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Situating women in the brain drain discourse: discursive challenges and opportunities

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Situating women in the brain drain discourse: discursive challenges and opportunities

In July 2007, the IZA (Institute for Study of Labour, Bonn) published a paper on gender dimensions of the brain drain which analysed how men and women are differentially represented in highly skilled migration to OECD countries (Dumont et al 2007). The report began by claiming that gender has been frequently neglected as an analytical axis in discussions of brain drain. They argue that this is despite the fact that although overall, higher proportions of male than female migrants possess tertiary educational qualifications, the difference between the levels of qualifications amongst recent migrant flows is relatively small. In Australia, the proportion of women and men who would be recognized as highly skilled migrants is almost gender-balanced. In the United States in 2000, one of the main destination countries of foreign human capital, just over a quarter of all immigrants held tertiary degrees and the difference between men and women with such degrees was just one percentage point (p. 9). According to Dumont et al.'s (2007) calculations highly skilled women migrants actually outnumber skilled migrant men in several European countries such as the UK, Sweden, Germany, France, Switzerland and Italy. This raises the sceptre of brain drain and the extent to which such migration is leading to a loss of human capital amongst countries of the global South.

The concerns of the authors of this report are partially correct. Although there is some literature on gender and the brain drain but this work has, on the whole, been sparse (although see for instance, Dodson 2002). In this chapter I want to address this lacuna through an exploration of how this invisibility is produced in the context of female health workers in two relevant literatures– the analysis of female migration and that of brain drain. Analysis of

female migration from the global South to the North often adopts a feminising optic so that women who do not experience migration as inherently feminising are often ignored. On the other hand existing discourses around immigration and labour market participation of migrants in sectors such as medicine are usually framed as brain drain and are often presented as gender-neutral or explicitly focus on the experiences of male migrants. However, gender relations, gendered hierarchies and career issues that face such migrant women may be significantly different from those affecting women other migrants, as I will go on to suggest.

The paper is divided into four further sections. The next two sections identify two relevant literatures, both of which have not fully considered the presence of women as gendered subjects – that on female migration and that on brain drain. Thus the second section explores some characteristics of the literature on female migration, especially as it pertains to migrant women moving from the Global South to the North. The third section looks at the literature on brain drain to understand how and why questions of gender are often obscured in these discussions. It explores how invisibility of female migrants in such migration is secured. The following section looks at why it is important to insert women into such narratives through a discussion of three issues that are rarely studied but may be opened up if gender differences were taken up as a serious analytical vector in migration of the skilled. It suggests some of the conceptual issues that the presence of women in such sectors throws up and the assumptions that they disrupt. The final section offers a conclusion.¹

¹ This paper offers a critical discussion of the brain drain literature. I have not explored the empirical or policy aspects of the brain drain in this paper but for such discussions see Raghuram 2006, for instance. The paper also limits itself to exploring gender biases within discussions of brain drain and does not explicitly question the use of brain drain frameworks to discuss migration. This is discussed elsewhere (Raghuram forthcoming).

It is worth stating at the outset that there is some literature on gender and knowledge migration within Europe. For instance, Louise Ackers has, in a series of interventions, highlighted the limits to gendered mobility amongst highly skilled scientists and other academics (2004). Eastern Europe, in particular, has come to be seen as a place of exit for skilled migrants but there is much less knowledge about migrant women from the global South who move to OECD countries. One exception is Docquier et al.'s study (2008) which suggests that women's brain drain migration is much higher from countries where women have less access to education. However, this is not to say that there is no interest in the forms of brain drain migration that are highly gendered. Specifically, the migration of nurses (usually women) has come to be seen as one of the most significant elements of brain drain but in such analysis migrants are not seen as women – it is their femininity that is often submerged. Finally, it is interesting that Europe has taken a lead in debating issues of gender and brain drain migration (Docquier et al. 2007; Dumont et al. 2007). In the 1970s many of the anxieties around brain drain posited Europe alongside countries of the global South as places from which people left to work in well-funded institutions in the US. As the analytical focus on brain drain has resurfaced Europe has been repositioned as a place of destination, not just of exit.

Migration literatures and the feminizing optic

Interest in international labour migration of women is not a new phenomenon, yet it is only recently that such migration has received sustained interest from researchers (Castles and Miller 2003). It is the great increase in such migration over the past decade, particularly those

moving to take up jobs as domestic workers, as sex workers and as nurses that has excited much interest amongst those researching migration (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003; UNIFEM 2002). Feminist researchers trying to get to grips with the conditions that stimulate such migration have examined the ways in which pressures both in the source and the destination countries have led to a growth in female labour migration (Lan 2003; Parreñas 2001). They argue that these pressures are alive at a number of levels, from the individual to the familial, the national through to the international, and the pressures at all of these levels overlap and intersect to trigger migration (Sassen 2000).

