NETWORKS AND THE VALUE OF SOCIAL REMITTANCES

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INTRODUCTION

• “In traditional Chinese society, maintaining harmony with others was the key to living in the world. The moral compass was not necessarily right or wrong; it was your relationship with people around you. And it took all your strength to break free from that.” (Factory Girls, Chang: 193)
• What is the importance of looking at the value of social remittance sending?
• Do transferred social values add value to remittances?
• Are women more reliable social remittance senders, and if so, what value does this add to remittance?

• Remittances are valued monetarily, but also socially, culturally, and morally (Fuentes, 2012)
• Remittance sending is shaped by “transnational identity” (Levitt, 2007) and the networks that the transnational identity gets formed within.
• Remittance is “gendered” (International Migration of Women, 2010) and shaped individually by the way women and men understand and have control over it
• “Social remittances are an under-utilized development resource that have the potential to be purposefully harnessed to improve socioeconomic outcomes in both sending and receiving countries.” (Levitt, 2005: 6)
• What does this mean, then, in regards to polarized labor sector (Autor, 2010) and feminization of survival (Sassen, 2002)?
• Future research:
• How can, and how does educational background play into social remittance sending, even with polarized labor sector and feminization of survival?
TYPES OF MIGRATION AND SOCIAL REMITTANCE

- Split Migration Models: “tied mover,” “tied stayer” (Pfieffer, Ritcher, Fletcher, Taylor, 2008) and cost/benefit to the family.
- Social remittances (Levitt, 2001) immigrants not only send money home, but positive and negative ideas and values
  - How does this factor in to the overall benefit of the family, if “split migration?”
- “Migrants sent $338 billion to their homeland in 2008, according to the World Bank.” (Levitt, 2010).
  - If remittances are social, what does this add?
- Social remittances are circular exchanges, and the beliefs and values that are transferred are fluid in both directions (Levitt, 2010).
  - For example, “some migrants come from communities with strong traditions of participation, be it in religious organizations, communal land management and farming schemes, or sports clubs. It is natural for them to reorganize themselves collectively when they move, and they do so with a great of skill and know-how.” (Levitt, 2010)
- Ideas that are transferred develop identities of families in other country.
  - Family in Gujarati, India might never set foot in United States, but express many cultural and societal values of United States because of a family member who has communicated or expressed those ideas (Levitt, 2001)
- Positive and negative effects of social remittances (Levitt, 2001, 2005, 2010)
SOCIAL REMITTANCE IMPACT AND IMPLICATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT

• Change status of migrant and non-migrant women
  • Changed gender roles, new perspectives on involvement in communities

• Improves socioeconomic indicators (Health, education, and class status are not merely local but transnationally developed (Levitt, 2005:6)), and racial relations are reconsidered (promotion of more communication and tolerance between groups?)
TRANSNATIONAL IDENTITY AND NETWORKS

- Transnational identity is developed along many circuits and networks. While often thought of as two-fold (between two countries), often more linear and across borders.

- Peggy Levitt (2007) defines “transnational identity” as the idea that through increased globalization, and especially through migration and remittances (monetary, social, and ideological), the way that migrants in countries assimilate is not merely one-directional, but two-fold, which has an impact on the community the individual migrated from and the country he or she now participates and lives within.

- Transnational identity” develops “within fluid social spaces that are constantly reworked through migrants’ simultaneous embeddedness in more than one society.” (Levitt, 2007)

- Some networks are more prone to “sloppiness” (Levitt, 1998) than others because of their open nature. Or, they could be closed and tightly regulated.

- This impacts the nature of what gets transferred. Interference could occur (Levitt, 1998).
U.S. POLARIZATION AND NETWORKS

- U.S. labor market has “sharply polarized over the past two decades, with expanding job opportunities in both high-skill, high-wage occupations and low-skill, low-wage occupations, coupled with contracting opportunities in middle-wage, middle-skill white-collar and blue-collar jobs” (David Autor, 2010).
- For women migrating to the U.S., the networks and circuits they interact within are explicitly and implicitly shaped by the pressures of the polarized labor market.
- Two fold push and pull shaping transnational identity through networks: labor market polarization and remittance sending back to country.
- “Top level firms and top level households in charge of the work producing and reproducing the organization and management of a global production system and a global marketplace for finance, as well as the vast infrastructure of low-wage jobs and low-profit activities that service the former.” (Sassen, 2002: 45)
FEMINIZED SURVIVAL AND NETWORKS

- Global labor market is increasingly becoming dependent upon women in all sectors. (Saskia Sassen, 2002)
- “Cities are thick enabling environments...even when the networks themselves are not urban per se...one might say that global civil society gets enacted partly in the microspaces of daily life rather than on some putative global scale.” (Sassen, 2006)
- The work sectors and occupations immigrants integrate within are thus twofold: the work sectors that are directly seen in daily life, and those that are hidden.
- Increased intensity of communication between cities from a micro level (Sassen, 2006)
- Hidden countergeographies add on to the pressure that migrant women feel in navigating the polarized labor sector.
- Hidden countergeographies also shape the transnational identity as women become assimilated (Fuentes, 2005, 2007)
EDUCATION AND DECISION TO PARTICIPATE IN POLARIZED LABOR MARKET

- Social remittances have potential to influence socioeconomic indicators (Levitt, 2005) (or improve as Levitt suggests): to what extent does education factor in?
- Participation in labor market not only depends on networks formed and shapes transnational identity, but educational background also shapes networks and is informed by the countergeographies and transnational identity.
- Connections with family members, children, and even spouses play a large role in success and decision to participate
  - “only divorced women seem to have a higher likelihood of employment.” (Ozden and Neagu, 2008, 6577 of 8363)
  - Women obligated to grandmothers often tended to do better in the labor market,
  - However, the presence of children, or being married to a spouse of the same nationality had “the largest negative effect on the decision to enter the labor market” (Ozden and Neagu, 6327).
• Ozden and Neagu (2008: 6114 of 8363, Kindle Edition) “broadly classify migrant women into two main categories: those who migrate to follow a husband or another family member and those who migrate alone for educational purposes.”

• Those who migrate for educational purposes: “split movers”
  - Social remittance sent back: positive or negative?
  - What value does the remittance have if woman or family member is negatively impacted?
  - How does this shape transnational identity if education only gets women so far in the polarized labor sector?

• Migration for educational purposes: “split movers”?
• Educational attainment for women is different for women of different countries (Ozden and Neagu, 2008)

• “Migrants do not form a random sample of the population” (See Figures 6.3 and 6.4 International Migration of Women, 2008)

• Highest percentage of migrants with tertiary degree from India (Figure 6.3 International Migration of Women, 2008)

• However, some tertiary degree plays a significant role in securing a job, whether or not that education was gained in the U.S. or not (Ozden and Neagu, 2008).
CONCLUSION

- Focusing on the social nature of remittances and the dynamic between decision to participate in labor market with education—what could this add to poverty alleviation for individualized countries?
- Socioeconomic indicators, such as improved health status, access to microfinance, participation in global market, etc.?
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