



## Analyzing Global Commodity Chains and Social Reproduction Mapping the Household within Multi-Sited and Hierarchical Capitalist Relations

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### Abstract

*World-systems analysts argue that households take on a structural role within the capitalist system to mediate pressures exerted by the state and economic actors. Underpinning this view is the supply of low-paid and waged labor by household members in the process of social reproduction and the role of households as sites of commodity consumption. Here, I argue that the analytical choice to use the features of low-waged households renders a partial analysis of their structural location within a multi-sited capitalist system. While acknowledging that households across the Global Commodity Chain (GCC) are neither spatially segregated (i.e., global North, global South) nor solely spaces of production or consumption, I suggest that households differ in their structural location within a multi-sited capitalist system, subject to their incidence on the instantiation of hierarchical capitalist relations. First, “core” households differ from their peripheral counterparts via their reliance on financial assetization and capital accumulation in the core for (intergenerational) social reproduction. Second, in the process of social reproduction, core household excess commodity consumption generates metabolic differentials that fuel hierarchical relations of production and place core households in a more central location within a multi-sited capitalist system compared to peripheral ones. Third, the analysis of hierarchical capitalist relations and GCCs focuses on capital accumulation and the extraction of (women’s) household unpaid labor in the periphery. I argue that to more fully capture the extraction of unpaid labor across the GCC, household fluidity and heterogeneity and associated variation in intra-household divisions of labor must be analytically considered.*

**Keywords:** Inequality, Households, Gender, Global Commodity Chain, GCCs, Development, Capitalism



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Within the capitalist world system, the globalization of production networks is inextricably linked to the daily iterative and aggregate provisioning practices of households connecting the lives of those who produce commodities with those who consume them. While the relationship between the expansion of the capitalist system and the requirements for social reproduction are complex and contradictory, the Global Commodity Chain (GCC) approach as formulated by world-systems analysts has been instrumental in analytically untangling some of the macro-historical and asymmetric social relations of production and capital accumulation that render some geographies peripheral to the world economy while maintaining others in the core. In distilling these insights, world-systems scholars point to social relations of production and the multiple levels of extraction that GCCs generate across space wherever they “touch down,” and identify the appropriation of labor as essential for processes of capital accumulation (Hopkins and Wallerstein 1986). In so doing, world-systems analysts effectively link (macro-systemic) capitalist relations with (micro-level) supply of wage work by those who engage in the production of global commodities.

World-systems analysts also recognize that individual workers do not live in a vacuum but are part of broader social formations (e.g., households), and that capital accumulation not only requires the appropriation of individual low-wage labor but that it also depends on the unpaid work performed largely by women in worker households extracted in the process of social reproduction (Wallerstein and Smith 1992). Pooling of resources—both waged and unpaid, or what world-systems analysts term “householding”—is essential for processes of capital accumulation that render the household a site of capitalist relations (McGuire, Smith, and Martin 1986). Thus, in this view, the micro-level and everyday (low-paid and unpaid) practices of household social reproduction or householding coupled with the socio-spatial reach of GCCs works to instantiate hierarchical capitalist relations of production and accumulation.

Yet, while the significance of the household, gender, and social reproduction did not escape GCC framework architects, Dunaway (2001, 2014) argues that the centrality of households and of women’s unpaid reproductive labor is not adequately reflected in GCC framework architectures and analysis. As a corrective, Dunaway endeavors to more fully account for the subsidies siphoned off from women and households in the periphery via GCCs by revising the world-systems commodity chain framework. While this is a welcomed contribution, Dunaway’s analytical focus on peripheral households as the quintessential site where capitalist relations are instantiated reinforces the production bias embedded in the world-systems approach and keeps households higher up the chain elusive to analytical scrutiny.

The production bias is apparent in the dearth of GCC studies that adequately integrate analysis of capitalist relations both at the production and consumption end of GCCs to specify the distinct ways households condition and are conditioned by capitalist relations. Instead, when referring to commodity consumption, GCC analysts point to socially dis-embedded and agency-bereft “consumers” who passively benefit from the flow of cheap commodities. The emphasis is often on structural explanations that point to the role of transnational corporations (TNCs) and their

GCCs play in generating multiple inequalities across the globe, obscuring the role of consumption. However, the nexus between household consumption and social reproduction cannot exclusively be explained by the structural forces exercised by GCCs on households and the corporations that drive them. Instead, the analysis of powerful entities such as TNCs and the mundane consumption choices of more ubiquitous social formations (Bishop and Payne 2021; Sassen 2021) such as households require analytical re-embedding as one of the multiple sites where hierarchical capitalist relations are instantiated.