While sustained interest in international female labour migration is a relatively new occurrence, that on women moving as family migrants has a much longer history (Phizacklea 1983). In this research the familial provides the route of entry into the debate but does not limit the terms in which their migration is understood. Thus, excellent work by feminist researchers has highlighted that women who migrate as wives and mothers play a part in their non-feminised roles, as factory workers, entrepreneurs and as activists (Morokvasic 1984).

In both debates, it is their gender roles that condition women's entry into a country and thus into debates on migration. For instance, gender appears to be a guiding principle in determining the nature of work (domestic work, nursing), and the terms of incorporation into both the labour market and the destination country. It also influences women's mode of entry in the family labour migration literature as women move as wives of the principal migrant. Femininities thus write the conditions in which migration occurs. It appears then that such femininities are necessary for women's migration to be considered seriously. Women, who enter male-dominated sectors of the labour market, therefore, rarely receive attention,

especially within the European context (Raghuram 2008; and for the US context see Radhakrishnan 2008).

A gender-neutral brain drain

Although there has been a history of international migration of skilled people from 'East to West', from 'South to North' and from the colonies and newly independent states to the imperial centres, the proportion of such migrants in overall population movements remains small. Arguably, the impact of skilled migration has however, been greater than that warranted by the number of migrants, a proposition which has fuelled significant amounts of research for many years (Salt 1992; Iredale 2001; Ouaked 2002). The analysis of the effects of such migration has been conceptualised under the rubric of brain drain (Kupfer et al. 2004). It has been argued elsewhere (Raghuram 2000) that there are two primary theoretical lenses through which this migration is being understood - modernisation and globalisation. Although there are overlaps in these forms of analysis, some distinctive elements too can be uncovered.

Much of the research carried out more recently on skilled migration conceptualises migrants as agents of globalisation. However, debates on such migration predate the emergence of the globalisation thesis. For instance, through the 1960s and 1970s, skilled migration was understood and analysed as 'brain drain' migration (see for instance, Bhagwati 1978). These debates focused on the impact of highly skilled mobility, particularly the movement of scientific personnel, researchers and doctors from the global South countries to the North but also from UK to the US (Mejía 1979). In the former instance, it was the impact on development of Third World countries that was of interest, where development was viewed

through the modernisation lens.² The questions that were asked concern the effects of skilled emigration or 'brain drain' on source countries, of 'brain gain' on destination countries, and of 'brain waste', or in other words, the loss of human capital due to the lack of recognition and utilisation of skills, for both the individual and the destination and source countries, although some positive effects of such migration such as 'transfer of knowledge' and the flow of remittances too have come to be recognised (Docquier and Rapoport 2004; Lethbridge 2004; Levy 2003).

In the 'globalization thesis' the movement of skilled people is tied to the rapid growth in the movement of goods, services, information and capital. Studies focusing on the migration of skilled personnel employed in transnational financial corporations and the IT sector have dominated this literature (Koser and Salt 1997; Xiang 2001). These studies are theoretically and analytically linked to the large and growing literature on globalization. Skilled migration involves the movement of people as actors facilitating and regulating flows of money and goods in an increasingly interdependent world (Beaverstock 1994, 1996). It is argued that such movement is not simply unidirectional but multilateral often involving moving back to the source country, frequently as employees of firms in the original destination country (Saxenian 2000) leading migration researchers to claim that brain drain was being replaced by brain circulation (Gwynne 1999). Brain circulation unlike brain drain offers some advantages to source countries in terms of returns to human capital.

² This is partly a reflection of the period when some of the analysis took place, i.e. the 1960s and 1970s when the modernisation paradigm was particularly influential in the development literature. Brain drain has once again come back to focus and this time the interest is less likely to wane (Bach 2004).

The discourse of brain circulation has been useful for understanding the experiences of migrant IT professionals and of scientists (Saxenian 2000) but has rarely been applied to understanding the experiences of professionals in some of the 'traditional sectors' of the brain drain literature, i.e. medicine and nursing. First, although the conditions of recruitment of migrant medical workforce have led to the circulation of migrants, the temporariness of this form of migration is different from that experienced by IT workers and scientists. Systemic knowledges play a greater part in medical migration so that complete and frequent transference between different health systems cannot be achieved at the same frequency as in the case of, say, IT workers. Secondly, both the state and professional bodies have large investments in enabling and regulating the movement of health workers, unlike in the IT sector, so that mobility itself takes much longer to organise and arrange. As a result, the extent and nature of mobility of medical professionals is different to that of IT workers. Finally, its effects are also much more asymmetrical (Pang, Langsang and Haines 2003; Marhcal and Kegels 2003). The negative effects of the migration of nurses and doctors not only on the skills base of the source country but also on the provision of health care in the source country (Kingma 2006), alongside the fact that much of the movement of professionals is from the South to the North has meant that such migration raises important ethical questions (Friedman 2004; Chikanda 2004). The ethics of migration are conceptualized within the terms of redistributive justice - it is argued that the erosion of human capital has a direct impact on the provision of welfare and can be measured in terms of falling health indicators (Stillwell and Adams 2004). Thus, health workers migration can lead to the loss of health know how, and thus, to poorer health, even higher mortality rates. Moreover, the cost of training such professionals is being borne by the poorer countries to the advantage of the richer ones so that the need for policy to arrest this process has become pressing. Intervention to promote a more ethical policy is largely being taken up by the

