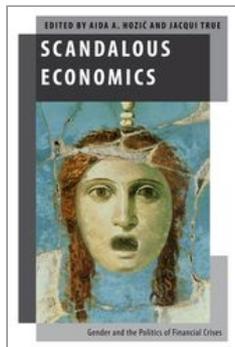


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## Scandalous Economics: Gender and the Politics of Financial Crises

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Print publication date: 2016

Print ISBN-13: 9780190204235

Published to Oxford Scholarship Online: April 2016

DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190204235.001.0001

## Exploits and Exploitations

A Micro and Macro Analysis of the “DSK Affair”

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DOI:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190204235.003.0009

### Abstract and Keywords

The “DSK Affair,” on the surface, provides a classic example of the role that intersecting power differentials play in sexual assault. A classic rape script is re-enacted when a powerful rich white man is accused of sexually assaulting a black female domestic worker. Despite an emerging pattern of sexual aggression by the accused, it is the credibility of the victim that is called into question, as her vulnerable societal position is used against her. These gendered, raced, and classed power dynamics take on a whole new dimension when considering the accused’s role as the director of the International Monetary Fund and the complainant’s status as a migrant with asylum from Guinea, one of the poorest countries in the world. This chapter examines the parallels as well as the connections between the macro-level power politics of neoliberal exploitation and the micro-level power politics in the exploits of Dominique Strauss-Kahn.

*Keywords:* Dominique Strauss-Kahn, DSK Affair, sexual assault, exploitation, International Monetary Fund

On May 14, 2011, Dominique Strauss-Kahn, the director of the International Monetary Fund and probable Socialist candidate for the French presidency, was arrested on a plane at New York City's JFK Airport. In a dramatic scene, he was led away by police, disheveled and in handcuffs. He was charged with the sexual assault of Nafissatou Diallo, a 32-year-old Guinea native and housekeeper at the Sofitel New York, the hotel where Strauss-Kahn had been staying. Several days later, he resigned, much to the shock of France and the world. However, within months the case was dropped. The prosecution began to lose faith in the credibility of the victim and their ability to successfully prosecute the criminal case against this high-profile defendant.

Despite its sensationalization, the "DSK Affair" was not particularly extraordinary. A wealthy and powerful white man was accused of sexual assault by a black female domestic worker. While early attention was placed on Dominique Strauss-Kahn, the case ultimately came to focus on the credibility of the victim. Thus the alleged perpetrator's troubling sexual history was dismissed and all the structural inequalities within which male violence has long been rooted were ignored. In a classic reversal, her motives were put into question, and the very vulnerabilities that contributed to her assault were used against her. No longer a sympathetic victim, she was cast in the role of a lying, manipulative opportunist and **(p.146)** her attacker the victim of her deceit, targeted for his position of wealth and power.

These intersecting power differentials of gender, socioeconomic class, race, and nationality take on a whole new dimension when focusing on the actual identities of these actors. The alleged assailant is the director of the International Monetary Fund and possible presidential contender for France's 2012 election, and the alleged victim is a migrant and asylum recipient native to Guinea, one of the poorest countries in the world, both a former colony of France and a recipient of IMF funding. When put into juxtaposition and analyzed with a feminist lens, we see strong parallels as well as connections between the micro-level examples of the power asymmetries in the "DSK Affair" and the macro-level examples found in the global political economy.

Not unlike the rape narrative described here, critics of development politics discuss the ways in which neoliberal development policy is gendered, raced, and classed. Furthermore, such critics have gone so far as to characterize capitalist exploitation as both a form and instigator of violence. For example, Gibson-Graham (1996) discusses the “rape script” of globalization by which “capitalist penetration” cannot be avoided or contested. Beyond these general analogies, however, are the more telling links between the broader structural patterns of colonial legacies and neoliberal exploitation and widespread and increased violence against women. Linking together the micro-level and macro-level exploitations more directly is the narrative of feminized migration. Neoliberal practices imposed upon developing countries limit the opportunities for societal groups to survive, placing pressure on these groups (and increasingly the women of these groups) to migrate. Migration, although sometime touted as a source of gender liberation, is one that leaves many immigrant women vulnerable to sexual exploitation and other forms of violence.