From this perspective, capitalist relations rely not only on farms, factories, and peripheral households but on household social reproduction and consumption across the GCC to realize capital accumulation. Therefore, to more fully account for the location of households within a multi-sited capitalist system, it is essential to analytically consider household consumption and shed light on the ways it conditions the material proliferation, expansion, and intensification of commodity production across the globe. To that end, I start by unpacking the production bias in the world-systems conceptualization of householding to draw an analytical distinction between “core” and “peripheral” households based on what I identify as “metabolic differentials” influencing the household’s structural location within a multi-sited capitalist system.

I suggest that in seeking to normalize high metabolic rates, core households condition hierarchical capitalist relations via their income generation portfolios and excess consumption, deepening core-periphery inequalities. In the next section, I apply world-systems analysts’ categorization of income portfolios to draw attention to the role of financialized assets in household social reproduction that differentiate the structural location of core households within the capitalist system. In the third section, I build on world systems’ depiction of the household as a site of commodity consumption and differences between “needs” and “wants” to argue that core household excess commodity consumption associated with social reproduction generates what I identify as household metabolic differentials that depend on the instantiation of hierarchical capitalist relations. These metabolic differentials have a greater incidence on processes of capital accumulation in the core and the deepening of hierarchical capitalist relations compared to their peripheral counterparts. In the fourth section, I engage with Dunaway’s (2001) revision of the GCC approach to suggest that the focus on heteronormative and nuclear peripheral households obscures the conceptualization of households as social formations subject to endogenous and exogenous change across the lifecycle and the spatial reach of GCCs. I suggest recovering world-systems analysts’ conceptualization of the household to account for different types of households (e.g., non-nuclear, non-heteronormative, non-conforming, and non-binary), but also to capture household fluidity (e.g., changes during the lifecycle) and shed light on the unpaid labor contributed by a broad array of household members, and the intra-household divisions of labor and inequalities these generate.

This article contributes to the world-systems GCC literature by examining the production bias and the analytical gap this creates in conceptualizing the structural location of the household within a multi-sited capitalist system. Specifically, it calls attention to differences in financialized income pooling and consumption. In addition, this article contributes to the literature on gender and

inequality by pointing to household heterogeneity and fluidity across the socio-spatial reach of GCCs and arguing for specificity in the analysis of household divisions of labor.

### **Structural Location of Households in the World-System:**

#### **Production Bias and Financialized Household Income Portfolios**

Wallerstein, Martin, and Dickinson acknowledge that households predate the capitalist world-economy (Wallerstein, Martin, and Dickinson 1982). However, they point out that the household takes on a different structural role within the capitalist system as a site where systematic exogenous pressure by employers and the state is exerted to secure the availability of low-cost labor and to create demand for commodities (Wallerstein et al. 1982). However, while the structural role of unpaid and waged labor has commanded much scholarly attention, what remains analytically unspecified is household consumption and the structural location it occupies within the hierarchical capitalist system. That is, while world-systems analysts point to the essential role of paid and unpaid resource pooling to meet household social reproduction, the analytical choice to focus on low-wage households at the production end of GCCs (McGuire et al. 1986; Wallerstein and Smith 1992), obscures the systematic examination of household resource pooling and consumption practices across the socio-spatial reach of GCCs providing only a partial view of the structural location of households within the capitalist system. As such, the household as a structural site of hierarchical capitalist relations remains inadequately elaborated.

When examining the relationship between householding and paid work, world-systems analysts identify a portfolio of household income sources including hourly wages, public support, rents (e.g. derived from animals and agricultural equipment), and gifts (e.g., jewelry) and categorize households as subsistence (de-commodified), semi-proletarian, and proletarian (Hopkins and Wallerstein 1977). In addition, world-systems analysts recognize the spatiality of households by placing a greater proportion of semi-proletarian and proletarian households in the core and pointing to them as “a defining feature of core status” (Hopkins and Wallerstein 1977: 136). What remains insufficiently examined is how financialized household income portfolios condition capitalist relations, how this reflects the structural location of core households, and to what extent this location provides core households with avenues to sustain exogenous pressure across generations.