destination state both through its immigration and its labour market policies (Stillwell et al. 2004). In the UK, for instance, the instrument that is being used to achieve this is guidelines on ethical recruitment, which enforces bans on recruitment from some countries (Department of Health 2001; Willetts and Martineau 2004).³

The ethical issues that surround the migration of skilled professionals in some professions have meant that brain drain continues to be a preferred model for understanding their mobility. It is also widely adopted by policy makers⁴ and therefore the contours of this debate, its markers, absences and presences are significant in understanding how migration of skilled persons is analysed. In particular, we need to broaden the frame in which we understand brain drain and to be reflexive about the co-ordinates that surround this debate. These are the issues to which I turn next.

Scalar emphases

First, the brain drain discourse is marked by a focus on particular scales, in particular, an overwhelming focus on the nation state. This is the scale at which optimum migration, ethical policy and notions of development are mobilised. The term brain drain is employed in order to take account of the effects of migration on source states and policies are formulated in order to understand how to limit or overcome these negative effects, through a variety of measures including limiting migration from countries where the effects of migration are most likely to be detrimental to the nation's health, by encouraging or enforcing return, or by building in linkages between source and destination countries so that the source countries are somewhat recompensed for the losses that they bear. More recently, there has been increasing

³ However the guidelines are a voluntary code of conduct.

⁴ I was, for instance, involved in the Health Workers Migration Community of Practice's online discussions in April 2008.

interest in research and training initiatives or tie-ups between institutions in different countries that offer such feedback loops (Ouaked 2002). Newer versions are attempting to stem brain drain through diaspora programmes that link migrants with those left behind and facilitate flows of knowledge and resources (Meyer and Brown 1999). In most of these programmes state policies become the primary route to achieving these aims, either through direct regulation or preferential funding for particular programmes. These policies are largely instituted by the destination state, albeit very often at the instigation of source states.⁵ For example, the South African government has exerted pressure on the UK government to limit recruitment of health professionals from South Africa. As such both the data sources on which brain drain discourses draws and the policy initiatives that are adopted operate primarily at the level of the nation state (Ray et al. 2006: Stark 2004).

While the primary agent in such analysis is the state, it is the individual migrant who is acted upon. Policy interventions implemented at a national level aim to alter the individual's migration decisions - to encourage them to stay behind in their home country, or to return to it after a period abroad. Towards this, the brain drain discourse also attempts to come to terms with the individual's aspirations for movement and their personal motivations for migration. Thus, the brain drain migrant, more than any other, is an autonomous rational individual - after all 'the brain' is what marks brain drain migration. Underpinned by Enlightenment notions of the individual - of the bounded, autonomous self, moving freely and rationally within the world - brain drain migrants are conceptualised as both unencumbered and disembodied. The decision to move becomes an exercise in rational discrimination. 'Modern' states require modern subjects, able to make a rational decision about their own interests and

⁵ Multilateral attempts include the UNDP's Transfer of Knowledge through Expatriate Networks (TOKTEN) programme.

both the mode of analysis and instruments for limiting brain drain presume the brain drain migrants' investment in rational knowledges, in evaluative judgements and informed engagement. As 'modernity has given science the status of the only truly public knowledge' (Pellizzoni 2003: 331) scientists are the ultimate modern subjects. As independent researchers they make informed impersonal decisions based on scientific knowledge and dismiss non-scientific knowledge 'as particular, private, unverifiable, and intertwined with non-cognitive interests' (Pellizzoni 2003: 331). These are the value commitments that are embedded in the brain drain migrants. The literature also presumes an aspirational individual, one who charts out their course, and has particular stakes in the 'modern', particularly as understood in the context of occupational mobility (Attafi 1994; Kuska and Gyarfasova 1997). Thus the brain drain analysis of the mobility of the highly skilled attempts to recognise migrants' agency, and the ability of the individual to overcome structural impediments to personal development through migration (Vizi 1993).