Dominique Strauss-Kahn is not the perfect embodiment of neoliberalism. Almost paradoxically, he seemed to be leading the IMF in a different direction, away from structural adjustment and austerity measures and with a more meaningful emphasis on human development. Yet, at the same time, he was an active participant in the financial industry’s culture of misogyny and sexual exploitation. The Oscar-winning documentary *Inside Job* provides a brief insight into a world where strip clubs and prostitution are not only rampant, but a normalized part of finance, where madams are given blank invoices to charge sexual services as “consultations” or “market research.” These individual instances of sexual exploitation, violence, and abuse cannot and should not be understood as distinct from the policies that have facilitated similar systemic patterns at a global scale. **(p.147)** The global order being perpetuated by big finance is one that sets up the macro-level circumstances that create the vulnerabilities, which can then be taken advantage of in sometimes violent manners. While Dominique Strauss-Kahn might have been attempting to reform the global order that has played such a pivotal role in facilitating the exploitation of

women, this does not mean that he is not complicit in said exploitation in his personal endeavors.

This chapter examines the analogies and connections between the macro-level power politics of neoliberal exploitation and the micro-level power politics in the exploits of Dominique Strauss-Kahn, the IMF's former director. The chapter is organized into two sections. In the first section, I provide a micro-level analysis of the "rape script" and apply it to the "DSK Affair." In addition to providing an overview of the contradictory narratives by the alleged victim, perpetrator, and the media, as well as the varied responses to such narratives, I deconstruct the gendered, raced, and classed power dynamics that characterize the case, highlighting the ways in which it follows a common narrative for sexual assault. In the second section, I deconstruct the case in a different manner, relating specific micro-level details to their macro-parallels in the global arena, so as to demonstrate how the intersectional power dynamics of the "DSK Affair" mirror and are in fact made possible by trends in the broader international political and economic environment. Finally, I focus on connections between these levels of analysis, pushing beyond the narrative similarities to discuss the more direct implications of the neoliberal global order on violence against women.

### The "DSK Affair" and Its Enactment of a Common Rape Script

The “DSK Affair,” on its surface, exemplifies many of the power differentials surrounding sexual assault cases, not only in the scenario recounted by the alleged victim, but in the aftermath. In these particular events, we see an all too common narrative play out: one in which a person in a position of power and privilege takes advantage of and exploits the weaknesses of a person in a vulnerable position. It follows a “rape script,” a gendered grammar of violence with rules and a structure that assign people to positions within the script (Marcus 1992). In the “rape script,” men are the subjects of violence against women. Whether or not this violence is deemed as legitimate depends on the intersections of gender with race and class. The intersections determine which bodies are understood as sexually available, and **(p.148)** ultimately which bodies can be considered as rapable (MacKinnon 1997; Bourke 2007). Violence that contradicts classic power patterns, such as a darker man raping a white woman or a working-class man raping an upper middle-class woman, are deemed illegitimate and worthy of punishment. Violence that upholds power dimensions, such as intra-racial or intra-class violence, or intersecting hierarchies, such as a white man raping a darker woman or a wealthy man raping a poorer woman, is significantly more difficult to prosecute. In traditional societal construction, there are certain contextual circumstances in which women’s resistance to violence is considered not only unthinkable but is condemned when it occurs (Markus 1992).