Categories of income streams (e.g. wages, public support, rent, and gifts) may be common to both low-wage peripheral and core households; however, there are some important differences (Davies et al. 2011) to consider in relation to how they condition and are conditioned by the capitalist system. For instance, in relation to earned income, core households may pool their income not only from wages but also from salaries accessing additional formal employment benefits that rely on the wellbeing of financial markets or are linked to company performance, including company shares and bonuses, retirement funds and investment portfolios, and financialized pension plans, among others (e.g., Bricker, Moore, and Thompson 2019). For instance, in placing pension funds within the capitalist system, Braun (2022) illustrates how

privatized U.S. pension funds (accounting for 62 percent of global pension assets in 2021) are under the control of asset managers (but also private equity firms and hedge funds) whose interests do not align with those of labor but seek to increase shareholder value through high-risk investment and the creation of financialized investable assets across the world.

In their quest for shareholder value, the asset management sector not only lobbies states for pension privatization and laxed regulation to engage in high-risk investment and the expansion of asset classes, but also lobbies firms to increase their “bottom line” by restructuring firms and creating (intergenerational) employment precarity and a cheaper labor pool of younger workers (Braun 2022). Similarly, the expansion of asset classes not only includes investments in commodities but also real estate, where the push to increase profit translates into higher rents and housing bubbles (Braun 2022). From this perspective, Braun shows how “pension fund capitalism” and pension fund activism makes “labor’s capital a major protagonist in a radical transformation of residential real estate into an asset class for institutional capital pools” (Braun 2022: 76). From this perspective, pension funds constitute a driver of the ubiquitous financialization of anything that can be turned into an investable asset fueling hierarchical capitalist relations and generating multiple inequalities and vulnerabilities across space and time (Gouzoulis, Iliopoulos, and Galanis 2023). While there is variation in the financialization of pension funds within the context of the development of the capitalist system mediated by the state (Aalbers et al. 2023), what is important to note here is that core household social reproduction not only depends on pension fund capitalism but also fuels it, a feature that differentiates core from peripheral households.

Similarly, as world-systems analysts point out, while gifts and rent are common sources of income pooled to support household social reproduction these income streams differentiate the structural location of core households and their conditioning of the capitalist system. For instance, while peripheral households may rely on gifts and rent (e.g., jewelry, animals, etc.) for (intergenerational) social reproduction, core households rely on gifts including financial investments (e.g., stocks, bonds, etc.), cash, and financialized assets for their social reproduction. Intergenerational in vivo transfers are particularly significant for core household social reproduction, household wealth accumulation, and social stratification (Kohli 2004; Leopold and Schneider 2011; Hansen and Wiborg 2019; Adkins, Cooper, and Konings 2020, 2021; Hällsten and Thaning 2022).

Within the context of exogenous pressures on the household, studies show that intergenerational transfers and gifts are essential to enable home ownership and asset-building, and to maintain or boost current and future generation class status (Albertini and Radl 2012; Druta and Ronald 2017; Keister, Benton, and Moody 2019; Adkins et al. 2020; Toft and Friedman 2021; Ouma 2023), including for the lower middle classes (Bricker et al. 2019; Ouma 2023). Therefore, “the bank of mum and dad” not only provides a significant intergenerational buffer to exogenous pressures not available to peripheral households but also serves to concentrate intergenerational wealth and reproduce class stratification (Kohli 2004; Hansen and Wiborg 2019; Hansen and Toft 2021).

In vivo transfers of parental wealth and the generation of household inequality is not only patterned but also varies within and across contexts including the United States, UK, and European and Scandinavian countries (See e.g., Kohli 2004; Albertini, Kohli, and Vogel 2007; Feiveson and Sabelhaus 2018; Hällsten and Thaning 2022). A 2018 study based on the Federal Reserve Board's Survey of Consumer Finances (SCF), containing detailed information on intergenerational transfers by demographic and socioeconomic markers, shows that in vivo transfers are highly skewed in demographic distribution, with 88 percent of gift recipients being white and 43 percent college educated. Households at the top ten percent of the income distribution receive 38 percent, those at the bottom 50 percent receive 21 percent, and those in the middle receive 41 percent of intergenerational transfers respectively. When accounting for wealth group, the top ten percent receives 56 percent of intergenerational transfers, the bottom 50 percent only eight percent, and those in the middle receive 36 percent (Feiveson and Sabelhaus 2018). However, it is important to note that the intergenerational transfers to those in the middle is not unsubstantial and that this has important implications not only for buffering exogenous pressures on households but also launching the propulsive power of unearned income (Toft and Friedman 2021), and for the continued financial assetization (See e.g., Birch and Ward 2022; Chiapello 2023) of capitalist markets through social reproduction.

