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## Rejoinder

# Accentuating the Negative: Reply to Hertel and Arat

RHODA E. HOWARD-HASSMANN

Although my article is an overview of several aspects of women's international human rights from 1970 to 2010, Shareen Hertel and Zehra F. Kabasakal Arat focus predominantly on my section on globalization, only one of the article's six sections. In so doing, they accentuate the negative effects of economic globalization on women, downplaying evidence of positive effects. I will attempt here to address many of their objections to my analysis of globalization and women's rights, arguing for a more nuanced approach than they adopt, looking at both sides of the picture.

Arat notes that I do not offer a formal definition of globalization. I do make clear in the introduction to my section on globalization that I consider not only its economic but also its political, legal, and social aspects. For the record, however, I have referred elsewhere to the following as aspects of globalization:

- The expanding world market and international trade and capital flows
- Transnational corporations
- Institutions of global governance, including the international law of human rights, international financial institutions (IFIs), and international organizations (IOs) established to regulate the market

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- Travel, migration, communication, and global culture
- Global civil society, including international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), global social movements, and other private social actors (Howard-Hassmann 2010: 8)

This definition includes economic, legal, institutional, and social aspects of globalization; hence the focus in my article is not only on economic globalization but also on international human rights law and the global feminist movement. My definition is similar to Arat's own, in its stress on the multidimensional features of globalization. I focus on the period from about 1970 to 2010; Arat is correct that there have been earlier periods of globalization, but that is irrelevant to my discussion of the current period's effect on women's rights.

Both Arat and Hertel present my article as if it argues for an undifferentiated and entirely beneficial effect of economic globalization on women. I do not argue, as Arat maintains, that "as a general rule economic globalization has promoted, not undermined, women's human rights" (Arat this issue: 460); rather, I state that improvements in women's material conditions indicated by aggregate statistical data on indicators such as life expectancy suggest such a general rule. However, as Arat points out, if globalization were responsible for all these improvements, then the least globalized part of the world, sub-Saharan Africa, would not have improved as much as it did. There are indeed factors other than globalization that contribute to improvements in women's enjoyment of their economic human rights.

Hertel argues for a "less uniformly positive picture of globalization's impact on women" (this issue: 451) but I present no such uniform picture. Nor is Hertel correct in her claim that one of my central contentions is that "women have . . . benefitted from globalization" (this issue: 451). Rather, I argue cautiously that globalization *may* well promote women's human rights: This is a statement about globalization writ large, not only about economic globalization. I also discuss how economic globalization can harm women; for example, in export processing zones, via the international chain of care, via human trafficking, and via sex tourism. Much of Arat's and Hertel's critiques are actually supplements to my argument, noting additional negative human rights consequences of globalization for some women. Both disregard possible positive human rights consequences.

Hertel objects to my use of aggregate statistical data, pointing out many flaws in it. One such flaw, she argues, is to cite the \$1.25/day poverty line, but I also cite the \$2.50/day poverty line, pointing out that the World Bank economists Chen and Ravallion calculated that in 2005 56.6 percent of the world's population lived on less than \$2.50 per day (Chen and Ravallion 2008: 34, Table 7). Hertel refers to Reddy and Pogge's article critiquing methods of counting the world's poor. Reddy and Pogge discuss work published by Chen and Ravallion in 2001 and 2004 (Reddy and Pogge 2010). I cite Chen and Ravallion 2008 when, acknowledging some of the flaws in their earlier calculations, they revised downwards their estimates of the decline in poverty rates; that is, they revised upward their estimates of the percentage of the world's population living in poverty (Chen and Ravallion 2008). Hertel also notes Reddy and Pogge's contention that "relying on data compiled by governments that have politically manipulated the baseline (i.e., China) systematically biases the estimate of 'improvements' in global poverty rates" (Hertel this issue: 452). Chen and Ravallion 2008 rely on 2005 data on China, collected with China's cooperation, which suggest that China's economy in 2005 was "40 per cent smaller than we all thought" (Chen and Ravallion 2008: 4); thus, they had already made adjustments in 2008 taking account of problems in calculating poverty in China. Chen and Ravallion 2008 also correct for urban bias in their data (Chen and Ravallion 2008: 5). In general, they conclude that "the incidence of poverty in the world is higher than past estimates have suggested. . . .

