

Patriarchy: the Missing Link in Understanding Globalization's Impact upon Women

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## **Introduction**

Beginning in the 1980s, the world experienced an interconnecting of international economic systems through the emergence of globalization. This transition to a system that promotes open markets has many political, economic, and social implications. For the fields of political science, economics, sociology, and more recently, gender studies, the topic of globalization sparks much debate over its positive and negative outcomes. As Lesley Doyal (2002) states, “globalization cannot be stopped” nor reversed and therefore, merits the study of its origin and impacts (p. 234). This research builds upon previous studies (see Literature Review) that have found a link between the theory of patriarchy and globalization for the purpose of examining the effects of globalization upon women. Patriarchy formulates the theoretical framework this study, determining that globalization is largely a manifestation of patriarchy and adversely affects women worldwide through a lack of consideration for women’s issues, promoting goal-oriented growth without protective measures, and an overwhelming focus on the public sphere (politics and economics) and disregard for the private sphere (home and family life).

Lynn E. Ford (2011) defines patriarchy as the “pervasive control men exercise over social, economic, and political power and resources” with the literal translation meaning simply the ‘rule of fathers’ (p. 4). Since males dominate the political, economic, and social arenas worldwide, it places them in a privileged position compared to women. Patriarchy in the public and private sphere (in economics, politics, as well as at home) has kept women submissively in the private sphere and prevented them from having a voice in the public sphere until very recently in history (Ford, 2011). Because of this proliferation of patriarchal ideals, it created separates spheres of gender dominance (women dominating the private sphere) and a gender

hierarchy placing privileged men at the very top. The purpose of this study is to utilize patriarchy as a frame for addressing and analyzing globalization. Before launching into an analysis of the two, the researcher will establish some fundamentals for understanding globalization.

Globalization is breakdown of barriers or borders across the globe to promote the free flow of goods, people, communication, and knowledge. It is intrinsically linked with neoliberalism, an economic philosophy that advocates free markets, free trade, deregulation, and privatization.

Over time, two philosophies fused together creating neoliberal globalization, which has been implemented worldwide and has become the prevalent international development philosophy (Schirato et al., 2003). Globalization, when used in the context of this research paper, will refer to the fusion of neoliberal policies with globalization. Next, the researcher employs a literature review to analyze previous research on linking globalization with the theory of patriarchy and different manners of evaluating globalization policies.

### **Literature Review**

#### *Theoretical Discussion: Patriarchy and Globalization*

Linda Lindsey (2013) states that “sources making the linkage [between gender and globalization] explicit are difficult to uncover” and that the literature that does exist “fails to connect the widening global economic gap to women who are in the poorest ranks, and often overlooks women in advanced economies who fall prey to negative development outcomes” (p. 1). Her study analyzes the impact globalization has on women, specifically in People’s Republic of China (PRC). In her study, she determines that when looking closely at the implications of globalization, it reveals growing disparities between development of men and women. PRC’s adoption of globalization policies, gender segregation in the workforce, gender wage gaps, investment in young males, the one child policy, and cuts of programs that offer help with family

responsibilities indicate policies that adversely affect women (Lindsey, 2013). She states there is a “feminization of employment” occurring, where women represent close to 90 percent of the workforce in some industries (i.e. textiles, technology), which tend to be lower paid positions with difficult work conditions (Lindsey, 2013, p. 7). Yet, while she analyzes globalization’s impact on women, she fails to make the connection of male-centered perspectives and policy output, thus forming the basis for this study.

In 1995, R. W. Connell formulated a sociological concept called ‘hegemonic masculinity.’ This term is an examination and explanation of how and why men maintain dominant social roles, while women remain in subordinate social positions. She asserts that due to the long history of patriarchy, men have control over the institutions, means, and resources that women need to reduce gender inequalities. Furthermore, the two genders are in constant struggle for power but the cyclical pattern of hegemonic masculinity (gender socialization, social/health inequality, and power inequality) ensures that patriarchy is perpetuated and sustained (Connell, 1995). She names men as “gatekeepers” to gender equality because they dominate the discussion and implementation of politics, are the main shareholders of economic resources, and have significant cultural power and influence (Connell, 2005, p. 1802). To simplify, this means patriarchy or hegemonic masculinity has direct control over women’s development. She later goes on to apply her theory to globalization, by saying that neoliberal values, which are tied intimately to patriarchy, are spread by globalization and enforced around the world.

### *Evaluating Globalization*

Scholars have employed many perspectives to analyze globalization and neoliberalism. The focuses of those studies range from: its emergence, the different implementations abroad,

anti-globalization movements, its effects on indigenous populations, cross-benefit analysis of its results, among others. Since this research paper focuses on gender and globalization, the literature review will be limited to the study of the impacts globalization has upon women. Rhoda E. Howard-Hassmann (2011), a highly regarded and awarded political science and sociology scholar, makes the argument that globalization “has promoted, not undermined, women’s human rights” and development (p. 442). Her main argument centers on the idea that globalization leads to job creation, lifting women out of economic control of men and granting them autonomy (control over one’s life choices). She concludes that women and children have benefited from globalization because of this new personal autonomy. To enhance her argument, Howard-Hassmann uses Richards and Gelleny’s 2007 study that states that globalization benefits women through the emergence of new industries (the export industries of textiles and technology in the developing world) that hire predominately women workers. Because of the new woman-dominated industries created by globalization, women are better off and more autonomous.

