyze available international data. I argue that domestic work is one of the most important structuring constants prompting the feminization of migration. The invisibility of domestic work, the often informal setting of the work and the restricted entrances of female migrants into the labour markets of the countries of arrival enhance the necessity of domestic work for the female migrants. The second part of my presentation focuses on the social profile of female migration in Germany and outlines the importance of domestic care work for the channelling of female migrants into the German labour market. I will be drawing upon the first results of an ongoing research project on the gendered labour market integration of migrants from developing countries in Germany.

Valerie Preston and Silvia D'Addario
Domestic Work and Care-giving: Filipina Immigrant Women’s Comparative Experiences

Abstract:
This paper compares the participation in domestic work and caregiving for immigrant Filipinas in Toronto, Canada. While there exists some literature around domestic caregiving for live-in Filipinas, this paper focuses on the ways in which levels of unpaid work influence paid work particularly in occupations related to care work. Using information from the census and from transcripts of interviews, we examine how paid and unpaid domestic work intersect for this group of women and their evaluations of participation in domestic work and caregiving. We find that Filipinas are more likely to engage in paid caregiving work, often in the health sector.
Pei-Chia Lan  
Stratified Others and Professional Servants: The Making of Filipina and Indonesian Migrant Domestic Workers  

Abstract:  
Recently in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore, we have witnessed a declining recruitment of Filipina domestic workers, followed by a growing number of Indonesian ones. This paper examines this ethnically stratified labor market and discloses the hidden reasons behind the distinct images of Filipina migrants (the Westernized other) and Indonesian migrants (the traditional other). Recruitment agencies, as a major doorkeeper in the maid trade, play an active role in the production of stratified others and professional servants. They not only construct and disseminate nationality-based stereotypes but also seek workers of “desired” characteristics through the organized practices of recruitment and training. Recruitment agencies promote Indonesian women as a better model of “ideal servants” in opposition to the Westernized Filipinas. Through a careful selection of recruitment venues, they seek “docile” village women to meet the image of “the traditional other.” They ease employers’ concerns about “disdained others” by imposing a monthly-long training project. Through “proper” management in dress code, hairstyle, and characters, migrant women are presented as de-feminized and naturally suitable servants under the gaze of prospective employers. This ritual of passage aims to “moralize” and “civilize” the savage in the creation of “modern” servants for the service of foreign households.

1:30-3:00pm  
Emerging perspectives on migration and care work  
Barbara Thiessen, Deutsches Jugendinstitut  
Marianne Friese, Giessen University  
Madeleine Wong, St. Lawrence University

Barbara Thiessen  
New gender relations in the traditional ethnic division of labour: Intersectional perspectives on care and domestic work  

Abstract:  
The presentation will focus on social change in modern societies and its impact on private care arrangements. My assumption is that improving gender equality (dual career couples, rising female qualifications etc.) is built on a new division of labour between women. A growing market for migrant domestic and care worker can be seen since the last decade of the 20th century. The transformation of Eastern Europe and
growing inequality worldwide are the background for a growing number of female migrants. The situation in Germany concerning domestic and care work is discussed and, in this context, gendered issues of domestic and care activities are addressed. The question is whether and how domestic and care work can be done with more regulation that will ensure the social rights of migrant women. Do these transformations call for the professionalization of domestic and care work?

Marianne Friese
Care and Household Services – Development of Profession in Germany

This paper focuses on the observed empirical tendency towards female “difference”. This is rarely examined and describes the beginning of a far-reaching new social framework of modernized societies. At present, much evidence points to the fact that the professional structure of Western industrial societies, the so called “one-and-a-half-person-career”, has not become obsolete at all through the feminisation of work. On the contrary, it creates new changes of social restructuring. These changes are not based on the redistribution of work between the genders – as the women’s movement has hoped – but is founded on a new international division of labour between women, among women of different generations, different ethnic groups and different social backgrounds. To the same extend, the trend of employment for Western middle class women is growing because of the increasing standard of her education. The need for “unprotected” female workers in the private household is increasing too. It is noticeable that a non-significant amount of these paid female workers are not German but are from foreign countries. In this paper I will examine the following five themes. First, the international division of labour between women: a path of modernisation between individualisation and the force of modernisation. Second, private services and profession: in a tense historical relationship of public and private. Third, precarious working conditions: modernisation traps and economical employment. Fourth, socio-political perspectives: maid-privilege or service agency? And last, perspectives of vocational education: normalisation and professionalisation of private work as a service.

Madeleine Wong
Transnational Motherhood in the Ghanaian Diaspora

Our understanding of transnational motherhood is based largely on case studies of Filipina and Mexican migrants. This paper explores the ways that Ghanaian women who have migrated to Canada and the United Kingdom care for children left at home with their fathers and other relatives. Using information from in-depth semi-structured interviews, I explore the frequency and nature of mothers’ contacts with their children. The strategies by which mothers maintain control over major decisions concerning their children’s education, upbringing, and livelihoods are examined in detail. The migrant women’s views concerning the success and failure of these arrangements are also evaluated. The findings show that Ghanaian women are similar to other transnational female migrants who maintain their roles as mothers by appointing surrogates who act
in their places. However, in the Ghanaian case, the importance of female lineage increases the reliance on relatives from their mothers’ families in unexpected ways.