In assessing the significance of asset ownership and intergenerational transfers as vectors of social stratification constitutive of class status, Adkins and colleagues (2021) argue that:

...the past decades have seen a dramatic growth of property prices in a context where wages have, by and large, stagnated... we are arguing that property inflation ... is also a structural feature of the current phase of capitalism and has been central to the production of a new social structure of class and stratification that is characterized by a logic of its own (Adkins et al. 2021: 549).

And while the beneficiaries of this new type of social structure and stratification grapple with the tension between meritocracy and privilege, the material benefits of accessing wealth generating assets such as housing constitute the key determinant of life chances (Moor and Friedman 2021). This is not only for those seeking to consolidate wealth but those vulnerable to class slippage or in the precarious middle (Bricker et al. 2019).

Within the context of differentiated welfare systems across Western Europe, Albertini, Kohli, and Vogel (2007) show patterns of intergenerational gift-giving within countries, but also differences in the frequency and magnitude of gifts across countries where southern European countries are characterized by less frequent but more substantial transfers than those in Nordic countries (Albertini et al. 2007) and continental European countries somewhere along the spectrum. In addition, they find a correlation between country-specific transfer patterns and Esping-Andersen's (1990) typology of welfare regimes. This suggests the role of the state in mediating the development of the capitalist system (Wallerstein 1988), and variation in forms of exogenous pressure exerted on households. While the practice of giving and receiving intergenerational gifts is far from straightforward, particularly when recipients are confronted with

the materiality of their privilege and its relationship to inequality (Cook 2021; Friedman et al. 2021; Ouma 2023), what is of import here is that financialized and intergenerational income streams differentiate the location of core households within a multi-sited capitalist system.

Altogether, there are a few key issues to note in relation to world-systems analysts' efforts to highlight the structural location of the household within the capitalist system. A closer examination of household income portfolios shows that core and peripheral households differ significantly in how they condition and are conditioned by the capitalist system. By drawing on the features of peripheral households, world-systems analysts identify a portfolio of household income sources where earned income is circumscribed by the wage relation and does not entail access to financialized assets, formal employment, and entitlement to benefits, etc. This stands in contrast to core households where (intergenerational) social reproduction relies on financialized assets and employment-related benefits that closely align with the realization of capital accumulation in the core; and in so doing, fuel hierarchical and expansionist capitalist relations. However, while locating the structural position of households within the capitalist system requires analytical specification not only of why and how households are constitutive of core status, it also highlights variation in household "coreness" and the benefits and vulnerabilities this location provides (See e.g., Gale et al. 2020; Morelli et al. 2022; Palladino 2023). Finally, financial assetization of income streams is differentiated but also patterned. Therefore, the structural location of households within the capitalist system is mediated by the state and the regulatory scaffolding (or lack thereof) associated with levels of capitalist development where households are differentially embedded. As such, conceptualizing the structural location of households within the capitalist system requires analytical specification of in situ conditions underpinning householding in the global South and North (e.g., legacies of internal colonialism; see Cardoso and Faletto 1979), the variegated incidence on hierarchical capitalist relations, and the benefits and vulnerabilities that this location may entail.

### **Social Reproduction and Excess Consumption:**

#### **Household Metabolic Differentials across GCCs**

World-systems analysts recognize that the household is as much a site of production as it is of consumption. They analytically differentiate need from want in relation to household commodity consumption but refrain from elaborating on the significance of commodity consumption for the materialization of hierarchical capitalist relations. This is a significant omission when analyzing the structural location of households within the capitalist system, particularly given historical trends toward the expansion of consumption (See e.g., Bryant and Pini 2006; Mullins 2011) of commodities, and the natural resources necessary for their circulation (See e.g., Barrett et al. 2013; Wiedmann and Lenzen 2018; Dorninger et al. 2021; Bruckner et al. 2023).