The brain drain migrant is also seen as making these decisions within the context of the labour market. The labour market presents one of the meso-levels of analysis that Findlay and Li (1998) urge us to adopt in understanding professional migration. Brain drain migration is inevitably influenced by the structures of the labour market - its opportunity structures and the career progression and blockages that ensue.

Although the level of the nation state is still significant in regulating migration the globalising imperative is catching up here too. Perhaps, the most significant mode in which this is occurring is through the World Trade Organisation's General Agreement on Trade in Services, an agreement, which was negotiated by member states in 1995 (Shifrin 2002) to liberalise service delivery globally. As Wade (2003) conclusively argues, this has particular

implications for the flow of capital investment from the First World to the Third, and the circulation of service deliverers including doctors with detrimental effects for the poor. The possibilities offered by multilateral organisations such as the United Nations in helping to set up return flow of investments and knowledge to the Third World are increasingly being recognised. Moreover, organisations like the WHO and the ILO (Wickramasekara 2003) have been increasingly involved in correcting the distributional imbalances in health that are seen as part of the brain drain.

Gender biases

This scalar emphasis misses many things but also contains significant gender biases. For instance, brain drain migration, unlike brain circulation migration of workers employed primarily in the private sector, is much more likely to be influenced by regulating bodies and by professional organisations. These organisations implicitly shape migration through their ability to award internationally accredited professional qualifications. In the case of doctors it is the qualifications awarded by the Royal Colleges in the various medical specialities that may influence migration because of their 'long reach' (Aluwihare 2002). Their imperial legacy means that they have both credibility and transferability across different parts of the old empire. Their link to a very recent powerful empire also means that this reach overstretches beyond the geographical boundaries of the old empire - it has a wider currency and facilitates and smoothes out professional mobility as well as geographical mobility. Thus, doctors who have a qualification from the Royal Colleges are usually offered a higher wage in parts of the Commonwealth and also in some of the Gulf countries. Focusing on the nation state does not take account of the social and historical formation of international labour markets and the ways in which nationally embedded regulators gain international power because of historical forces. To recognise the constitutive role that organisations such as the

Royal Colleges play in maintaining practices and structures that shape the nature of work in this sector is therefore essential. It tells us something of the hierarchies, the power relations and, therefore, the aspirations and the notions of career and success that shape brain drain migration.

These are often gendered hierarchies, as the professional organisations that shape what constitutes a medical career remain male-dominated. Women continue to be under-represented in the higher levels of administration on academic boards and grant awarding bodies (Royal College of Physicians 2001). Working practices, benchmarks of achievement and, therefore, ideas of success are set by such institutions and will influence how work is experienced. The hierarchical and patriarchal nature of professional organisations also holds true in the home countries. Hence, women's mobility will also be shaped by the nature of the profession and the different gender norms that are adopted in the source and destination countries.

The primary geographic scales at which we analyse brain drain also limits the possibilities for understanding the role of women in 'brain drain' migration. In its focus on the nation state, the literature does not recognise the different relationships that men and women may have with the state (Yuval-Davis 1997). Secondly, cultures of work splinter across a range of vectors that are internal to the nation state - along lines of religion, class and region amongst others (Wibulpolprasert and Pachanee 2008). Some of these differences may be more important for women than men, as women's participation in the workforce is more likely to be regulated by social mores occurring at the interstices of these differences. For example, a study of Pakistani nurses found that non-Muslim women and Ismaili women were more likely to take up nursing than Non-Ismaili or Muslim women (French, Watters and Matthews 1994).

Similarly Sheba George's study shows us that Malayali Christian women are over-represented among Indian nurses (2000) while gynaecology and obstetrics are female dominated in some countries such as India but not across the globe, leading to marked shifts in the gendering of such subspecialties in countries of destination too (Rajesh and Nagrani 2003). It is unclear whether such differences are also seen amongst another category of brain drain migrants - doctors - but it does point to the need to look more closely at the way in which work is socially constructed within the nation - in different regions. The complex intersections of gender and class will influence who migrates and which source communities are most likely to be affected by migration.

As a result the national scale is inadequate for understanding how 'brain drain' migration occurs or is experienced.⁶ It presumes a continuity of interests within individual nation states - both source and destination - which cannot be empirically validated. The interests of national governments and the professional bodies are also not necessarily co-terminus. In the UK the national government's attempt to deliver health services and expand the numbers entering the labour market can often run counter to the wishes of regulatory bodies to maintain standards. The ability of such bodies to provide accreditation and to broker entry into work and, thus, the size of the labour market, and the conditions under which such labour is performed can mean that their interests conflict with those of the Department of Health. These conflicts also affect the relationship between labour unions such as the British Medical Association and the Department of Health. Moreover, the Ministries of Health, Finance and Foreign Affairs or International Development themselves have conflicting views and