3:30-5:00pm
Policy issues, labour rights, and protection
Cynthia Cranford, University of Toronto, Mississauga
Grace Chang, University of California – Santa Barbara
Luann Good Gingrich, York University

Cynthia Cranford
Toward Flexibility with Security: Personal Assistance Services in Los Angeles Public and Private Sectors

Abstract:
The literature documents a strong relationship between flexibility in the organization of employment and insecurity for workers, particularly immigrant women workers. This comparative analysis of personal assistance services (PAS) in the private and public sectors of Los Angeles documents the conditions under which flexibility with security is possible. In the public sector, innovative legislation allowed for flexibility with security by deeming the recipient the employer for hiring/firing, creating a new organization as the employer for collective bargaining and recognizing the responsibility of the State for payroll taxes. Legislation combined with a creative community unionism to provide public workers employment, pay and social security, while lack of regulation and unionization resulted in insecurity for private workers along each dimension. These findings validate scholars’ calls for a re-regulation of the employment relationship to protect vulnerable workers but underscore the additional importance of new forms of unionism.

Grace Chang
Trafficking By Any Other Name: Recognizing Trafficking Victims in Care Work

Abstract:
Recent attention to human trafficking has focused largely on “sex trafficking,” defined as “migration achieved through force or deception for the purpose of coerced prostitution or sex slavery.” This emphasis deflects attention from sending and receiving country governments’ complicity in human trafficking for labor exploitation. I propose a framework viewing trafficking as coerced migration or labor exploitation in any labor sector, including manufacturing, agriculture, service work, domestic work and sex work. Immigrant rights and anti-trafficking advocates report that domestic work is the industry
in which women are most commonly trafficked. Many are forced to migrate, not through physical force but economic coercion created by the destruction of subsistence economies and social services in their home countries under neoliberal policies. Many unrecognized trafficking victims, particularly in care work, would be better served by a broader definition of trafficking, looking beyond the sex industry, focused on exploited workers in all labor sectors.

Luann Good Gingrich
Social Exclusion, the Law, and Low-Skilled Temporary Migrant Workers

Abstract: The feminization, criminalization, and commodification of migration has far-reaching consequences on national practices and obligations under the law. This paper will explore the relationship between gender, the law, and transnational livelihoods. That is, I will consider the ways in which national legal and regulatory enactments operate gendered processes of social exclusion and inclusion across sovereign borders. Extending previous and ongoing research on social exclusion and Mennonite migrant women from Mexico, I will investigate the peculiar and contrived legal place of women from Mexico entering Canada as low skilled temporary workers. This paper seeks to address the following questions: How might the concepts of social exclusion and inclusion, commonly limited to economic, socio-political, and subjective concerns, incorporate legal processes and outcomes? How do we understand the responsibility of the nation-state to protect its non-citizens -- those who work "temporarily" in the country for years at a time? Alternatively, what obligations reside with source countries for their citizens who live within their borders for only a few months every few years? With the increasing reliance on migrant workers in Canadian labour markets, what legal obligations does the nation-state have for protection, even social inclusion, of these non-citizens?

November 14, 2008

9:00-10:30am
Displacement, human rights, and care work

Ray Jureidini, American University in Cairo
Abhar Rukh Husain, York University
Ray Jureidini
Criminalization and Human Rights of Migrant Domestic Workers Under the Kefala System in Lebanon

Abstract:
The history of domestic service in Lebanon shows that non-Arab migrant domestic workers emerged mainly since the end of the civil war (1990). However, after years of arrests, detention (imprisonment) and deportation of female migrant domestic workers who left their employers (for unpaid salaries, verbal, physical and sexual abuse) in countries throughout the Middle East, there are still few signs of the de-criminalization of these workers in Lebanon and other Arab governments even though 5 Arab countries have now ratified the UN Convention on the Protection of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families. There are no labour laws to protect migrant domestic workers in Lebanon, or the Middle East generally. Following the invasion of Lebanon by Israeli military forces in July-August, 2006, human rights awareness campaigns have sought to bring about attitudinal changes towards migrant domestic workers, but it seems with little effect. The paper provides some data from a survey of migrant domestic workers conducted in 2005-6 prior to the Lebanese crisis that gives some indication of the extent of human rights violations occurring.