As world-systems analysts point out, households engage in need and want consumption associated with the process of social reproduction. However, what they fail to elaborate on is that households differ in their consumptive "metabolic rate," with peripheral households pooling to

provision needs while core households pool to satisfy wants reflected in excess commodity consumption, which magnifies core household waste, land, and energy use (Weinzettel et al. 2013; Ivanova et al. 2016; Dubois et al. 2019). As such, excess consumption is reflected in the difference between household metabolic rates or “metabolic differential” distinguishing core from peripheral households and rendering them not only a structural feature of multi-sited capitalism where commodities come to rest but a driving force.

As Taylor points out,

[P]roduction creates no value unless the product itself can be socially validated through sale on the market and, as such, production must be understood not solely as a conjuncture of concrete, embedded relationships but as one moment in a circuit of capital spanning production and circulation. (Taylor 2007: 536)

Here, the abstract value of labor does not only materialize in the form of a commodity but is “constituted socially and disclosed to producers post-factum in the market as a form of imposition” (Taylor 2007: 536). Therefore, the process of realizing the abstract value of commodities via the structural scaffolding of GCCs requires social validation materialized in the micro-level choices and preferences associated with daily household consumption in the process of social reproduction.

The examination of micro/macro dynamics that lend the household a structural location within multi-sited capitalism reflects broader feminist engagements with social reproduction. Despite the perseverance of the production bias, these theoretical interventions highlight the link between macro-structural and micro-level daily practices as constitutive of capitalism, providing an analytical foundation for placing household social reproduction within the context of global capitalism (Bakker and Gill 2003; Bakker and Silvey 2012; Enloe 2013). For instance, Bakker (2007) recognizes that the mutually conditioning, asymmetrical, and structural relationship between market-based hierarchical capitalist relations and everyday household practices generates “a conflictive relationship between the imperatives of capitalism and the necessities of material life, or between capitalist production and social reproduction” (Bakker 2007: 543).

Similarly, Katz (2001) emphasizes the need to

look at the material social practises through which people reproduce themselves on a daily and generational basis and through which the social relations and material bases of capitalism are renewed—and the havoc wreaked on them by a putatively placeless capitalism [so that] we can better expose both the costs of globalisation and the connexions between vastly different sites of production. (Katz 2001: 709)

Here, social reproduction and macro-level capitalist structures are considered “the fleshy, messy, and indeterminate stuff of everyday life” characterized as “mutually constitutive and in tension” (Katz 2001: 711). As such, the micro-level daily choices are recognized to be constitutive of macro-level capitalist structures and the multiple inequalities this uneasy interdependency generates. Dunaway (2001) also points out that the economy cannot be understood in isolation from the practices of everyday life but are integral to it. Together, these insights explicitly point to

the significance of micro-level daily practices for the instantiation of capitalist macro-level structures.

While the role of daily practices of social reproduction is recognized as integral to capitalism the analysis of household commodity consumption, its embeddedness in practices of householding, and its incidence on hierarchical capitalist relations remain elusive. For instance, in endeavoring to place women's daily unpaid labor in the practice of social reproduction and capital accumulation at the heart of the GCC framework, Dunaway (2001) reproduces the production bias and misses the opportunity to question the nexus of household consumption and social reproduction across the GCC. Instead, she points to core households as passive spheres of consumption by placing the onus of core-periphery and gender inequalities on macro structural factors related to the spatial reach of GCCs and driven by economic actors:

There is a third way in which households are crucial to capitalism, for they are the structural end points of commodity chains. Without households, consumer goods would have far fewer arenas for marketing and profit-taking... Key transnational corporations control the development and distribution of new consumer goods and define the spatialities and target groups that will be the markets for commodities. Consequently, consumption is structured around and reinforces gender inequalities, as well as the polarization between rich and poor countries. (Dunaway 2014: 74)

Macro-structural explanations, however, cannot fully account for the inequalities generated across the GCC, if daily micro-level practices of social reproduction are to be considered integral to the instantiation of hierarchical capitalist relations, as feminist scholars argue. From this perspective, the analytical examination of consumption and household social reproduction requires the “embodiment” of the abstract consumer not just as “target groups,” but as active agents embedded in household formations and engaged in daily commodity consumption.

