Flexibility of women in the information age sociology

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In the Information Age in which we are soon situated (Rifkin, 1995) , how do we measure the promises and dangers offered to adult females by information and communicating engineerings (ICTs) ? Advocates of technological determinism point out the emancipatory potency posed by ICTs on adult females. Evidence of this is the feminisation of the information society as concern procedure outsourcing (BPO) companies have become the biggest employer of adult females (ILO, 2009) . Technology has besides remodeled the nature of work as the physical barriers of the workplace are torn down with minutess performed over the Internet. Many people, particularly adult females, are engaged in telecommute work or telework. Considered as the " holy grail " of work-life balance concerns for adult females, telecommute work has become an progressively popular work form for female parents. The thought is with telecommute work, generative and productive work is merged, emancipating adult females from the public/private divide. Prevailing literature on gender and engineering has highlighted the double-edged character of ICTs in the sense that it is potentially emancipating to some adult females on the one manus and reproduces societal inequalities in digital signifier on the other manus. Some bookmans have expressed their anxiousness over the ubiquitousness and high outlooks of society, particularly immature people and adult females, over the information economic system (Pendakur & A ; Harris, 2005 ; Wajcman, 2009) . Among feminist bookmans, the analysis of engineering with gender as precedence has been mostly met a " general somberness "

(Mitter & A ; Rowbotham, 1995) . Some of these positions include engineering being represented as support of the master-slave relationship of work forces and adult females (Pringle, 1989, as cited in Mitter & A ; Rowbotham, 1995) .

Part 1 provides a general background of telework, some definitions, labour flexibilization as applied in the Philippine context and some literature foregrounding the positive facets of telework.

Part 2 presents a reappraisal of Marxist positions on gender and engineering with a focal point on the constructs of bureau, adult females ' s emancipation, and the private household.

1. Telework in the context of globalisation

Much of the literature on telework has been theorized from the American and European position (Bittman, Rice, & A ; Wajcman, 2004) . In order to contextualize this review to reflect the worlds of Filipino adult females, the treatment will be framed in relation to globalisation and multinational capital.

1. 1 Definitions of telework

The term " telework " or " teleworking " originated from the construct of " electronic cottaging " characterized by " computing machine mediated work for both corporate employees and freelance persons " (Orser, 1991, p. 22) . A more brief definition is laid out in a UK study by the Trades Union Congress which viewed telework as " distance working facilitated by information and communicating engineerings " (Bibby, 1996, p. 3) . Telecommuting can

either be full-time or parttime and many writers have categorized the type and nature of telecommute work as (Bibby, 1996) :

1. Multi-locational telecommuting: work is done partially at place and party at the office. This is normally available to skilled and professional workers and covered by corporate understandings.

2. Telehomeworking: work is done wholly at place. The type of work is insistent and is piece-rate in footings of compensation. Telework on this country is feminized.

3. Freelancer Telecommuting: work is performed besides at place but on a free-lance footing and for multiple employers. Freelance work includes authorship, design, interlingual rendition, or package development) .

4. Mobile telecommuting: this work uses engineering used for gross revenues and selling every bit good as applied scientists or inspectors. (p. 4)

Telecommute work is first and first characterized by " flexibleness. " In the Philippines, telecommuting as a non-traditional work form was introduced by transnational companies which outsourced the voice and back-office procedure in the state every bit early as 1995. It was so treated as " a radical attack " (Panao, n. d.) . The entreaty is readily seen. Without being tied to the office cell or restricted by the working hours, employees had the freedom to work anytime and anyplace with merely a nomadic phone or a computing machine, at the company ' s disbursal. Such descriptions are consistent with Rifkin ' s (1995) hypothesis of the " close workerless economic system " where a lesser figure of lasting workers will shortly be