However ... the poverty profile across regions of the developing world and the overall rate of progress against absolute poverty are fairly similar to past estimates” (Chen and Ravallion 2008: 6).

Neither Hertel nor Arat cites data that might show that the rate of poverty has increased in the era of economic globalization, nor do Reddy and Pogge suggest that the rate of poverty has increased. Pogge suggests that there are “reasons to doubt” whether the World Bank’s poverty monitoring method can “reveal whether world poverty is in decline,” but he provides no alternative data suggesting that it is not (Pogge 2010: 85). Arat provides data on inequality, which is not synonymous with absolute poverty (Howard-Hassmann 2010: 18–32). Severe inequality is degrading to the poor, in both developed (Howard-Hassmann 2011b: 30–33) and underdeveloped countries; it also impedes economic development, even when economic development is defined narrowly merely as economic growth (Howard-Hassmann 2010: 27). Inequality within and among nations was not the topic of my article, however, in which I cited reductions in the poverty rate worldwide only to argue that women are better off with more money than with less. I found no data indicating an increase in the rate of poverty. I did find sources that suggested that the decline in the poverty rate was even higher than Chen and Ravallion calculate (Bhalla 2002; Sala-i-Martin 2002, 2005), but I chose to use Chen and Ravallion’s more conservative figures. The debate among those who track such aggregate data is about how much poverty has declined, not about whether it has declined over the last 30 or so years.

Hertel disagrees with my mention of declining inequality between women and men in a subset of six large emerging economies that “have disproportionately attracted foreign capital” (this issue: 452), but this is precisely the point: many countries that attract foreign capital, a significant aspect of economic globalization, show declining inequality between men and women. The Gender-Related Development Index also shows declining male-female inequality from 1996 to 2007 in smaller less-developed countries such as Indonesia, Vietnam, and Bangladesh, where women are employed in export-oriented factories; although this is not a universal tendency: Gender inequality widened, for example, in Thailand during the same period (United Nations Development Programme 1996: 138–143; United Nations Development Programme 2009: 181–184). Unfortunately, the Gender-Related Development Index does not offer composite rankings for developed versus less-developed regions, or for more versus less economically globalized countries, in 2007. Hertel’s statement that the “cause of persistent gender inequality in the laggards—India and Russia—in all likelihood has more to do with domestic institutional factors than it does global exposure” (this issue: 452) supports my argument that globalization *may* promote women’s human rights. Domestic factors in many cases play as much a role, or a greater role, than globalization in determining women’s rights. Among the four smaller countries mentioned above, only in Thailand did the female-to-male earned-income ratio increase (marginally) from 2006 to 2010, from 0.61 to 0.63; in the others it decreased, most severely in Indonesia, from 0.52 to 0.44 (World Economic Forum 2010). However, inequality indices are not indices of absolute income, and in any event, we do not know if domestic or global factors explain this widening inequality gap.

Arat claims that “the reduced gap between the aggregate male and female incomes” that I mention “is largely a result of the increase in women’s participation in the workforce” (this issue: 465). Again, this is precisely the point: Economic globalization provides more jobs for women, increasing their incomes. Arat also claims that “The gaps in wages [for women and men] not only for comparable work but also for the same kind of work remain” (this issue: 465). This depends on the country, however. World Economic Forum data suggest that the gap between women’s and men’s wages for comparable work narrowed between

2006 and 2010 in five of the six large emerging economies mentioned in my original article (Russia, India, China, South Africa, and Mexico) but not in Brazil, while in the four smaller countries I mention here, it narrowed in Bangladesh, but not in Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam (World Economic Forum 2010). The World Economic Forums' methodology can, of course, be criticized; I mention these country-by-country results merely to point out that it is not possible to make sweeping statements about wage gaps.