Abhar Rukh Husain
Migration and Involuntary Servitude: The Case of Bangladeshi Domestic Workers

Abstract:
As a transnational economy, Bangladesh should generate immense interest among academics studying the transnational migration of domestic workers. On the one hand, the country is increasingly dependent on the remittances of its overseas workers, who are predominantly semi-skilled and unskilled, to support its economy. On the other hand, it has a conditional ban on unskilled female workers’ emigration as a measure to ensure “safe migration” in the context of the growing volume of trafficking of women and young children. This paper will highlight the complex factors that underscore the persistent flows of women as migrant domestic workers from Bangladesh as a sending country. These women migrate to the Middle East as domestic workers, but many also experience involuntary servitude, including fraudulent recruitment offers and debt bondage imposed by Bangladeshi recruitment agents. Given that transnational migration of Bangladeshi domestic workers to date is a relatively under researched area, I have used disparate information available from various secondary sources to develop my paper.
A re-evaluation of reproductive labour

Helma Lutz, Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität and Ewa Palenga-Möllenbeck, Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität
Mary Romero, Arizona State University
Daiva Stasiulis, Carleton University

Helma Lutz and Ewa Palenga-Möllenbeck
Between (trans)national regimes and biographical trajectories: East-West transnational care migration

Abstract:
In this paper we will discuss our analytical concept which we have developed through and for the exploration of forms and dynamics of transnational labour and care arrangements in domestic work migration.
Firstly, we argue, that on the institutional level there is an interplay of three national regimes (of migration, gender and welfare/care) that must be considered in order to understand the very specific dynamic of transnational care migration.
Secondly, the approach of intersectionality analysis allows us to link the institutional level to the meso- and micro level of networks/organizations and individuals in order to explore how these institutional regimes act as an opportunity/obstruction structure – either as a source of assets or a cause of marginalization, or both.
Thirdly, by adopting the "dual" transnational perspective of both the sending and the receiving society, we intend to take into account transnational social spaces as the migrants’ action frame of reference.
Finally, a cross-national comparative study of two cases of transnational East-West migration (from Ukraine to Poland and from Poland to Germany) promises to provide new insights into the relationship between (trans)national migration, gender and care regimes on the one hand, and the migrants’ arrangements of labour and care on the other hand.

Mary Romero
The Hidden Costs of Paid Care Work: Motherhood, Childhood and the Globalization of Reproduction

Abstract:
In this essay, I argue that individual solutions to the problem of child care results in hidden costs of paid reproductive labor that is transferred to the families of private household workers and nannies. Without nationally funded child care program that provides services for all families, regardless of economic means or citizenship status, employers are unwilling to pay a living wage and benefits to workers. Mothering shaped by the capitalist emphasis on competition, which is prescribed by childcare experts, advocate child-centered, emotionally demanding, labor-intensive, and financially
draining methods. The substitute mothering that is currently purchased by hiring domestics and nannies transfers the more physical and taxing part of child care to the workers while employers upgrade their own status to mother-managers. Interviews conducted with the adult children of domestics and nannies demonstrate the social reproduction of difference in both employee and employer families within communities locally, nationally and internationally. Private child care arrangements provide a significant social space for reproducing inequality between families and national states. Children are socialized into privilege or subordination, as well as their place in the gendered, racialized, and class-based social hierarchy. Reproducing the contemporary middle-class family with all its current privileges, requires vulnerable workers who are stigmatized in the labor force by their citizenship and economic status (and frequently racialized) in order to retain a globalized unequal distribution of reproductive labor. Child care policies and programs that are not inclusive of all mothers, regardless of class, race, or citizenship, maintain a system of privileges that relies on subordination.

Daiva Stasiulis
“If Care-giving were ‘natural’ to Men: The implications of the re-gendering of care responsibilities for the global chain of care”

This paper asks “what if care-giving were deemed ‘natural’ to men?” and explores the implications for the global migration of female care workers of reversing the gendered assumptions underlying responsibility for care-giving. A huge corpus of scholarship about household work performed by female migrant workers begins with the observation regarding the universal ideological assumption that caring is a ‘feminine ethic’ and that care-giving is the ‘natural’ duty of women. In many countries around the world, societal expectations and social policy reinforce this set of gendered values. The gender essentialism of the assumption regarding women’s responsibility for care-giving is widely regarded as providing one of the major discursive forces with immense material effects for the devaluation, invisibility, and non-remuneration of household and familial care work when performed by female family members. It is also regarded as intersecting with other ideological justifications (that are racialized, classed, etc.) to account for the under-remuneration and the universal exploitation of female household and care (migrant and other) workers. Moreover, it is women, with privileged class, racial and citizenship positioning who are almost exclusively cast as the employers of non-citizen or ‘partial citizen’ racialized minority women. In both theoretical and empirical accounts of care-giving and household work, men appear infrequently - in migrant-receiving countries as primary breadwinners, beneficiaries of domestic labour, or more rarely as (sexual) predators of female migrant household workers. In migrant-sending countries, they figure as under-employed, undependable, and not infrequently abusive husbands and fathers. More recent research, however, indicates that men (in some geographic locales) are taking up a greater, albeit often different and not nearly equal share of care giving for children and especially elders.

Taking inspiration from the witty essay by Gloria Steinem, “If Men Could Menstruate,” this paper explores first, the implications of ideological re-gendering of care work (i.e., asking what if care-giving were deemed ‘natural’ for men) for the
revaluation of reproductive labour. Second, it examines some analytical, political and policy implications of ‘bringing men back’ into analyses of household and care-giving work for the global chain of care and the global migration of care workers.

1:30-3:00pm  Closing

Session chaired by organizers to summarize progress towards publication and review next steps.

3:30-6:00pm  Walking Tour of Toronto

6:00pm  Dinner