

# Introduction: The Family as a Gendered Site of Continuity and Change

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## Introduction

The family has long been regarded as a central institution that simultaneously reproduces norms and adapts to shifting political, cultural and economic pressures. While some scholarship on the Global South has highlighted gender role transformations within households (Rangaswamaiah, 2024) and others have focused on family laws, fertility, marriage, divorce and violence – whether intimate partner or state-directed – (Biholar, 2024; Yeung et al., 2018; Zarrugh, 2022) there still remains relatively little research that examines families in the Global South through a gendered perspective. Comparative scholarship has challenged the universalism of the changing Northern family models and their applicability across diverse contexts (Kagiticbasi, 2005; Leeder, 2004; Rahman et al., 2025). Work on households in different parts of the Global South (Andersson Djurfeldt, 2021) and studies on changing gendered family structures in different contexts such as South Africa or India reveal that families are not static units but living sites where inequality, care and agency are contested and reshaped (Makiwane et al., 2017; Palriwala, 2019). In South Asia, for example, patriarchal family systems continue to reproduce normative gender hierarchies while simultaneously responding to women's growing workforce participation, youth culture, shifting laws and new intimacies (Bhandari & Titzman, 2017). Families thus act as gendered sites of both continuity and transformation, reproducing patriarchal forms while also offering spaces for negotiation, resistance and new forms of intimacy.

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Much has been written about the backlash against gender and sexual rights in the second decade of the 21st century. However, much of this discourse primarily reflects the experiences of privileged groups in specific parts of the world (Primecz, 2022; Schmidt et al., 2023). While the backlash is real and consequential, it risks obscuring a more complex reality: for many communities across the globe – particularly those historically marginalised – structural barriers to rights and equity have long existed. Despite these persistent challenges, these communities continue to resist, adapt and develop innovative strategies to confront and undo multiple forms of oppression (Edström et al., 2024). What remains less understood is how gender itself correlates with these strategies of resistance and innovation, within social structures that are traditionally referred to as family and state, and how these structures and their changes have shaped such responses (Hatem, 1994; Ossome, 2024).

This edited volume challenges the dominant narrative of a singular ‘backlash’ by offering case studies that highlight diverse experiences of resistance beyond the Western world. Many of these cases come from regions commonly referred to as the Global South – sometimes geographically located in the Global North but linked by shared histories of colonisation, marginalisation and resistance. Following longstanding calls for more inclusive scholarship (Connell, 2014; Mohanty, 1984; Walia & Mondal, 2025), this volume extends the conversation beyond traditional feminist frameworks to include a broader spectrum of marginalised sexualities and gender identities. Building on the contributions of scholars such as Abu-Lughod (2002); Caywood and Darmstadt (2024); Kandiotti (1988); Medie and Kang (2018) and Moraga and Anzaldúa (1981) who rendered *Third World* feminisms impossible to ignore, we aim to foreground gendered experiences that challenge the universalising tendencies of Northern theories and that reframe understandings of gender identity, sexuality and resistance in relational and contextual terms of the changing family.

### ***The Global South as a Knowledge Location***

The term *Global South* extends beyond geography to denote regions and peoples historically marginalised within global relations of power. It encompasses countries outside Europe and North America but also marginalised communities within the Global North, underscoring the geopolitical dimensions of inequality (Dados & Connell, 2012; Klob, 2017; Mignolo, 2011). As an intellectual category, the Global South highlights legacies of colonial domination and the continuing ‘coloniality of power’ that shape contemporary social and cultural structures. It has also become a location of distinctive knowledge production, articulated through movements such as neglected aspects of subaltern displacement and Southern theory (Connell, 2007), which foreground histories of resistance and emphasise the epistemological contributions of scholars outside the North. In this sense, the Global South is not merely a metaphor for underdevelopment but a lens through which to reconceptualise knowledge, resistance and agency.