⁶ Findlay and Li (1998) suggest that a migration channels approach focuses on the meso scale and is more appropriate for those who migrate professionally. However, there has been little work exploring how these processes are figured in professional migration.

investments in the migration of health workers (Stillwell and Adams 2004). These departments and organisations also adopt different attitudes and have different investments in women's work and their participation labour market so that some may see migrant women as having no specific interests because of their gender, while others may see them primarily as gendered bodies or as targets of welfare. Similarly, in source countries too the rhetoric of limiting brain drain migration expressed by national governments may not find sympathy everywhere. As health services are often provided within national formations, and the capacity of the state to employ doctors is crucial for doctors seeking employment, the impact of structural adjustment and the shrinking welfare state can mean that it is not necessarily in the interest of doctors to keep their colleagues in their home country. For instance, in the context of limited state capacity, small health services and therefore few jobs, it may not be in the interests of those within the profession to stop brain drain migration (Chikanda 2004). Migration of a few can reduce the competition for scarce jobs so that some doctors may well seek to encourage the migration of others while paying lip service to the state's rhetoric of controlling migration.

As the controls over migration are not merely enforced through the state but are influenced by discourses circulating within the professional communities the importance of such processes cannot be underestimated. Increasingly, scientific activity is analysed as being embedded within the processes of scientific communities. The sociology of science and technology has allowed us to understand the collective nature of knowledge creation and the role of scientific communities in these processes (Meyer and Brown 1999). It has made us recognise the importance of recognising professional groups such as doctors and nurses not only as people who share technical knowledge but also as part of socio-cognitive

communities. Such communities have a range of collective knowledge and practices that are highly specialised and influence what it means to be a member of that profession.t.

Within this landscape of work we will undoubtedly see gendered hierarchies at play as skills are embodied in gendered human beings who move through gender-selective and gender-discriminatory labour markets, both in the source countries and in countries of destination. Women and men do not have equal access to skills, and even those with equal or equivalent skills have differential access to jobs, to promotion, to wages and to human capital development, so that women face career blocks in ways that men do not. They may find it more difficult than men to gain access to the labour market or to find employment that is commensurate with their skills. These gendered inequalities in both entry to the labour market and progression within it shapes the experience of female brain drain migrants. Moreover, these processes may also vary between feminised sectors and male-dominated sectors of the labour market. Thus the experience of gender selectivity and discrimination will be distinctive for nurses and doctors, for instance.

The family and or the household is another level at which gender differences are played out, and these differences influence both men and women's ability and inclination to migrate. The brain drain literature has still not fully engaged with the large and expanding literature on households as locales where decisions about migration are taken (Bailey and Boyle 2004). Feminists, in particular have argued that both gender and generation affect the ability of individuals to influence decisions, and to make them (Kofman et al. 2000). Men and women do not have equal ability to decide to move, and migration decisions are products of unequal bargaining between different members of a household. The micro-level, functionalist analysis of decision-making precludes an understanding of these complex bargaining processes, which

occur at a different scale. Thus, although Zweig (1997) in his research on Chinese emigrants to the U.S notes that the presence of wives abroad greatly increased the desire of migrants to stay abroad, he does not explore the way in which family migration influences the desire to return among skilled migrants.

Moreover, brain drain migration of women can be obscured because family migrants are not seen to participate in the labour market so that professional women who may often enter as family migrants rather than primary labour migrants are simply not counted as brain drain migrants. This is particularly important in some sectors such as medicine because medical professionals often marry other medical professionals and men are more likely than women to be lead migrants (but see Raghuram 2004)⁷. Moreover, as skilled migrants they quickly accrue the resources to bring their families along so that the migration of doctors is often family migration. Women doctors who enter through the family reunification route and not on work permits can simply disappear from the analysis. On the other hand, basing brain drain studies on numbers of doctors who enter the medical labour market too fails to take account of female migrants who may be unable to join the labour market after migration because they have little ability to garner resources to re-qualify or work in the new country. Re-qualification may depend on migrant women getting the time to study and money to attend courses and pay tuition fees for qualifying exams. This will involve negotiating childcare and household responsibilities with a partner - who is also adjusting to a changed labour market, and may also be studying for examinations, either for re-qualifying or obtaining further qualifications (Raghuram 2004). Women find this harder to achieve as they often continue to bear the responsibilities for social reproduction of the family in the post-migration scenario.

The autonomous individual of the brain drain literature too needs further attention. The notion of the autonomous self is central to modernity and to the brain drain literature. Yet such autonomy is difficult for women to achieve. In many societies ideologies of caring and having children can themselves be an accomplishment of gender for women (Aranda 2003: 616). Nurturing and reproductive labour are, by definition, about co-dependence (Hollway 2006) so that women find it difficult to ever achieve autonomy. The autonomous subject of the brain drain is therefore imagined as having the characteristics of a masculine subject.