absorbed in the labour force. Flexibility besides includes the proviso of " flexitime " where employers are physically in the office during extremum hours without completing work at the terminal of concern (Clear & A ; Dickson, 2005) . Another discrepancy of flexible work-patterns is parttime work where personal pick enables one to work for fewer hours out of the regular eight-hour work twenty-four hours. The most recent discrepancy of telework in the state came about with the proliferation of O & A ; O (outsourcing and offshoring) patterns of MNCs along with the execution of structural policies which made the state conducive to outsourcing. During the 1980s to the 1990s, fabrication procedures were outsourced to China, Taiwan, Southeast Asia (including the Philippines) and Mexico. At the beginning of 2000, outsourcing of services took off as a consequence of World Trade Organization (WTO) understandings peculiarly GATS and TRIPS (Ofreneo, 2005) . Free trade understandings led to cheap air travel, inflow of ICTs, and the popularity of the Internet – factors all lending to the smooth flow of multinational capital. Anything that did non necessitate face to confront contact could be outsourced (ILO, 2009) . Foreign companies outsourced non-core procedures to bring forth higher net income borders through lower production costs and inexpensive labour (Beneria, 2003) – factors readily available in the Philippines.

1. 2 Labor flexibilization

The recent popularity towards flexible work forms in the state needs to be discussed vis a vis the phenomenon of labour flexibilization. Flexibilization of labour is " the micro-economic or firm-level facet of the on-going economic restructuring of the universe economic system " (EILER, 2000, p. 3) which is

mutualist with other globalisation strategies such as liberalisation, denationalization, and deregulating. Stripped of its " convenience and freedom " rhetoric, flexibilization is truly merely the accommodation of work forms designed to pull out maximal net incomes (Clear & A ; Dickson, 2005) . The more widely-used strategies in fabricating include casualization/contractualization, labor-only catching, subcontracting, and apprenticeship (Ofreneo, 2005) . Neoliberal globalisation requires readily-available inexpensive labour ; flexibilization is a important driver of that end (EILER, 2000) . As the state ' s labor-surplus economic system became more embedded into the globalized market environment, more adult females became captive into the labour force, their low-paid labour an of import factor to its planetary repute as " internationally competitory " (Eviota, 1994) . Apart from this, adult females were valued for their subject, " manual sleight " (Beneria, 2003) , and because stereotypically, they were " easier to model, larn faster, and endure poorness well " (Eviota, 1994, p. 121) . Labor flexibilization serves the capitalist involvements by take downing the lower limit pay (EILER, 2000) and sabotaging or eliminating trade brotherhoods (Ofreneo, 2005) .

Labor flexibilization poses legion challenges to Filipino workers. As MNCs infusion superprofits through casualization and labour flexibilization, workers experiences increasing occupation insecurity, union-busting, and increasing economic crisis (EILER, 2000) . The construct of teleworking is considered radical in direction rhetoric because it changes the standard definition of work – or as Bibby (1996) considered it, " rewrites the thought of where work takes topographic point " get downing with fabrication until the white-

collar workers in the office composite (p. 14) . With teleworking, workers are dispersed in distant offices or at place where the collectivised work experience is removed. It is in the premiss of this " boundaryless workplace " which capitalists like Hewlett Packard justify the inutility of unionism. Consequently, today ' s flexible work patterns no longer fit brotherhood patterns ; MNCs are more immune of brotherhoods as of all time (Stone, 2005) . Telecommuting as applied in the Philippines is a direction construct patterned after U. S. company patterns that highlight 1) decrease of travel among employees and 2) a win-win state of affairs for both employee and employer (Zambales, Lidasan, & A ; Kawakami, 1995) . This runs in direct contrast to labour flexibilization as used synonymously with contractualization or casualization of labour. While labour flexibilization may earn superprofits for the large capitalists, it increases the development of workers, airss obstructions to their hawkish unionisation, and raises the rate of unemployment and underemployment (EILER, 2000) .

1. 3 Facts and figures on telecommute work in the Philippines

There is an absence of empirical literature or statistics on telecommute work in the Philippines, a fact showing their invisibleness. The survey which perchance arises out of this literature reappraisal would be explorative in that respect. However, the predomination of telecommute work is seen in the BPO industry, of which the Philippines soon leads. The Filipino call centre and BPO industry is a major beginning of employment in the state and one of the largest beginnings of grosss with over US $ 1 billion generated in 2005. But it has been late reported that turnover rate in Philippine call centres