### ***A Gendered Perspective: From Intersectionality to Relationality***

A gendered perspective reveals that identities and expressions are always mediated by webs of embodied relationships – family, community, politics, economy, land, ancestors and spiritual practices – rather than existing as isolated categories. Unlike intersectionality as approached from the Western paradigm, which often examines the intersection of identity markers within individuals or groups (e.g., race, class, gender, sexuality), a relational intersectional approach emphasises how identities are negotiated and transformed through relational and structural dynamics (Collins, 2019; Quek, Wei-Mun Hsieh & Eppler, 2021). By centring care, relational well-being and community ties, a relational intersectional gendered perspective expands the field of analysis beyond individual empowerment metrics to address systemic inequalities and collective strategies of survival and resistance.

### **Towards Southern Research Agenda**

By foregrounding the family, situating knowledge within the Global South and adopting a relational intersectional gendered perspective, this volume presents case studies about how changing families in the Global South both reproduce and resist gendered power. It asks how everyday practices within households sustain patriarchal norms while also generating new forms of agency, care and resilience. At the heart of this inquiry is the undervaluation of care work and the ways it exposes structural inequalities that remain invisible yet indispensable to household and community survival. The chapters also press us to consider how state policies, religious discourses and cultural norms regulate gendered family life and how women, men and LGBTQI+ individuals respond by creating alternative forms of kinship, belonging and care. Across contexts shaped by colonial legacies, neoliberal reforms and migration, families emerge as deeply political institutions – sites where inequality is reproduced but also where resistance is forged.

By centring a Global South perspective, this volume interrogates how feminist frameworks grounded in relationality, collective survival and interdependence can disrupt dominant Global North paradigms of empowerment and autonomy. In doing so, it advances a broader theoretical understanding of family, gender and processes of social transformation. This volume further highlights the heterogeneity of the Global South while recognising that across these diverse contexts emerge shared expressions of resilience. Although these strategies may manifest in distinct cultural forms, they nonetheless reveal convergent patterns of striving towards structural change.

### ***Feminist Praxis Across Borders: Centring Global South Voices in Scholarship***

We are two women social scientists whose lives span North Africa, Western Asia, and the transcontinental spaces connecting West Asia and Europe. Having lived in both our heritage homelands and our chosen homes in Europe and the United States, we have seen firsthand how feminist resistance takes strikingly different

forms across these contexts. The contrasts between feminist backlash in Western settings and our home regions underscore the urgent need for more nuanced, globally attuned conversations about feminism.

This book is not intended as a definitive account of our journeys. Instead, it is an invitation to widen these critical dialogues beyond academic circles. We aim to make space for voices that challenge Western-centric and class-privileged frameworks, drawing in colleagues, students and public intellectuals to engage with more expansive understandings of feminist practice.

Our editorial approach deliberately broke with conventional academic publishing norms. Rather than imposing predetermined chapter topics, we partnered with Emerald Publishers to issue an open call for contributions, allowing the scholarly community itself to shape the book's direction. The response was extraordinary: more than 40 abstracts arrived from researchers working across the regions we broadly identify as the Global South. From this wealth of submissions, themes and regional foci emerged organically, reflecting contributors' intellectual priorities and research concerns.

This approach embodies a distinct form of feminist praxis in academic publishing – one that centres the voices, questions and priorities of scholars working within and from the Global South rather than framing their work through externally imposed theoretical lenses. The resulting collection offers an authentic representation of the contemporary feminist intellectual landscape in these regions, grounded in lived experience and shaped by the scholars themselves.

## Structure and Themes

### *Section I*

#### *Dynamics Within Gendered Households*

Chapters 1, 2 and 3 collectively show that across Ghana, Botswana and Mexico, women – particularly those heading households – are central to sustaining family well-being in contexts marked by poverty, inequality and limited institutional support. Despite geographic and cultural differences, the chapters share a common insight: women's agency in the Global South often emerges through relational, community-based strategies rather than through formal systems. Whether mobilising extra-familial social capital in Ghana (*Chapter 1*), leveraging agricultural programmes in Botswana (*Chapter 2*) or sustaining ancestral rituals in Mexico (*Chapter 3*), women weave networks of care and resilience that mitigate the structural disadvantages they face.