Within the context of food consumption, daily micro-level consumption choices and preferences reverberate across the GCC and play an important role in diversification, intensification, and expansion in the production of agricultural exports across the globe. From a consumption perspective, preferences and choices may reflect complex and contradictory societal norms and values encapsulated in dietary and nutritional predilection (e.g., paleo, functional), value-led choices (e.g., vegan, fair-trade, ethical, local, etc.), and social constraints (e.g., fast, ready-made, “cheap” food), among others. Notwithstanding the reasons underlying choice and preference, what is of import to the discussion here is that material choices and preferences at one end of the GCC have magnified consequences across the social milieus within which production networks are dispersed yet embedded across the globe, and how this conditions macro-level capitalist structures. Also, when seeking to draw differences in the location of the household within a multi-sited capitalist system and the inequalities this generates across the GCC, what is also important to note is the leeway core households may have to exercise preference and choice in food consumption compared to peripheral ones.

As such, the exercise of choice and preference by core households actively condition hierarchical capitalist relations that create social reproduction tensions and vulnerabilities along

the GCC. This is not to essentialize core households by characterizing their structural location as inherently poised to syphon the benefits of core-periphery inequality, but to emphasize that “consumers” are embedded within larger social systems (i.e., households) and that core household consumption in the process of social reproduction requires agency and has impacts across the GCC. Therefore, while corporations orchestrate production networks and markets creating structural links between the core and the periphery, the uptake and intensification of commodity consumption is far from inevitable or predetermined. That is, the production of commodities is not solely associated with powerful economic actors and TNC production networks but is also driven by the active and iterative daily choices and preferences of individuals existing not in a social vacuum (e.g., the consumer) but embedded in households and actively engaged in the process of social reproduction.

The analytical task of revising the world-systems GCC framework, therefore, entails not only entering the through the doorway of low-wage commodity producing households to account for women’s unpaid labor as Dunaway (2001) asks us to do, but also requires calibrating macro-structural explanations of inequality with micro-level daily household consumption choices and preferences to problematize the normalization of excess commodity consumption constitutive of core household social reproduction and core-periphery metabolic differentials.

### **Conceptualizing the Household within Multi-Sited Capitalist Relations:**

#### **Endogenous Fluidity and Cross-Household Heterogeneity**

In analyzing gender inequality at the individual and societal levels gender scholars have long recognized three analytical divides: production/reproduction, household/market, and informal/commodity chain work (Prügl 2020). From a GCC perspective and within the first divide, Dunaway (2014) highlights three aspects of production/reproduction and informal/commodity chain work divides. First is the reproductive work women perform when raising and socializing future generations of workers including not only all forms of care work but ensuring the socialization and assimilation of cultural norms, behavior, and social expectations of future generations (e.g., social norms, values and aspirations, discipline, work ethic, efficiency, productivity, etc). Second is the unpaid daily work provided by women including washing clothes, preparing meals, and collection of recyclables and natural resources among others used to subsidize low wage work by household wage earners (Dunaway 2013). Within the informal/commodity chain analytical divide, Dunaway (2001, 2014) points to women’s participation in low paid and informal export commodity production performed at home or in factories, and how informal work and unpaid labor is a subsidy to capital accumulation at the production end of GCCs (Dunaway 2013). Together, the elaboration of these divides are used to point out the limitations of the GCC framework in capturing unpaid labor at the production end of GCCs.

However, it is important to point out that Dunaway’s (2001, 2014) interventions are premised on the analysis of intra-household social relations associated with the heteronormative and nuclear

family where the relationship between spouses (i.e., husband and wife) takes analytical precedence over all other relations (e.g., father-child, mother-child, in-laws, extended, blended family, etc.) or other types of households (e.g., non-heteronormative, non-binary, non-monogamous). As such, Dunaway's (2001, 2014) interventions mark an important analytical departure from world system analysts' conceptualization of the household understating the multiple features of the household as a social formation across the GCC.

World-systems analysts conceptualize the household as a porous and historically situated network of social relations not necessarily bound by kinship or contract (as in marriage or the nuclear family) but one that is characterized by a fluid membership of kin and non-kinship relations and whose members may or may not share the same residence, and that changes over time (Wallerstein et al. 1982; McGuire al. 1986). To achieve social reproduction within the context of exogenous pressure by the state and capital, the practice of householding requires (waged and unpaid) resource pooling by a variety of household members (e.g., children, youth, adults, elderly, non-relatives, etc.), and not just contractually bounded adult men and women. This conceptualization of the household provides the opportunity to capture a range of intra-household inequalities (e.g., age, birth order, race, class, seniority, gender, religion, etc.), and to specify different types of households as social formations (e.g., nuclear, blended, intergenerational, non-conforming, etc.), and their divisions of labor.