reached 60 to 80 per centum harmonizing to the Call Center Association of the Philippines (CCAP) , apparently the highest worldwide (Bool, 2006) . However, the BPO industry is where the best and brightest alumnuss of the state. Employment in a planetary company attaches a sense of prestigiousness and achievement because of the comparatively high rewards, digital workplaces, and Americanized civilization. Saloma (2006) praised the " gender equalitarianism " of the Philippine ICT industry and suggested that no devaluation of labour exists in the industry every bit far as highly-skilled workers are concerned. While it is accurate to state that workers in the BPO industry earn comparatively higher than the mean Filipino worker but turnover rate is high in the contact companies, with wellness jobs, insistent work, deficiency of worker discretion, non-union policies, and deskilling among the important issues afflicting contact centre workers (Bool, 2006) .

In the Philippines, telecommute work is a fledgeling industry embedded within the BPO industry. There are besides companies concentrating merely on telecommute work such as oDesk. oDesk is a company that accommodates free-lance workers specialising on authorship, redacting, layout, client services, and media services. Compensation is piece-rate or undertaking based. Other telecommute companies compensate free-lance authors or copywriters per word at an norm of 1, 000 words a twenty-four hours. While literature on this is anecdotal, oDesk has reported that Filipino free-lance authors contribute the king of beasts ' s portion of income compared to other nationalities. The study highlighted that the Philippines is

the most promising country of concern in the universe for telecommuting

(Open Access Marketing, 2010) .

1. 4 Promises of telecommute work

Telecommute work has been heralded as the " holy grail " of adult females

taking at work-life balance every bit good as companies taking to better their

net income borders (Elsever, 2010) . This decision is premised on a

deterministic position on engineering which tends to joy over engineering

without oppugning its rightness to different adult females (Chris everts,

1995) . However, engineering used in the domestic domain has

paradoxically increased domestic work, non reduced it. Surveies have found

that in generative work, technological inventions have non reduced adult

females ' s multiple loads (Bittman et al. , 2004) . Consistent with theories

that the debut of engineering or the mechanisation of agribusiness has

displaced adult females from productive work, Cowan (1987) referred to

industrialization as a driver of the " backward hunt for muliebrity " (p. 34) .

The debut of engineering to Third World adult females came with a promise

of economic authorization but this was non plenty as adult females were still

governed by province policies and cultural stereotypes that prevent them

from full entree to engineering and its benefits (Chris everts, 1995) .

Without alterations in division of labour and socialisation forms, adult

females searched " newer ways of being " as engineering reduced their

functions in the family. At least in the Western middle-class context, this

arrested development resulted to a return to domesticity – raising babes,

knitting, baking, turning veggies, and others (Cowan, 1987) . However, the

gender advantages of telecommute work is well-published. From a

managerial position, telework produces organisational advantages in footings of increased productiveness, high occupation satisfaction, and decreased office costs (Clear & A ; Dickson, 2005 ; Cox, 2009) . To adult females particularly, telecommute work offers the benefit of a higher quality of life (Cox, 2009) , greater occupation liberty, reduced commuting clip, and greater work-life balance (Melhem, Tandon, & A ; Morrell, 2008) . However, while teleworking has surely offered adult females a scope of new employment possibilities, the downside is that adult females can be excluded from other better, calling possibilities. Furthermore, alternatively of happening a balance, household duties are combined with paid work, so that adult females end up geting new undertakings on top of the old (Melhem, et al. , 2008) . Far from high-end informational occupations that much of the concern literature undertakings, most telework in Latin American would more accurately be characterized as informational maquiladoras: low rewards, long hours, Taylorist subject, and a hostile anti-union environment (Robinson, 2008) .