In each case, the work women do to uphold households is deeply shaped by intersecting systems of constraint – patriarchy, economic precarity, land inequality and the erosion of traditional forms of support. Yet, this labour is also a form of gendered resistance. In *Chapter 1*, extra-familial social capital becomes both a survival mechanism and a quiet challenge to patriarchal norms of male independence. In *Chapter 2*, women's empowerment within agricultural contexts is grounded in the need to remain close to family, reframing economic participation

as inseparable from caregiving. In *Chapter 3*, the preservation of Mayan rituals acts as cultural and political resistance to the homogenising effects of capitalism and intergenerational change.

In Chapter 1, *Social Capital and Meeting Household Needs*, Albert Kpoor and Sylvia Esther Gyan explore how male- and female-headed households in Ghana rely on extra-familial social networks, such as extended kin, neighbours, friends and community organisations, to meet basic needs like food, clothing, loans and labour. Drawing from a network-based framework and mixed-methods research, the study highlights a gendered pattern of social capital use. Female-headed households overwhelmingly turned to extended kin (61.7%), neighbours (56.1%) and Community-Based Organisations (67.4%), reflecting a survival strategy rooted in cultural expectations and gendered access to informal support systems. By contrast, male-headed households, shaped by patriarchal norms that emphasise independence, relied more on friendship networks (57.1%), especially for financial support and labour. Their limited engagement with broader communal support reflects the gendered ideals of male self-reliance, often at the expense of household adaptability.

In Chapter 2, *Determinants of Women's Empowerment in Agriculture in Botswana*, Masa V. Motaung and Martin Bosompem assess how Botswana's Livestock Management and Infrastructure Development (LIMID) of small-stock programme impact women's empowerment using the Abbreviated Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (A-WEAI). Based on surveys and focus groups with 370 women across four districts, the study reveals that household structure, particularly female-headed households and those caring for numerous dependants, influences women's decision-making power in agriculture. The study finds that effective implementation, including training and veterinary services, is critical. Where support was strong, women could manage livestock and make informed decisions; where it was lacking, empowerment stalled. Despite systemic barriers, many women chose to pursue village-based farming to remain close to their families and continue their roles as producers and caregivers. The chapter calls for gender-sensitive, inclusive agricultural programming that views women not as recipients but as central agents of rural development.

In Chapter 3, *Although Food Is Not Always on the Table, I Feel Happy With my Family*. *The Life Satisfaction Among Mayan Families*, Lukasz Czarnecki examines how in Campeche, Mayan family life is deeply rooted in ancestral rituals *Jéets meek* (mutual responsibility in the family), *Ch'a cháak* (agricultural rain ritual) and *Janal pixián* (Day of the Dead family unification) – which all reaffirm collective identity and relational well-being. Women, as cultural anchors, play a central role in maintaining these traditions. Yet, modern influences, including capitalism and digital media, as well as changing youth values, are eroding traditional practices. While younger generations drift away from ancestral rituals, women often stand at the crossroads, balancing cultural preservation with contemporary demands. Using frameworks such as subjective and relational well-being, as well as the poor-excluded lens, the chapter reveals that, despite poverty and marginalisation, many Mayan families – particularly women – report high life satisfaction, grounded in familial and cultural ties.

Together, these chapters argue that well-being and empowerment in the Global South cannot be measured solely by income or productivity but must be understood in relational, cultural and community-defined terms. While the specific expressions differ – from kin-based reciprocity in Ghana to livestock management in Botswana to ritual-based identity in Mexico – all three show that women's leadership in sustaining households is both indispensable and undervalued and that their strategies for resilience are as much about cultural continuity and social connection as they are about economic survival.

## Section II

### *Understandings of Caregiving and Gendered Agency*

Chapters 4–6 collectively reveal that across South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, women's caregiving labour – whether rooted in migration, daily survival or disability support – is both the backbone of household resilience and one of the most undervalued forms of work in the global economy. Despite vast geographic and cultural differences, the chapters share a central insight: care is not simply an act of private duty but a deeply political terrain where gender, economic inequality and structural neglect converge. In all three contexts, care is shaped by overlapping systems of constraint – colonial legacies, neoliberal economic pressures, patriarchal family structures and policy blind spots – that render women's contributions invisible while making them indispensable.