By narrowing the analytical lens to a subset of households—the heteronormative nuclear family—Dunaway's (2001, 2014) interventions obscure the heterogeneity and fluidity of households across the GCC, where unpaid labor is contributed by variety of (resident, non-resident, etc.) household members across the lifecycle while circumscribing the mutability of gender norms. And yet, as Pearse and Connell (2016) argue, gender norms and practices are dynamic and relational because

[T]here is no irresistible process of socialisation that embeds gender norms in every head and guarantees transmission between generations...but gender norms, as prescriptive statements, also enable action, and this may be action to contest gender inequality...To put it in a nutshell, there is not a simple opposition between gender norms and women's agency. (Pearse and Connell 2016: 47–48)

Decoupling women's bodies from reproductive work is not meant to suggest that women do not endure gender-based inequality related to reproductive labor. To the contrary, women share gender-based oppression across the GCC and within the patriarchal and capitalist hierarchy. Rather, this is to acknowledge that households as social formations are heterogenous across space and the lifecycle, and that household divisions of labor are mutable. As such, a revision of the GCC framework requires a re-examination of the heteronormative nuclear family as a congealed template (See e.g., Furstenberg 2020) of intra-household divisions of labor and analytically include non-binary, non-heteronormative and non-normative households (Bergeron 2011; Furstenberg et al. 2020), and the divisions of labor that these may entail. Recognizing that

[G]ender is not simply about males and females, but more powerfully about a governing code that privileges what is characterized as masculine (not necessarily men) at the expense of what is stigmatized as feminine (not necessarily women). As a governing code, gender normalizes structures of social “difference” as hierarchical. (V. Spike Peterson 2010: 190)

Thus, as a governing code, gender normalizes or “maps” hierarchical difference onto a variety of bodies across the lifecycle require that traditional divisions of labor be re-examined to capture a variety of vectors of social stratification associated with household social reproduction and unpaid labor. As such, what is emphasized here is that structural tensions among women created by GCCs are not always axiomatic nor inevitable. That is, while gender-based oppression is shared among women, their exploitation is not structurally predetermined by the performance of unpaid labor at opposite ends of the GCC, as Dunaway suggests, “[a]t the consumption end of a commodity chain, core women diminish their own household hardships because they are subsidized by the peripheral women whose low-paid and unpaid labor keeps prices low” (Dunaway 2001: 17). Instead of placing the onus on women as an analytical category to account for exploitation across the GCC, I suggest that underpinning household inequality is the drive and commitment to reach, sustain, and normalize metabolic differentials that require the materialization of governing codes of social difference to extract unpaid and cheap household labor and realize the abstract value of commodities through consumption in the process of social reproduction. Therefore, revising the GCC framework not only requires questioning assumptions of household homogeneity across space, lifecycle, and time, but also paying analytical attention to change in the mapping of codes of social difference associated with unpaid labor and household divisions of labor upon which capital accumulation depends.

### Conclusion

In this article, I suggest that the analytical choice to rely on features of peripheral households and their social reproduction practices generates a production bias in world-systems analysis of the household. This has significant implications for the examination of the structural location of households within a multi-sited capitalist system. I argue that households are locationally differentiated (i.e., core and periphery) due to their role in conditioning and being conditioned by the capitalist system. First, I analyze income resource pooling to illustrate how financialized income sources are not only an essential component of core household social reproduction but also require close alignment with hierarchical capitalist relations and capitalist accumulation in the core. Second, while both peripheral and core households engage in consumption as part of social reproduction, I argue that they differ in their metabolic rate reflected in the practice of excess commodity consumption. Household metabolic differentials as well as the daily choices and preferences this entails differentiates the structural location of households within the capitalist system and across the GCC. Here, core households emerge not just as passive commodity

receptacles but as drivers of excess commodity consumption in the process of social reproduction, fueling the expansion and deepening of hierarchical capitalist relations of production.

Third, at the intra-household level, I diverge from Dunaway (2001) to highlight that the subsidies that unpaid labor provides to capital accumulation cannot solely be attributed to the bodies of women but to the drive to maintain social reproduction metabolic differentials. I highlight that the socio-spatiality of GCCs requires conceptualizing the household not as a closed social system (i.e., the heteronormative nuclear family) but one that is fluid and heterogenous across the lifecycle and includes non-nuclear and non-conforming households where divisions of labor and markers of social stratification vary. In all, I suggest that mapping the household's structural location within a multi-sited capitalist system entails the analysis of endogenous and exogenous change within the broader social systems and normative ordering codes in which they are embedded.