Moreover, this autonomous subject is one who is to be acted upon, a subject to be manipulated through national policy because the analysis of brain drain migration, more than most other migration analysis, carries with it ethical and political stances and a policy imperative. It is, therefore, more crucial for such analysis to take better account of people's subjectivities and the riven and shifting nature of the subject. The ambiguities and the ambivalences that brain drain migrants experience, their mixed emotions, have to be grasped if their motivations for migration are to be properly recognised. To consider migrant decision-making as migration strategies implies an instrumentality and pre-thinking that sits comfortably with the modern scientific notion of a medical migrant but fails to capture the complexity of migration decisions - the impulsive, the chaotic, the contingent, the conditional, the coercive. Brain waste too does not fully encapsulate the toil and the struggle that surrounds mobility, the failed aspirations and expectations, and particularly the re-routing of these aspirations to the next generation (McLaren and Dyck 2003). It misses not only the cultural but also the emotional elements that make up the subject of brain drain migration.

⁷ For instance, doctors who were part of 'medical couples' were seen to alter their jobs and thus, their immigration status in order to maximise their career. What was also clear was that very often women doctors

In sum, there are many different ways in which the analysis of brain drain migration adopts scalar levels that are inappropriate or insensitive to the characteristics of female migration. In this context it is easy then to overlook female brain drain migrants.

Functionalism and its gender limits

The brain drain literature is also marked by a functionalism where the brain drain migrant is largely seen to be an economic actor. This economism leads to a focus on the labour market as the primary unit that influences migration decisions. Moreover, the individual who moves through these labour markets is usually considered to be ungendered. They often masquerade as dependent on human capital. This validation of a meritocratic version of knowledge is, according to Boyer (2006), a part of professional knowledges more generally. He argues in the context of East European journalists that professional discourse 'appears to dissolve or to subsume modes of knowing that are not oriented to epistemic priorities of professionalism' (p. 178) so that the role that other forms of social distinction play in producing professionals is often obscured. Hence the discourse on brain drain fails to recognise the complex and differentiated nature of gendered disadvantages in labour markets around the globe. In the context of migration, a complex interplay of social and cultural positionings, such as ethnicity, gender and age (Hawthorne 1997) operate to structure labour market disadvantages. For instance, the utilisation of migrants' skills in the destination country could be influenced by the intersection of racism and sexism and by ethnocide gender stereotyping (Ip 1993; Man 1995).

were able to become lead migrants because they were in specialties that had labour shortages (Raghuram, 2004).

Economic functionalism also misses the multi-dimensionality of the migration process, the intersecting, messy 'chanciness' and the chaotic nature of some migration decisions. The purposive rationality that is often characteristic of brain drain can be limiting. Rather, migration decisions are often multi-layered and relational, especially for women whose migration decision-making may have many axes and values. As Carling (2001: 17) argues, migration is not simply a demographic event, a move from A to B, but a parcel of expected actions and consequences. A person's wish to migrate will often be based on ideas about a culturally defined 'emigration project', but if they do migrate, their own particular experience is likely to diverge from this ideal-type version. Hagerstrand (1996: 653) refers to such projects as 'ready-made blueprints, preserved in the store-house of culture' (Carling 2001: 17).

In sum, like other modernisation theses, the analysis of brain drain has been economically driven and has privileged mobility in the context of the labour market. It has largely neglected the social and cultural characteristics of brain drain, including gender, as it is professedly gender-neutral. Even where other factors influencing decision-making are considered, such as political conditions and educational opportunities for children (Cheng and Yang 1998), gender differences in the experience of 'political conditions', of social and cultural conditions and the possibility of attaining skills are not adequately taken into account. Gender differences in human capital development, in the aspirations people have, and of their ability to achieve these aspirations, too are ignored. The terms of the brain drain debate have, therefore, led to a relative neglect of the presence of women in accounts of this form of skilled migration. In the next section I explore three issues that may be opened up through the interrogation of gender in sectors that are usually treated in terms of brain drain: the contrasting experiences of migrant men and migrant women in a given employment

sector; the differences between the experiences of migrant and non-migrant women; and finally the differences between the experiences of migrant women in different sectors of the economy.

Taking gender seriously

As suggested earlier, analysis of female migration has often failed to address the presence of women in sectors usually seen to be part of brain drain migration. The feminising optic in most discussions of female migration have meant that the experiences of women who occupy male dominated sectors of the labour market are rarely discussed. On the other hand, although there is a large literature on female migration in some aspects of brain drain literature such as nursing, migrants are in this instance, rarely analysed as women (as stated above). Rather, the analytical emphasis seems to veer towards the national scale. In this section I want to explore three specific issues that have rarely been addressed because of the dominance of these conceptual approaches but which would add richness to any understanding of migration from the global South to the North. As suggested earlier, the importance of Europe as destination (rather than sending) area has meant that this analysis is especially timely. I also want to argue that taking gender seriously within the work places that brain drain migrants inhabit can lead to new questions being asked.