In Chapter 4, *The COVID-19 Border Closure as an Opportunity for New Gender Roles*, Lucía Granda, Rita Sobczyk and Rosa M. Soriano-Miras examine how the COVID-19 border closure between Morocco and Melilla, Spain disrupted the lives of Moroccan women engaged in precarious, cross-border domestic work – an emblematic example of feminised labour migration from the Global South. These women, embedded in a transnational care chain that responds to demands from the Global North, suddenly found themselves immobilised, trapped in Melilla without legal status or certainty. Rather than returning to Morocco and forfeiting their families' only income, they exercised constrained agency by staying behind, assuming the role of primary breadwinners.

In Chapter 5, *Gendered Subjectivities of Care among Street Trading Women in Rural Venda: Negotiations and Resistance to Norms and Stereotypes*, Pfarelo Matsila draws on the voices of rural street trading women in Venda, South Africa, to foreground how overlapping structures of inequality shape gendered labour and care practices in the Global South. Matsila highlights how these women's everyday practices contest deeply entrenched gender norms that confine women to domestic spaces and render their economic contributions invisible. By selling food, goods and clothing in rural markets – while simultaneously supporting children, grandchildren and elders – these women perform care as a form of social reproduction, one that extends beyond the household and sustains entire communities. In the absence of formal welfare systems, women mobilise informal networks and draw strength from culturally embedded traditions such

as the *Makhadzi* – a respected senior woman figure whose authority they reinterpret to challenge stereotypes about age, marital status and education.

In Chapter 6, *Who Cares for the Carers of People with Disabilities? Stories, Solutions and a Model from South Asia*, Mary Wickenden and Ruth Patil offer a powerful and deeply contextualised analysis of the lived experiences of women in the Global South – particularly in South Asia – who care for disabled family members under conditions shaped by poverty, patriarchy and social exclusion. In South Asia, women are culturally and morally assigned caregiving roles, reinforcing patriarchal divisions of labour within both nuclear and extended families. Care for disabled persons – whether children, spouses, siblings or elders – is regarded not as a shared societal responsibility but as a private duty, often a moral or spiritual obligation expected of women. These carers operate within systems that normalise their suffering and deny them voice, autonomy and support. This feminisation of care links disability to poverty in a vicious cycle, exacerbated by neoliberal neglect and patriarchal policy silences. Despite these structural violences, the chapter foregrounds women's resistance and agency. Through the Carers Worldwide model, the authors present a holistic intervention that provides women carers with peer networks, access to healthcare, livelihood training and platforms for advocacy.

Across these cases, the expression of the shared theme varies: in *Chapter 4*, care becomes a means of preserving household stability across borders; in *Chapter 5*, it becomes a form of resilience forged under conditions of extreme resource scarcity and in *Chapter 6*, it emerges as a site of organised resistance aimed at transforming the very frameworks that devalue it. Yet in every chapter, women are not depicted as passive recipients of hardship – they negotiate, adapt and reimagine the possibilities of care, whether quietly through endurance or publicly through collective action.

Together, these chapters underscore that in the Global South, the politics of care cannot be separated from questions of justice, equity and recognition. While the settings differ – from migrant-dependent communities to caregivers mobilising for systemic change or to households navigating disability without support – the underlying struggle is the same: to make visible, value and transform the labour that sustains life itself.

### Section III

#### *Changes and Challenges in Sexuality, Reproduction and Kinship Practices*

All four chapters, 7–10, examine how gender is regulated through state-sanctioned discourses and cultural norms, often using the family as a key site of control. Whether through reproductive tourism in China (Chapter 7), closed adoption practices in India (Chapter 8), religio-nationalist familialism in Turkey (Chapter 9) or the shame-infused marital sexuality experienced by Turkish divorcées (Chapter 10), the texts converge in recognising women's bodies and roles as symbolic battlegrounds for broader ideological struggles. Across these diverse contexts, a recurring concern is the subordination of women's autonomy – sexual, reproductive

or social – within systems that equate female virtue with national honour, moral authenticity or middle-class aspirations. Across all four chapters, a shared theme emerges: the family operates as a primary site where gender norms are produced, enforced and contested, revealing how women's bodies, roles and choices are deeply embedded in broader ideological projects across the Global South.