On the other side of the argument of the pros and cons of globalization, some scholars argue that globalization has been overwhelmingly negative for women. Peterson & Runyan’s (2010) research is an important challenge to Howard-Hassmann’s argument. They argue that while globalization has created new industries and brought women into the workforce, women are trapped in the “lowest-paid, least-protected, and least-powerful positions” (Peterson & Runyan, 2010, p. 13). They argue that gaining wages and working is not enough to lift women from their subordinate position in society. Getting a job is not progress if the job is dangerous, menial and underpaid. Moreover, Rittich (2001) argues that globalization weakens the state, therefore less able to provide for the needs of women and children. Undoubtedly, the impact of globalization is a highly debated topic when it comes to women’s development. There are

scholars who argue each side and there are no definite conclusions to be drawn about the ramifications or advantages of globalization policies. Therefore, it is important to note that this research does not make a quantitative or qualitative evaluation of globalization, but instead studies globalization and neoliberal values from a gendered perspective to explain how they systematically favor males and may not serve the needs of women as they do men's.

The literature shows two approaches to applying gender to the field of International Relations. One perspective is applying gender theory to globalization as a concept (connecting patriarchy and masculine values with globalization). The other perspective is determining whether or not globalization will have positive or negative outcomes for women, which is largely still up for debate. However, there is an absence of literature showing the connection of all three: patriarchy, globalization, and the development of women. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to synthesize the different approaches to argue for an underlying root to the difference in men and women's development.

### **Main Argument**

Globalization, in its original definition, does not purposely promote one gender's development over another. Nor does it purposely reinforce a gender hierarchy. However, globalization and patriarchy represent a cyclical pattern where the two reflect and cause one another. Over time, the characteristics associated with masculinity and promoted by patriarchy have become synonymous with the globalization movement. For example, masculine characteristics are defined as "competitive individualism, reason, self-control or self-denial, combining respectability as breadwinner and head of household with calculative rationality in public life" (Hooper, 1999, p. 33). In simpler terms: dominating, competing, and a focusing on the ends and the individual rather than the means and the communal. This type of ends over

means rationale is at the heart of globalization and neo-liberalism, where economic development comes at the price of many disregarded means, such as enacting social reforms to match the economic ones, investing in education, creating good employment opportunities, the health and safety of the population, and many other factors usually deemed 'women's issues' (Peterson & Runyan, 2010). The remaining component of this research paper explores the impacts of this symbiotic relationship between patriarchy and globalization on women.

Among proponents of globalization, there appears to be an assumption that globalization will naturally produce gender equity because social development will follow in the steps of economic (Howard-Hassmann, 2011). However, this has hardly been the case. The World Economic Forum (WEC) annually releases the Global Gender Gap Report that analyzes 175 countries based on economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment. In the 2014 report, the worldwide health/survival and education gender gaps have closed almost completely (96 and 93 percent respectively); however, the gender gaps in economy and politics still have a lot of room for growth at 60 and 21 percent respectively ("Global Gender Gap Report," 2014). Compared to the index values from the WEC's first report in 2006, the gender gap in economics and politics has closed but not by a large degree, whereas health and education has stayed constant in the 90+ percent range. In 2006, the economic gender gap was 51-52 percent and the political gender gap was 15 percent, showing an 8-9 percent increase for economic participation and opportunity and a 6 percent increase for political empowerment ("Global Gender Gap Report," 2006). Furthermore, the closing of the economic gap is not expected until 2095 ("Global Gender Gap Report", 2014). The slow closing of the gender gaps in the economic and political domains shows there is a fundamental disadvantage in these areas for women because though there is growth, it is

underwhelming. To explain the slow closure of the gender gap, the differences between masculine and feminine characteristics provide an excellent foundation. Masculine characteristics, described above, are: being assertive, goal-oriented, competitive, and strong. Whereas, characteristics associated with femininity (being passive, nurturing and submissive) do not reflect the globalization goals, which require being assertive and authoritative to achieve rapid economic growth (Peterson & Runyan, 2010). Therefore, women, by their very nature, are at a disadvantage under this system. It comes as no surprise then that a system designed by men benefits men because they already know how to play the game. Women, on the other hand, must play catch up and adopt masculine characteristics in order to succeed (Ford, 2011). For many women that have traditionally held roles working in the informal sector, the transition into employment in the formal sector provides a complicated and seemingly impenetrable feat. This means abandoning their former social roles and adopting new ones – a challenge to some women with fewer means or opportunities – which can be one of many explanations for why women's development comes at a slower rate than that of men.