One might accept the figures I cite on women's progress but argue that without globalization, there would have been even greater progress in longevity, fertility, and literacy rates, and even greater decline in poverty. Neither Arat nor Hertel makes such an argument. Hertel does argue that the type of globalization affects changes in women's rights, noting the disadvantageous globalization of sub-Saharan Africa, caused in part by the continuation of agricultural subsidies in Europe and the United States that undermine Africans' capacity to profit from agricultural exports. Indeed, the asymmetrical "free" trade connected with neoliberal globalization will not actually be free until Western countries remove their own protectionist tariffs and agricultural subsidies (Howard-Hassmann 2010: 44–45). Hertel is also correct to mention the detrimental globalizing effect of intellectual property rights for HIV/AIDS and other drugs. On the other hand, part of the problem in Africa is not globalization but indigenous politics such as kleptocratic rule (Collier 2007: 64–75), or even former President Thabo Mbeki's refusal to take HIV/AIDS seriously in South Africa, as Hertel mentions.

Hertel also criticizes my use of Richards and Gelleny's article (Richards and Gelleny 2007), noting that financial capital does not have the same benefits for women as trade. I agree; I cite Richards and Gelleny's conclusion that trade had a "generally positive influence on women's status," but I also note that they found that "foreign investment was associated with worsening women's rights" (871–872). Foreign direct investment can have differential effects, depending on whether it is for short-term profit or is meant to be a long-term investment. "Hot money" that flows unpredictably into and out of a country to enhance its owners' profits can have severely detrimental consequences not only for citizens' economic human rights but also for their civil and political rights (Howard-Hassmann 2010: 42–43, 66–82). Hertel mentions a study by Sweeney that demonstrates that "women in industrial economies, especially postindustrial ones, benefit more from globalization than women in developing countries" (Sweeney 2007: 254). Sweeney's measure of economic human rights, however, is not the actual enjoyment of substantive rights such as food and education, but rather laws that protect women's economic human rights, such as those mandating equal pay for equal work or freedom from sexual harassment. Since Sweeney also notes that women in secular democracies are most likely to enjoy their economic human rights, as she defines them, it is not surprising that women in postindustrial economies, characteristic of secular democracies, would also benefit the most from globalization (Sweeney 2007).

Hertel's dismissal of the aggregate data I cite in my original article points to a more fundamental problem: If we do not refer to aggregate data, to what do we refer? If all such data are so questionable as to be completely unreliable, then we are no more at liberty to make the broad claim that globalization harms women's interests than to say that it promotes them. Thus, for example, Abouharb's and Cigranelli's magisterial study of the largely detrimental effects of structural adjustment policies—on women as well as men—ought to be dismissed (Abouharb and Cigranelli 2007). Hertel is correct that aggregate global data mask inequalities, international, interregional, and intracountry. The causes of these inequalities, however, are complex and reflect internal public policy decisions as well as inequalities caused by the expansion of relatively unfettered capitalist production (Howard-Hassmann 2010: 18–32).

Aggregate data point to rates of change. Human rights scholars often deal only with the situation as it exists at the exact point at which they write: They hope for a perfect rights-protective world, so they focus only on negative violations of human rights, not on positive protections of them. This is not an illegitimate form of analysis, and it is certainly one in which I have engaged when discussing women's rights (e.g., Howard 1986: 184–211; Howard 1982, 1993; Howard-Hassmann 2004). However, to understand whether, how, and why human rights are protected, we must also analyze trends. To take into account different practices and policies, we must control for population growth; we do so by looking at percentages, not absolute numbers. Citing a 2001 source that in turn relies on a 1999 World Bank Report (Razavi 2001: 14), Arat states that the global trend of the size of the population living in poverty appears to be upward, if China is excluded. Chen and Ravallion confirm this: Using their 2005 data and excluding China, they find that the number of people in the developing world living below \$1.25/day increased from 1061.1 million in 1981 to 1169.0 million in 2005, while the number living below \$2.50/day increased from 1759.5 million to 2611.0 million (Chen and Ravallion 2008: 31, Table 5). But percentage rates show that even if China is excluded, the \$1.25/day poverty rate declined in all regions except Eastern Europe and Central Asia from 1981 to 2005, while the \$2.50/day poverty rate declined in all regions (Chen and Ravallion 2008: 33–34, Table 7). Since 2008, the absolute number of the world's poor has increased because of the financial crisis and the rise in commodity food prices, as Arat notes: The World Bank acknowledged this in late 2008, estimating that the two combined crises had already driven 100 million more people into poverty, and that another 40 million would experience malnutrition (Phumaphi 2008). In any case, there is nothing wrong with including China in the data on poverty reduction: Surely significant reduction in poverty in a country with a 2009 population of 1.33 billion should be a cause for celebration, and the means by which China achieved this reduction should be seriously studied.