First, there is little research that addresses the ways in which migrants have to negotiate that *gender differentials in work experience and in rewards obtained* that already exist in destination countries. The labour markets that migrant women enter are often gender coded in their own specific ways. Thus, there is a growing literature on gender differentials in employment and opportunities amongst those with similar qualifications and educational opportunities (Purcell 2002). What happens to migrant women who enter these parts of the

labour market? For instance, Purcell (2002) points out that both men and women have higher earnings in the male-dominated sectors. However, even within these male-dominated sectors there is a gendering of tasks and differences in the extent to which women reach the higher echelons of Human Resources Management and other managerial posts (Purcell 2002). Women usually earn less than men in similar posts do. They also appear to be more likely to work in smaller rather than larger organisations and in the voluntary or public sectors rather than in the private sector. This sectoral difference intersects with occupational differences to map onto pay differentials and job security. For instance, women working for smaller organisations seem to be disadvantaged compared to those in larger organisations.

How do these patterns map on to the experiences of migrant women? And does migration alter these patterns of inequality? A contextualised analysis of mobility, sectoral employment and occupations is largely limited to migrant nurses but such an analysis can be illustrative of the limits of transposing wider results on women's occupational experiences to that of migrant women. It can also highlight the ways in which the 'migration penalty'⁸ alters the relative benefits and costs of particular organisational contexts.

The nursing sector (one marked by relatively high levels of gender concentration) in the UK offers one site to explore these issues. In the UK, the wage differentials between private hospitals and the government-owned and run National Health Service may be small for non-

⁸ The term migration penalty, adapted from the term 'ethnic penalty' suggests the forms of disadvantage that result from the migration process. This is not to suggest that migrants are all or only penalized but to suggest that there are considerable losses (as well as some gains) in migrating and that they are constituted through a complex intercalation of social formations and migratory processes.

migrant workers but amongst migrants they may mask deeper forms of inequality. The private care sector is becoming increasingly dependent on migrant nurses who undertake 'adaptation courses'⁹ in care homes and then become trapped in the sector. For migrant nurses then, public sector employment is a mark that their qualifications and experience have been recognised. Hence, it is the public sector that offers higher wages and greater job security than the private sector. However, there is little analysis of how the experiences of female nurse migrants compares with those of male nurse migrants as there is very little acknowledgement of the presence of the latter (but see Winkelmann-Gleed 2006). It appears that the normative gender assumptions preclude any detailed analysis of the experience of male migrants, let alone a comparison between male and female migrant nurses' experiences.

Analyses of the complexities of these intersections between gender, organisations and the workplace have been much more limited outside the nursing sector. The focus on female migrants employed in informal, casualised sectors such as domestic work and sex work means that questions around gender differentials in the workplace are rarely asked. Moreover, there is little work that attempts to compare the gendered experiences and rewards of work in the same sector among migrant and non-migrant populations.

Second, there is also very little on how female migrants negotiate *gender relations* in formalised workplace. In much of the literature on female migrants gender relations are interrogated primarily through the familial lens. This has been made easy because for many

⁹ An adaptation programme is a programme of supervised practice designed for nurses trained outside the EEA who want to become registered on UK's Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) professional register. It assists internationally qualified nurses to gain the requisite supervisory experience to establish themselves within the UK health care service.

migrant women from the global South, the household is the setting for providing waged labour. As domestic workers and even as sex workers, it is familial relations that are brought under the spotlight. Feminist interest in domestic work, for instance, has focused on the challenges that an occupation where women employ other women poses for the sisterhood of women, and hence on the classed and racialised differences among women (Giles and Arat-Koc 1994). The inadequacies of men's contributions to household work in the employing households, it was argued, necessitated the employment of other women so that employment of domestic workers becomes a conservative alternative to challenging patriarchal norms (Gregson and Lowe 1994). More recently, as domestic work arrangements have been stretched across space through the conceptualisation of care chains, men's failure to contribute to the households that migrant workers leave behind too have been highlighted (Hochschild 2000; Yeates 2004).