In Chapter 7, *Reproduction as a Form of Aspiration: Medicalised Childbirth and the Case of Chinese Birth Tourism in the United States and Canada (1980–2017)*, Brandon Folse, Arafaat A. Valiani and Bo Yang showcase birth tourism as part of a global cosmopolitan project, which is intrinsically linked with aspirational identities of China's new middle-class. They argue that this aspiration has developed following changes to China's One Child Policy and neoliberal economic reforms. In this context, they present how middle-class Chinese mothers strategically navigate transnational medical markets to reclaim birthing autonomy by circumventing their mothers' and mother-in-laws' authorities as gatekeepers of traditional pre- and post-partum care practices. In that sense, birth tourism appears not only as a quest for social distinction or as a means for gaining citizenship in the North but as a means for investment for children's future benefits.

In Chapter 8, *Redefining Adoptive Family Practices in Contemporary India*, Sushri Sangita Puhan shows how adoptive mothers challenge caste- and bloodline-based definitions of kinship through relational and narrative labour in the closed adoption system because the adoptive identity needs collective approval in India. The study is based on narratives which have been collected from nine mothers but two fathers and as such brings forth the gendered nature of doing family. Sushri Sangita Puhan underscores the ways in which mothers of different ages and statuses, in two parent or single-parent families, make use of different displays in their endeavours to gain acceptance by different audiences such as their own parents, the extended kin, neighbours or friends. She argues that doing family as an adoptive parent demands creativity and resilience by the adoptive parents and as such it is an ongoing and uncertain journey.

In Chapter 9, *The Discursive Frontiers of 'Sacred Familialism' and Islamist Gender Nativism in Authoritarian Populist Politics in Turkey*, Didem Unal brings forth 'sacred familialism' as an empty signifier which is used by authoritarian governments across diverse political contexts. This signifier is adopted by AKP (Justice and Development Party) as a populist strategy shaped by Islamist gender nativism in Turkey. She argues that by assigning a sacred status to the family and framing childbearing as a matter of faith, Turkish citizens are discouraged from questioning the material costs of maintaining a large family. In that sense, large family ideal becomes encapsulated in a discursive logic that spiritualises economic suffering. Within this discourse, the LGBTQ+ community is constructed as the threatening 'other', serving as a foil against which the ideal of the sacred family is defined and defended. In the same manner, 'Anti-Family Europe' is constructed in civilisational terms. Unal concludes that feminist and LGBTQ+ resistance in Turkey has to be understood as a resistance to this discursive logic.

In Chapter 10, *Constructing Sexuality as Shame: Turkish Women's Emotions in Marriage*, Aylin Akpınar analyses divorce narratives of five professional



women who married in the 1980s against the background of gendered state-led modernisation in Turkey. Being chaste until marriage was a part of this project while *iffetli* (virtuous) mothers were expected to edify their children. Schools besides the families were disciplinary spaces in terms of regulating women's sexuality. Yet, at the same time the women were socialised under the influence of second wave feminism in Turkey in the late 1970s and 1980s, thanks to feminist books translated into Turkish besides feminist popular Turkish writers' books. The common theme that was brought up in the narratives of divorcées was the double sexual morality which implied sexuality in marriage as pleasure for men but as shame for women. Mutual pleasure in sex was a missing aspect of the marriage that was brought forth by all women. Turkish divorcées' rejection of marriages that sustained shame-based control could be considered a reclaim on emotional and sexual autonomy.