Hertel appears to argue that progress made by some women must be at the expense of other women, noting the “conflicting claims to a better life that pit people with more against those with less” (this issue: 455). It is difficult, if not impossible, to find statistics that focus only on inequalities among women; certainly, I have not been able to find any, and I agree with Pogge that they would assist in measuring the true extent of poverty among women (Pogge 2010: 87). Should they exist, they might show that as the inequality between women and men lessens, the inequality among women widens. Alternately, there might be some validity to the argument that as women's absolute incomes rise, even some women at the bottom benefit. Improvements in the standard of living of one sector of the (female) population do not necessarily mean deterioration in the standard of living of another sector. To argue so is to assume that there is a finite amount of wealth or income in the world, and that some must become poorer as others become richer.

Hertel also asks why I did not reference Nussbaum on human capacities. As Nussbaum argues, human rights enhance women's capacities: the more rights they have, the more they can strive for and attain others. Nussbaum agrees with my own position on how paid employment, as well other resources, can enhance what she calls women's capabilities and what I refer to as autonomy: “When a woman can leave [her husband], she doesn't have to endure being beaten. And when the husband knows she can leave because she has employment opportunities or control over property, she is at least somewhat less likely to be beaten” (Nussbaum 2011: 8). Nevertheless, I prefer the human rights discourse to the discourse of human capacities because not all human beings possess capacities. Severely disabled human beings, for example, are entitled to the full range of human rights even if they have no capacity whatsoever to “form a conception of the good” or “recognize

and show concern for other human beings” (Nussbaum 2006b: 31). Hertel explains that “the capability approach states that we as human beings have a right to what we ought to have the capability to do, alone or with the help of others” (this issue: 451–452). The advantage of the human rights approach, however, is that it prohibits many of human beings’ rights-abusive capabilities. Some capabilities are best left unrealized; for example, women as well as men are capable of the most horrific genocidal acts, as not only Nazism (Goldhagen 1997) but the genocide in Rwanda and ethnic cleansing in Yugoslavia in the 1990s show us.

Turning to noneconomic aspects of globalization, Hertel suggests that my “focus on improvements in the women’s condition leaves off the table discussion of the forms of globalization that would enhance the prospects for change in women’s position” (this issue: 455). She is correct that I did not discuss in detail “women’s ability to advocate for forms of globalization that strengthen their position(s) in multiple economic spheres” (Hertel this issue: 450–451). But not all critiques of economic globalization, whether by men or women, are sound. Some critics, for example, completely dismiss the relevance of economic growth to realization of economic human rights, arguing only for redistribution (Howard-Hassmann 2010: 114). Redistribution of wealth is an important means to ensure that all human beings enjoy their economic human rights, but it is not sufficient. Poor economies also need growth, and this growth is stimulated in many countries by integration into the global economic system.

Like Hertel, Arat refers to a transnational feminism that critiques globalization, mentioning, for example, women’s participation in the World Social Forum. She relies on Falk’s distinction between “globalization-from-below” and “globalization-from-above” (Falk 1999), claiming that globalization from below is “directed by people, based on equality, and motivated by cooperation” (Arat this issue: 460). This claim is not empirically grounded, even if one could argue that globalization from above is somehow not directed by “people.” Among those hundreds of millions of individuals who take advantage of the employment opportunities, however arduous, engendered by globalization are many who think only of themselves, and who are quite happy to enrich themselves even if (which is not necessarily the case) economic inequality is thereby widened. Nor are they necessarily interested in cooperation: They may be motivated by a desire to remove themselves from their families and/or communities, to cease cooperation with others, and to strike out on their own. Tens of millions of migrants, for example, “globalize” principally in order to better their own life chances. Perhaps many, or even all, transnational women’s groups in favor of reforming globalization or eliminating it entirely are motivated by cooperation. That is something that would have to be determined by research into their platforms, statements, and actions. But it is certainly not the case that all globalization “from below” is cooperative. In less-developed countries as in more developed, many women, even among the poorest of the poor, are economically rational beings who act in their own or their families’ material interests.