There are “blind spots” (LeBaron et al. 2020) that require further analytical examination, however. Considering the spatial location of households as outlined by world-systems analysts entails gauging how and to what extent household resource pooling is enough to navigate exogenous pressures from the state and capital, not only in the periphery but also the core. Here, the question is not only what the implications of unresolved tensions on households are when pooling in situ resources is not enough to achieve household social reproduction (See e.g., Yeates 2004; Holmes 2013); but also, why and how their spatial embeddedness influence (or not) the mediation of exogenous change. Similarly, the examination of core households points to degrees in household “coreness” where the context of in situ state-society relations alongside levels of capitalist development influence their structural location within the capitalist system. Spatially grounding households across the GCC provides the opportunity to identify not only the benefits associated with core status but also to discern how household embeddedness in more developed capitalist systems and political economies moderate levels of household vulnerability, precarity, and inequality.

Second, as Spike-Peterson (2010) points out, households are sites where intergenerational socialization takes place and where gender identities and social stratification among others are learned and internalized so that the “emotional investments” associated with societal “orderings” and their normalization is materialized but can also be transformed (Spike-Peterson 2010: 196). In this view, this transformation entails internal “in our heads” and “in here” (in our hearts and bodies) and “out there” (institutional, etc.) components. And while “gender is being disrupted—at every level, and in very personal ways” (Spike-Peterson 2010: 197), what is not being disrupted is the privilege that is associated with “coreness.” That is, while the re-ordering and re-coding of household gender norms and practices is gaining momentum, this is not the case for class. Rather, the coding and ordering of class and the increasing metabolic differentials together with the inequality this engenders is stubbornly augmented and normalized. And yet, as de Grazia and Furlough (1996) state: “The gendered study of consumption brings back class through the front door. The changing meanings of consumption habits in successive forms of social stratification

highlights very different roles for women and men, over time and from class to class” (de Grazia and Furlough 1996: 9).

Putting it more bluntly, the emotional investments and material aspirations associated with affluence, class, and (intergenerational) upward mobility are not only environmentally unsustainable but also affect quality of life. Within the context of developed capitalist economies, work-life balance analysts point to the complexities of negotiating home and work life across gender and class difference (See e.g., Emslie and Hunt 2009). While the literature on work-life balance contributes to the understanding of the normative and structural causes of how and why gender inequalities are produced at the intersection of social reproduction and paid employment, what remains unexplored is the notion of work-life balance and the nexus of social reproduction and the upkeep of metabolic differentials, and its implications on transnational feminist understandings of labor.

The examination of this nexus is of importance since the tension of work-life balance is predicated on reconciling (intergenerational) labor market change (i.e., paid work) and time for social reproduction. As such, the calibration of household metabolic differentials associated with core household social reproduction and work-life balance even in the face of increased precarity (Standing 2014; Alvaredo et al. 2017) and household consumption must be examined. Therefore, an avenue for further research entails the examination of emotional attachments to class identity and their normalization through commodity excess consumption, work-life (im)balance, and the costs and benefits this generates across the spatial reach of commodity chains. This is of utmost importance given the role the core plays in the diffusion of consumption patterns that transform working class into bourgeoisie households, including in peripheral areas (Furtado 2021).

Third, households are not only the landscape where the circulation of commodities necessarily end or where these realize their use value. Rather, households increasingly partake in the resale of commodities using online platforms (e.g., eBay, Vinted, Craigslist, etc.) or through other methods (Lane, Horne, and Bicknell 2009; Brooks 2013; Gregson et al. 2013). As such the continued extraction of value from the (re)sale of commodities by core households requires analytical attention. Finally, while addressing the environmental issues raised by Dunaway (2001) is beyond scope of this article, a blind spot in the examination of GCCs and the environment is the role of core households in the consumption of commodified natural resources (e.g., energy, water, etc.) within the context of social reproduction. While capital may be footloose, households are less so. Therefore, the aim here is not only to place the onus of inequality on powerful actors (i.e., TNCs) but to lend due weight to households as ubiquitous yet no less influential social formations where commodities and environmental resources are intensively consumed, and capitalist relations are materialized, and therefore require (self) containment.

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