These chapters show that women's identities are continually shaped and reshaped through familial roles – whether as mothers, wives or moral anchors of the nation – yet women are not merely passive recipients of these roles. Instead, each chapter foregrounds diverse forms of resistance. Chinese mothers cross borders to circumvent restrictive reproductive policies; Indian adoptive mothers negotiate secrecy, prejudice and kinship boundaries to claim social legitimacy for their families; Turkish feminists contest religio-nationalist definitions of womanhood and middle-class divorcées in Turkey assert their right to sexual and emotional self-determination. Despite the different terrains – medical tourism, adoption policy, nationalist discourse and marital sexuality – these narratives converge on a core insight: the intimate domains of birth, motherhood, marriage and kinship are deeply political terrains, sites where power is both exercised and contested. And yet, in every case, women resist. Sometimes loudly, sometimes quietly. Through medical migration, narrative reframing, discursive opposition or emotional truth-telling, they carve out new ways to be mothers, daughters, citizens and selves. These are not stories of passive suffering but of everyday negotiation and fragile yet transformative agency – reminding us that across the Global South, the personal is never just personal.

## Section IV

### *Challenges in Heterosexual Systems*

Chapters 11–13 share a thematic focus on gender, sexuality, kinship, and social resistance in the Global South. Together, they disrupt normative notions of family and challenge state and religious authority. They also illuminate alternative forms of care, resilience, and kin-making shaped by cultural specificity, postcolonial legacies, and everyday survival. Although their focal points vary, from policy reform to cultural reclamation to lived reinvention, the chapters share a central insight. Recognition and legitimisation of diverse families cannot be achieved through legal measures or cultural work alone. Instead, it requires a multifaceted process that intertwines rights, representation, and relational

practice. The authors collectively call for inclusive policies, recognition of diverse families, and support for indigenous practice.

In Chapter 11, *LGBTQ+-headed Families in Brazil and Chile: An Examination of Policies, Social Initiatives and Social Challenges*, Kate Luxion, Diego Castro and Bruno de Brito Silva argue that despite advances in marriage equality, adoption rights and gender identity laws in Brazil and Chile, transgender and non-binary parents are still discriminated against particularly in terms of parental leave. Anti-rights discourse in policymaking of far right in both countries, which emphasises the role of the heterosexual family as a part of family intimacy, continues to be a threat against the hardly won bodily autonomy and human rights of LGBTQ+ communities. The authors inform us not only about the changes in governmental policies and their impact in societies but the promotion of alternative children's literature by the LGBTQ+ communities in both countries, which is used as an alternative to create better public opinion for the recognition of LGBTQ+ rights. Yet, in the Brazilian children-books, same-gender parental couples mirror heterosexual relationships with an emphasis on romantic love. In the Chilean children-books, potential normativity is considered by not including the portrayals of trans and non-binary parents. The authors conclude that future research in the region should take into consideration the complex interplay between the advancement of legal recognition, literary media and its potential to reduce social stigma in public opinion.

In Chapter 12, *LGBTQI+ Social Change in the Global South: Repositioning Resistance Risk, Equality and Wellbeing in Fiji*, Mark Vicars, Ann Cheryl Armstrong, Peter Sipeli, John Tenamo Mānoa Erasito Teaiwa, Ratu Manoa Rokotavaga and Mark Shaheel Lal focus on the auto-ethnographical experiences of Peter, Manoa, Ratu and Mark, four Fijian non-hetero men by using their individual life story narratives. The indigenous methodology they have used is called *Talanoa*, an oral tradition which is interconnected with the concept of cultural engagement in groups where there are no pre-determined expectations regarding an agreed position and which has an empowering effect because of resistance produced in dialogue. In this case, the four men engage in *Talanoa* to retell and reframe how gender and sexuality have been imposed on them as non-heterosexual men living outside normative expectations. From these reflections, it becomes possible to understand how the church has had and continues to shape their sexualities.