While Hertel focuses only on my section on globalization, Arat also briefly mentions other sections. Commenting on my argument that women, like men, need civil and political rights, Arat mentions that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was insufficient to protect women’s rights, even if women participated in devising it and ensuring the inclusion of antidiscrimination clauses. Thus, she confirms my argument that women need civil and political as well as economical, social, and cultural rights. I did not argue that the UDHR was sufficient for women’s rights; I argued only that it was necessary. Arat and I agree that violence against women was not covered in CEDAW nor were reproductive



rights adequately covered: I also note that lesbians' rights are still not adequately protected, nor do women enjoy reproductive freedom as long as they do not have the right to abortion.

Arat exaggerates, however, when she argues that the "remarkable efforts and increased attention to women's rights . . . are yet to yield concrete changes in political processes and practice" (this issue: 461). She cites as an example transitional justice and reparations procedures that "continue to be male centered and inadequate and insensitive to the violations experienced by women" (this issue: 461). Yet, since the mid-1990s the international movement for women's rights has persuaded transitional justice actors to pay attention to "women's issues" such as rape. Jurists, activists, and others now recognize, for example, that women need special procedures when asked to testify about sexual violence. Other concrete changes are the appointment of women truth commissioners and closer liaisons with women's groups (Hayner 2011: 85–90). Later in her commentary, contradicting her original statement that there are no concrete changes in political processes and practices, Arat notes that women have made significant progress in political representation and some progress in "breaking the glass ceiling" in the private sector. I agree with her that achievement of equal representation in military forces or in exploitative private corporations is problematic, from the point of view of the greater goals of peace and human rights. A feminist perspective concerned only with formal equality might celebrate these changes more than I do.

Arat states that I seem to look at women's rights through the lens of liberal feminism. If she is referring to liberal feminism in its historic guise, as I describe it in my article, then she is simply wrong. A central aspect of women's quest for social justice is indeed equality (Nussbaum 2006a: 51), which liberal feminism stresses, but formal legal equality of opportunity with men is not sufficient for women's rights. Lest it not be obvious from my article, I supported in 1970, and I support now, the aims of what was once known as "radical feminism," as well as the aims of liberal feminism. I support socialist feminism's concern with the differential impact of social class on women's (and men's) likelihood of enjoying their economic human rights, although I do not support socialism as an economic system. It has been tried and has dismally failed. I also agree with postmodern feminism that women are culturally diverse and that such diversity ought to be taken into account, as I argue in my section on culture and women's rights. In short, I support the entire (but still incomplete) range of international women's rights.

Arat analogizes capitalism to war and suggests that since I presumably object to war, so I ought to object to capitalism. The analogy of capitalism to war is far-fetched: A better analogy is to democracy. Winston Churchill said in the British House of Commons in 1947 that "democracy is the worst form of government, except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time" (Langworth 2008: 574). Similarly, capitalism is the worst form of economic system, except for all those others that have been tried from time to time. Capitalism is based on the profit motive, property rights, and free wage labor. This is a better system than slavery, serfdom, or socialism. It is also a better system than supposedly egalitarian (but frequently exploitative of women) subsistence agriculture, because the profit motive promotes growth, which is necessary for the standard of living that most in the Western world, and an increasing number in the non-Western world, enjoy. However, uncontrolled capitalism is a danger to all human rights, as we have seen most recently in the 2008 (and ongoing) financial crisis. The profit motive must not be permitted to override workers' rights; that it often does so is one reason so many women working in export processing zones (EPZs) suffer such appalling working conditions. Property rights must not be extended to mean governments cannot control who owns property and under

what conditions, so that, for example, men can sell land on which women had had usufruct rights to either local or global buyers (Howard-Hassmann 2011a). Globalization ought to be regulated by the state, by international law, and by international organizations, in order to control rampant capitalist exploitation.