In the brain drain sectors, the family does not occupy centrestage as the broker of gender relations, nor the household become the all-important site where such working relations are played out. For instance, nursing demands women to negotiate gendered hierarchies in hospital settings. This requires a range of technical skills that imply negotiating specific hierarchies (George 2000). The definition of some of these skills and the recognition and rewards for performing such skills are likely to vary between countries of destination and countries where the nursing skills were acquired. But it also requires migrants to draw upon caring and nurturing skills which are often very feminised skills, which too may have place-specific manifestations. The forms of femininities that are called upon and how they are mobilised by nurses in different settings, are likely to vary but how they impact on work are rarely addressed. To summarise, a focus on feminised sectors has also gone hand-in-hand with very specific ways of addressing gender relations as they influence migrants. Most work

focuses on gender relations as they are played out within the household (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2005). They leave unasked a range of questions about migrant women's experience of work.

Finally, by thinking about gender issues as they pertain to brain drain, one may also be able to insert women into discourses around the brain. On the whole, discussions of brain drain take the skills involved in developing the brain drain for granted and focus instead on the losses to national repositories of brains due to mobility. However, men and women also seek to be mobile because of their desire to further their knowledge and thus their careers. Inserting gender issues into discourses of brain drain challenges the exclusivity of discourses of career satisfaction, aspirations and promotion to male migrants (as in much of the skilled literature), a ground that they increasingly share with non-migrant women. In much of the existing literature on migrant women, their participation in the labour market is underwritten by the need to survive some combination of global inequities (Sassen 2003), troubled gendered/political regimes, or conflictual families. Women's mobility seems to be driven by economic imperatives rather than the language of career or individual aspirations, or their aspirations appear to be embedded within familial objectives. Women may move in order to benefit the families they leave behind or bring with them, or in order to escape from difficult or exploitative familial situations. There is little space for women who want to improve their skills or better their career through migration, especially if they have arrived from the global South (although in the European context see Oliver et al., this volume). Yet, narratives of work appear to be becoming increasingly recognised and validated for non-migrant women in the global North (McDowell 2001) and human capital enhancement has remained the prerogative of male migrants (DTI and Home Office 2002). However, migration may also be one route into circumventing career blockages in the home country. This is exemplified by Ono and Piper's (2004) study of Japanese women who move to the U.S. to study in order to

break out of the cycle of disadvantage caused by gender discriminatory practices within education which then translate into gender discrimination in employment. It appears then that migrant women too may have career aspirations and that their movements may not be driven by survival but because work is increasingly central to women's identities in the middle classes around the world. But there are very few accounts of the immigration of women which charts such a story. By suggesting that migrant women may invest in work per se and not just see work as a route to survival (Sassen 2003), we can expand the scope within which female migrant identities may be understood and ensure that narratives of economic survival and of familial hardship do not constrain our analysis of female migration.

Conclusion

Although it is clear that women do migrate through a variety of routes and in a range of roles, in most instances, migrant women's narratives are ultimately mediated through their feminine roles, especially as they relate to women's movement from the global South to the North. Both in narratives of labour migration and in family reunification, female migrants who move are rarely recognised as part of brain drain unless they operate within feminised sectors of the labour market such as nursing. As European countries have become important destination countries for such migrants, these issues have become pressing for European academics (Docquier et al 2007; Dumont et al 2007)

On the other hand, the analysis of skilled migrants from the South to the North has often been seen under the rubric of brain drain migration, especially as they relate to the health sectors. This analysis has remained largely gender-neutral. However, welfare sectors such as nursing and medicine are both sectors where women migrants are present and, in some instances, dominate. As a result, both the state, through its immigration policies, and professional

organisations through their systems of accreditation of skills, act as gatekeepers to the participation of migrants in the welfare sectors of the labour market. This affects women disproportionately as a larger percentage of skilled women (than men) who migrate are entering such sectors. These are the brain drain sectors within which women find jobs so that the gender relations and gendered rewards as they pertain to these sectors need particular scrutiny, both in the context of source and of destination countries.

This chapter, therefore, argues for the need to reconfigure the modes of analysis adopted both in understanding female migration and in thinking about brain drain to recognise the gendered subjectivities that are part of the 'brain drain' flows. It suggests that the analysis of brain drain migration should move away from gender neutrality because the terms of participation of migrants in labour markets, both in source and in destination countries, are deeply gendered. They carry with them traces of social formations such as class as it intersects with gender, but this fertile intersection has been largely ignored in migration research.

Recognising the importance of brain in the mobility of women also inserts such women into discussions of work and the identificatory spaces that work provides for women worldwide. Moreover, inserting migrant women's desires within the framework of career makes room for moving beyond both the household and the nation state, and instead situating it within the labour market.

Ultimately it could also lead to interrogating the logic of 'brain drain', and to questioning the spatial ontologies that are being mobilised in current thinking around the brain drain. It can lead to the adoption of a quizzical approach to discussions of brain drain and the contours of

this debate as it is currently configured. This has to be an important element for migration researchers globally because the policy focus on such migration is likely to be sustained in future years (Bach 2004).

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