In Chapter 13, *A Family with Fluid Boundaries and Possible Ruptures: An Ethnographic Study of a Transgender Parivar in South India*, Nimisha John draws on her nine-month ethnographic fieldwork among the members of *Laya Parivar* – a familial unit/a broader network of kinship relations which is prevalent among transgender people in the South Indian state of Kerala and headed by Laya, who is a transwoman. The chapter draws the readers' attention to the aspects of mothering due to its centrality in a kinship. In *Parivar*, the mothers voluntarily opt for mothering outside of a heterosexual nuclear family and thus an entire familial unit is based on adopted kin ties. Nimisha John shows in the chapter how in Kerala, matrilineal familial structures were prevalent besides patrilineal families in various religious and caste communities. Despite the changes towards patriliney,

the ideological values associated with the gendered position of mother in matriliney or patriliney remained unchanged. In this context, Nimisha John asks how transgender mothers' mothering in *Parivar* contributes to the changing notion of kinship. She shows us several configurations which she calls as becoming, being and breaking as different performative phases of mothering.

These chapters collectively resist the epistemic violence of being made invisible. They demand a decentring of Global North paradigms, asserting instead that LGBTQI+ lives in the Global South are not only valid but fertile grounds for rethinking kinship, care and justice. In each context, kinship is not merely inherited – it is actively made, defended and reimagined. Together, these chapters underscore that the future of kinship in the Global South will be determined not just in courtrooms or parliaments but in living rooms, community rituals and the intimate acts of care that continually redefine who belongs and on what terms.

## Section V

### *Domestic Worlds, Political Struggles: Gender at the Nexus of Family and State*

Chapters 14–17 collectively reveal that gender norms are reproduced less through grand legislative acts and more through the small, repetitive practices, moral expectations and spatial constraints that regulate women's behaviour. While the specifics vary – from religious scripts to normalised domestic violence or from spatial segregation to post-conflict silences – the chapters share a central insight: how gendered power is woven into the very fabric of everyday life in the Global South, taking root in the intimate spheres of family, community and the spaces women inhabit. Whether in Jordan (Chapter 14), Northern Nigeria (Chapter 15), the Arabian Gulf (Chapter 16) or post-war El Salvador (Chapter 17), the home emerges as a political arena where patriarchal authority is simultaneously sustained, contested and reimagined. In each context, the home becomes not merely a private setting but a political arena where patriarchal authority is sustained, challenged and redefined. In each case, the family functions as both a site of control and a platform for resistance. Religion and morality – whether shaped by Islamic or Catholic traditions – play a dual role: they serve as instruments for legitimating gender hierarchies yet also as sources of meaning and discursive tools that women and youth creatively reinterpret to expand their agency.

In Chapter 14, in *Dismantling 'Gender-Appropriate' Scripts: Young Jordanians' Practices of Creative Agency within Family Contexts*, Ivana Cosmano builds on semi-structured interviews and family observations of young Jordanians living in urban centres and suggests that young people's agency challenge both personal and societal change in Jordan. She critically scrutinises the scholarship on Arab families which represents them as arenas of domination and victimhood. Drawing from her data analysis which is informed by the concepts of creative agency and relational self, Cosmano illustrates youngsters' everyday renegotiation of gender boundaries and shows the reader how youngsters manage to navigate several familial constraints in their endeavours to gain more autonomy. She argues that Jordanian youngsters have developed four strategies

in terms of agency: convincing the parents by insisting on their decisions; sabotaging parents' decisions by faking conformity to the family's authority; deceiving parents albeit temporarily and using circumventing strategy for example by moving abroad. As such, the chapter brings forth gender consciousness among the youth in a region which has been overlooked by Western-centric approaches.

In Chapter 15, *Mundane Violence and Gender Politics: Young Women's Narratives from Northern Nigeria*, Máiréad Dunne, Dauda Moses, Safiya Adamu and Barbara Crossouard present the results of their research study which has taken place in two rural locations in north-east Nigeria where overall poverty levels are high, and the rural economy relies on agriculture and fishing besides women's unpaid labour. The population is mostly Muslim with an important Christian minority (40%). Using participatory visual methods, the authors foreground two groups of 14 young women's voices (both Muslim and Christian) as co-research participants and suggest that multiple gender restrictions which are projected as the protection for women function to protect what is called pious masculinity and which is bolstered by reference to culture and religion. The authors emphasise young women's persistent efforts to stay in education even when their household labour is taken for granted. The dynamics which deny young women decision-making power is termed as mundane violence, which is perpetuated under conditions of a 'naturalised gender hierarchy'. The naturalised hierarchy is also apparent in schools where women must struggle to continue after getting married. The authors show the reader the gender consciousness and everyday struggles of these young women who must stand against the patriarchal restrictions daily.