Hertel is correct that the effects of globalization on any individual woman vary with her class, race, and other such positions. She is also correct that collective resources managed by the state ought to be available to assist women (and men) who cannot support themselves and their families. Only a social democratic state can protect the full range of women's international human rights. Social democracy is "a variant of liberalism that views the social provision of economic security as an inherent part of respect for the individual. . . . [in which] both civil and political freedoms associated with democracy and the economic protections associated with socialism are objectives of state policy" (Howard-Hassmann 2010: 137). Even less well-off regions can protect men and women's economic human rights if they follow social-democratic practices, as the Indian state of Kerala shows (Sen 1999; Sandbrook et al. 2007). In order to fully protect women's rights, such social democracies would also have to be informed by feminist analysis and gender sensitivity.

But all other things equal, a woman who possesses her own economic resources, under her own control, is better off than a woman who does not. Globalization provides some women with some economic opportunities they otherwise would not have. A woman without money is frequently a woman who is a prisoner, a slave of the men in her family (and sometimes of older women), who can terrorize her, sell her, rent her out, violate her and even murder her with impunity. If globalization releases some women (the only contention I make) from such slavery, then it improves their human rights. Yes, money is not enough, as Arat points out: Many women are terrorized physically into turning over their money to their kinfolk, while others may accept a customary imperative to do so. But women are also capable of making their own autonomous decisions as to where to devote their resources, and many choose to devote them to their families. Arat worries that women's expenditure on their families and children might simply be a consequence of "a sense of responsibility inflicted by patriarchal norms embedded in the culture and internalized by women" (this issue: 462). That might be the case for some women; others, though, might actually decide freely to spend their earnings on their children and kinfolk, male as well as female. There is no reason to assume that a world in which, some day, women may be fully equal to men in all respects will be one in which women assume a radically individualistic stance, putting their own interests ahead of those of their children and family.

While Arat is probably correct that "there is no clear and consistent evidence to support the argument that gainful employment leads to the autonomy and empowerment of women" (this issue: 462), there is evidence that in some case it does. Arat claims that Razavi "draws a picture [of globalization and women's employment] that can take various titles but hardly 'autonomy' or 'empowerment'" (this issue: 460). In fact, Razavi argues that structuralist accounts of women's employment in EPZs disregard women's subjective views of their jobs. She refers to a study of Javanese "factory daughters" whose work enabled them to undermine patriarchal social relations; she also discusses a study of women garment workers in Dhaka, who experienced an increasing sense of self-worth through their work. "[D]espite being problematic," Razavi argues, "very few women would like to see their jobs in export-oriented factories disappear" (Razavi 2001: 34–37, quotation from p. 37). Thus, some women do indeed enjoy an increased sense of autonomy as a consequence of work in the global economy.

Finally, Hertel's title: "Standing on the Shoulders of Giants, Looking Up From the Grassroots" implies that small-scale qualitative studies of grassroots poverty are more

useful for social analysis than aggregate quantitative studies. But those of us who use aggregate data (as, for example, Arat does when citing statistics on inequality) and who take seriously improvements in, as well as violations of, human rights, also look up from the grassroots. If we are concerned with women, or the poor (not necessarily synonymous) then we should note the aggregate consequences of large-scale processes of economic, political, or social change, as well as small-scale qualitative studies of violations of economic human rights. One of the problems in this entire discussion is the assumption that one is, or ought to be, “pro” or “anti” globalization. There is no more sense, however, in taking a position for or against globalization in 2011 than there would have been in taking a position for or against European industrialization in 1780. In both cases, multiple economic and social changes have occurred, with manifold results, some positive and others negative for women’s human rights. Both aggregate quantitative and small-scale qualitative studies point to disparate effects of globalization, positive and negative.

I stand by my conclusion that there has been tremendous progress in women’s rights since 1970. Nor should this be surprising, given the amount of effort that both feminist and human rights activists and scholars have put into promoting women’s human rights over this 40-year period. But I also stand by my conclusion that “Poverty still plagues much of the human race, and the benefits of development and globalization are spread very unevenly” (Howard-Hassmann this issue: 446). A nuanced view of globalization and autonomy—the aspect of my article on which both Arat and Hertel focus—will take seriously the positive consequences of globalization for (some) women’s autonomy, rather than only accentuating the negative.

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