Furthermore, looking at how globalization policies value each gender's characteristics and traits is very telling. In the current world order, "men, states, war-making, wealth production are high valued in political...thought" yet "women, local or international political formations, peace-making, and poverty-reduction are devalued;" meaning that masculine traits hold a higher worth in the world (Peterson & Runyan, 2010, p. 13). While this seems largely theoretical, there are real-world manifestations of this. Women around the world tend to be responsible for care of the home, childcare, subsistence farming, and other informal sectors but are unpaid for work in these positions (Peterson & Runyan, 2010). Yet, men, who dominate the formal sector, get paid wages and therefore have much larger control of the wealth and resources. Due to globalization

and patriarchy, the value is placed on the idea of 'wealth production,' which means men's work is valued at a higher rate. Even when women enter the formal sector, barriers ('glass-walls' which are gendered positions that block horizontal mobility in the workforce and 'glass ceilings' that is vertical immobility in the workforce) exist that prevent them from catching up to their male counterparts (Ford, 2011). Instead of being an inclusive economic and political strategy, globalization has been shaped by males to reflect masculine characteristics, effectively devaluing women as a result.

As one of the top international institutions promoting worldwide growth through globalization, the World Bank and its programs provide the perfect example of how globalization policies are implemented. The World Bank provides low-interest loans and grants to developing nations to promote education, health, infrastructure, private sector development, agriculture, and many other aspects of growth. On the World Bank website, they name two goals: decrease the percentage of people living on less than \$1.25 a day to 3 percent and promoting income growth of the bottom 40 percent for each country ("World Bank: What We Do," 2014). The United Nations found that nearly 70 percent of people living in poverty are women ("Gender and Poverty," 2014). Women also only own one percent of the world's wealth ("Gender and Poverty," 2014). Since women make up the large majority of those living in poverty, it can be assumed that the World Bank's investments should be at least somewhat directed at women, but research shows that their record on the advancement of women is not as high as it should be. Though the organization does have programs such as micro-financing that are directed towards women, Peterson and Runyan (2010) found that a large portion of the World Bank's investments disproportionately benefitted men over women. One example is a program started by the World Bank that grants funding for agricultural production in developing nations, where the bulk of the

money went to male farmers instead of women farmers (Peterson & Runyan, 2010). This is interesting because up to 70 percent of all agricultural producers are women ("Facts & Figures," 2012). The reason: most of these women worked as subsistence farmers and were not part of the formal economy. This finding shows the World Bank's focus on neo-liberal principles to deliver results and reach their two goals. They target poverty reduction through investing in workers because of the assumption that economic development will lead to social equity. However, that leaves behind half of the population that happen to be women, who have yet to even enter the formal sector. It can therefore be argued, that the goals of the World Bank, a major globalization institution, is focused on reduction of poverty but primarily in ways that reflect neo-liberalism (i.e. promoting economic growth) and are not considering the reality that the development of women – 70 percent of impoverished individuals – should be their primary focus ("Gender and Poverty," 2014).

Typically, the current globalization system measures growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and Gross National Product (GNP) (Schirato, 2003). Critics of globalization state that there should be a more inclusive and broad degree of measurements that include more social and political aspects for a more well balanced picture of development and progress (Marsh, 2013). Marsh (2013) conducted a study of 156 countries to examine if a high or low GDP per capita reflected the expected development levels (high development for high GDP, low for low). Singapore, one of the countries that adopted globalization policies in full, has the third highest GDP per capita; but this measure of success may be misleading. The country had much lower than predicted performance in political freedom, much higher than predicted income inequality and lower education than expected (Marsh, 2013, p. 371). For women, there was an increase in educated women entering the workforce, but no significant push to increase the rate of education

for women in the country, resulting in larger income inequality among women (Marsh, 2013).

While Singapore has high economic output and GDP per capita, Marsh's analysis suggests that equality not only of women, but also of the entire population, is much lower than expected when compared with their rate of growth. Once more, GDP and GNP represent globalization proponent's focus on the ends (economic growth) that fails to show the entire picture of development.

### **Conclusion**

Globalization does not fail women because it is a substandard economic strategy or oppresses women like some regime types or economic systems; but it does negatively impact women because it applies masculine values and perspectives to a multi-gendered problem. Globalization is masculine, based on many different aspects, mainly who holds the decision-making power when formulating, advocating, implementing, and evaluating globalization. These aspects have been disproportionately male dominated since the emergence of globalization as an economic system. These masculine values have been proven to value men, invest in men, and promote the devaluation of feminine values and skills. The masculine value of wealth production is apparent in globalization and neo-liberal ideology, which name economic growth (measured in GDP and GNP) as the catalyst for political and social growth. However, women who have yet to enter the formal sector or hold low-paying and low-position jobs do not benefit under this system that does not empower them. Through examining how this theory has developed and progressed over time, it can be concluded that a gender gap exists because women are largely absent from the equation. Since globalization was created and implemented from a masculine perspective, it comes as no surprise that it does not benefit women as well as some believe it does. Recently, "it has become accepted wisdom that improving the status of women is one of the most critical

levers of international development” (Coleman, 2010, p. 1). Therefore, further research should focus on how to utilize both men and women and their respective talents to create lasting and impactful results.

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