In Chapter 16, *Politics of Gender and Resistance in the Arabian Gulf: A Feminist Theological Reading*, Jihan Zakarriya discusses aspects of politics of gender in the Middle East and North Africa region with a focus on women's status in the Gulf states. She draws her analysis from feminist theology, particularly represented by Moroccan Fatima Mernissi and Egyptian Nawal el Saadawi who have argued that Islam is egalitarian, but Islamic male theologians have interpreted Islam in a masculinist patriarchal manner. Dominant sexist interpretations of Islam have silenced not only women but other minorities as well as compared to the privileged ruling male elites. Mernissi and Saadawi besides others have argued for women's right to public space and equal access to economic and natural resources. Zakarriya also introduces several activists and scholars in the Gulf States and brings forth vividly the strategies used by secular, state, Islamic and Islamist feminisms in the region to expand women's rights in public life. She argues that Arab spring in 2011 was a result not only of the accumulation of feminist resistance but feminist groups' utilisation of the internal modifications and divisions between political and religious male elites as well. The high levels of corruption and the weak infrastructural and social investment in the Gulf countries developed people's and particularly women's awareness of their denied human rights. Several reforms pertaining to women's rights in family and society became inevitable.

In Chapter 17, *Mothers' and Daughters' Relationships in the Aftermath of the Salvadoran Armed Conflict: A Strenuous Relationship*, Paula Cuellar Cuellar draws on oral history interviews she has conducted in five years with 15 daughters of female guerilla fighters of the Salvadoran civil war. Her chapter brings forth insights on several dimensions in relation to genuine (re)conciliation in post conflict societies. Cuellar Cuellar asks the question: 'If families remain fractured and silent about their wartime experiences, can society at large truly reconcile?' She shows us how truth telling within the family is as vital as truth telling at the national level. This is because of the long-term post-traumatic effects of insurgent motherhood on mother–daughter relationships. Here comes in the gendered dimension of the trauma and reconciliation. Due to the ideal of womanhood encapsulated in *marianismo*, which operates against *machismo* in the Catholic Latin American culture, children's associations of care are exclusively with their mothers. Cuellar Cuellar shows us how mothers are blamed disproportionately by negligence by their daughters, and their reproductive choices are scrutinised in comparison with the fathers who saw fathering children as a means of preserving the lineage, an act which is even romanticised. Cuellar Cuellar argues for bringing in symbolic acts such as public acknowledgement, truth-telling and community dialogue into post-conflict processes.

In none of these chapters is resistance portrayed as purely confrontational. Instead, agency emerges in relational and negotiated forms: subtle noncompliance, strategic accommodation, manipulation of space and mobility and long-term emotional labour that challenges inherited patterns of domination. This framing disrupts the binary of submission versus defiance, showing instead that women's actions occupy a fluid spectrum shaped by intersecting factors such as class, age, citizenship, geography and historical memory.

The Middle Eastern and African contexts tend to centre the immediacy of everyday negotiation – how women and men adapt and reframe their roles within ongoing structures of authority – while the Salvadoran case introduces a distinctly temporal and historical dimension, showing how the legacies of war and political struggle echo decades later in the relationships between mothers and daughters. Here, resistance is not only about claiming space or voice in the present but about confronting inherited silences and reclaiming personal histories as acts of gendered justice.

Together, these chapters invite a broader understanding of agency in the Global South – one that recognises both the urgent negotiations of the present and the long, often invisible work of intergenerational repair. They insist that the personal is never merely personal but bound up in political histories, structural constraints and the enduring creativity with which women and youth reimagine the possibilities of their lives.

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