2. Marxism, Gender, and ICTs

Central to a Marxist analysis of telework is how category society at every phase of historical development has developed its ain theoretical account of the household with the subjugation of adult females as its common facet (Wilson & A ; Greenhill, 2005) . The conventional household in capitalist society serves to refill the present and future coevals of workers and in the procedure, subsidise capital (Eviota, 1994) . While non-conventional households have since emerged, it is the traditional household that is considered ideal. The infliction of this traditional household theoretical

account on society creates forms of socialisation that influence work forces and adult females think and do. Marxism, as distinguished from feminism, " is the societal scientific discipline of the working category which starts from the premiss that we are non what we are because of what we think, but that we think in certain ways because of the sort of work we do, or do n't hold to make, or are kept from making " (Guettel, 1987, p. 2) . Marxists believe that the release of adult females requires the creative activity of new household forms where generative and caring in the traditional privatized household is non borne by single adult females but by the community (German, 2003) . From this point of view, it is possible to construct on the statement that the construct of telecommute work, as a procedure where both productive and generative work is brought into the place, is a regressive phenomenon which can in fact, reinforce adult females ' s subjugation and frustrate adult females ' s possible for corporate life, battle, and solidarity with other adult females.

2. 1 Marxism and feminism on engineering

Marxism rejects technological determinism and a broad women's rightist position of engineering which lauds the success of the classless technological undertaking (Wilson & A ; Greenhill, 2005) . Marxism takes a critical stance on engineering but does non overtly concentrate on its gendered nature as espoused by extremist or socialist women's rightists (Wajcman, 2009) . This has frequently been a point of unfavorable judgment among many women's rightists who feel that Marxism entirely obfuscates the function of patriarchate or biological inequalities by telling adult females ' s predicament into a hierarchy of subjugations with category on top of the pyramid

(Armstrong & A ; Armstrong, 1990) . This unfavorable judgment is misdirecting, nevertheless, because Marxism does non deny patriarchate but argues that socialisation works both ways for adult females and work forces in different respects ; hence, the thoughts about a adult female ' s topographic point (being subordinate to work forces, sexualized, objectified) in the universe is held non merely by work forces but besides by adult females (Wilson & A ; Greenhill, 2005) .

2. 2 Marxism and the private household

As before stated, cardinal to a Marxist review of telecommute work requires an expounding of privatized and heterosexual household in capitalist society (Wilson & A ; Greenhill, 2005) . Capitalist society requires adult females ' s generative work as its stuff base. Eviota (1994) suggested:

In world, so, the family and care work of adult females is the material base for the reproduction of populating labour without which capital can non allow excess. Women ' s generative work serves both the involvements of work forces and capital. (p. 15)

However, Marxists believe that the major donees of adult females ' s dual load are the capitalist category as a realisation of their quest for super-profits. They besides locate adult females ' s subjugation in the retreat to domesticity or private life, as in the instance of telecommute working. Marxists view that " the isolation of adult females in the place could cut them off from wider sociables motions. Their subjugation reduced their ability to fight against the system much of the clip, and so opened them up

to conservative positions of society " (Harman 1984, as cited in Wilson & A ;

Greenhill, 2005, p. 8) .

2. 3 Agency and self-emancipation

Agency and self-emancipation are critical elements to the Marxist position.

Analysis of adult females ' s subjugation precludes adult females as mere

victims of patriarchate but instead active topics of history (Guettel, 1987) .

Marxism emphasizes on the corporate strength of adult females as agents of

alteration and foreground the battles of working category adult females in

history (Barbara & A ; Ehrenreich, 2003) . In the Philippines, the history of

the battles of provincial and working category adult females is evidenced in

their continuing plan of agitation, forming work, and mobilisation to demand

for corporate involvements such as land, employment, and nutrient security

(Lindio-McGovern, 2005) . This emphasizes how echt freedom requires

struggle and activity outside of the place. Therefore, the isolation and

disaffection that at-home teleworkers experience can stand for a measure

rearward ideologically and physically (Wilson & A ; Greenhill, 2005) .

Teleworkers have been found to be non- or less-unionized, without proper

employment rights, and experience low wage and insecure conditions at

work. The jobs which at-home teleworkers face are kindred to the jobs

experienced by domestic workers (Bibby, 1996) . However, the conditions

of teleworkers are besides classed. Middle-class and professional

telecommute workers may be able to afford maidservants or baby-sitters to

manage generative work and may see telecommute work as liberating.

However, these " proficient hole " contribute to the disaffection of

telecommuting adult females and strip them of opportunities for personal

development offered by the corporate experiences in the workplace. In the terminal, this disaffection may finally pass on adult females back to their traditional functions (Wilson & A ; Greenhill, 2005) .

Decision