While the feminist movement has done much to challenge these scripts in the past two decades, the scripts have not been completely eradicated. Instead they have taken on subtler and more insidious forms, most specifically with regard to the notion of “credibility.” Because rape is defined by consent (or the lack thereof), sexual assault cases become a process of judging one person’s word against another, or weighing one person’s reputation against that of another (Lees 1997). Randall (2010) argues that although the archetype of the “ideal” sexual assault victim has been expanded somewhat over the years, it still exists and functions so as to disqualify many complainants’ accounts of sexual assault. The excavation of personal records has been and remains a central strategy of the defense (Sheehy 2002; Randall 2010). “Good” victims are those who are deemed pure and demure, who are able to demonstrate that they fought to the best of their ability, and

who are able to consistently recount the struggle. “Bad” victims are those women whose lives, backgrounds, and characteristics depart from the narrow confines of ideal victims (Randall 2010). A victim’s “moral character” and “behavior” influence the prosecutors’ judgments regarding the credibility of complainants (Spears and Spohn 1997; Haskell 2003).

Race and class also play into the notion of credibility. Being white and middle class contributes to a victim’s credibility, whereas being poor may elicit the response that the woman made the accusation for monetary or other gains (Phipps 2009). Racialized and marginalized women are less easily identified as “ideal” victims and are more easily stigmatized as “bad” or “undeserving” victims (Randall 2010). Credibility testing can be compounded by cultural and language problems (Razack 2002). The power dynamics inherent in “credibility” often result in a woman’s vulnerabilities being used against her. Victim blaming is a persistent means of reinforcing structural inequalities and allowing sexual assault to continue undiminished. The “DSK Affair” illustrates many of the power dynamics theorized and demonstrated in the research of feminist scholars. What began as the **(p.149)** very public recognition and disruption of the dominant rape script quickly devolved into its re-entrenchment.

### The Victim's Narrative and Narratives of the Victim

In the original reports to detectives and the assistant district attorneys, Nafissatou Diallo provided her narrative of the alleged attack and her subsequent actions. On May 14, 2011, Diallo was working the Saturday morning shift, where she was assigned to clean the rooms on the 28th floor. A few minutes after noon she sees a room service attendant leaving Suite 2806, who assures her that the room is empty and ready to be cleaned. She opens the door, announces herself and then begins checking the rooms. When she approaches the bedroom she again announces herself and is confronted by a naked white-haired man approaching from a nearby bathroom. She apologizes and turns to leave. He grabs her breasts then slides around her to close the door to the suite. She pleads with him, "Sir, stop this! I don't want to lose my job." He responds, "You don't have to lose your job." He tells her that she is beautiful and pulls her onto the bed, pinning her to the edge, and attempts to force her to perform oral sex. She resists, pushes him away, and tells him that her supervisor is right there, which he dismisses. He becomes more aggressive, pushing her to the bathroom and pinning her to a wall and trying to pull down her pantyhose, of which she is wearing two pairs. He slides his hand beneath the pantyhose and grabs her hard. Again she tries to resist and he pushes her to her knees, wrenching her shoulder and then forcing himself into her mouth. Afterward she flees to the main hallway and hides in one of the rooms she previously cleaned. Not long afterward, she observes him leaving the suite and entering the elevator. Unsure as to what to do and afraid that she might lose her job, she attempts to return to work, but she feels nauseated and disoriented. A few minutes later, her supervisor arrives and upon encountering the shaken employee eventually coaxes a reluctant Diallo to share her story. The head of housekeeping and then security are called, and they encourage Diallo to make a police report.

Soon after the arrest, prosecutors very publicly announced that they had a strong case against the director of the International Monetary Fund. They had a victim who had consistently recounted the events, several witnesses who encountered her very soon after the attack who can recount her reaction, and physical evidence that demonstrated a sexual encounter with the alleged assailant. DSK's DNA is found in semen on Diallo's uniform and in the epithelial cells

on her pantyhose and panties. Doctor's observed **(p.150)** "redness" in her vaginal area about five hours after the attack, and she has a ligament tear in her shoulder. The evidence is compelling, and on May 18, DSK resigns his IMF directorship "with infinite sadness" in an effort "to protect this institution." In his resignation letter he denies "with the greatest possible firmness all of the allegations that have been made."

What seemed to be an airtight case, however, became questionable when prosecutors began to express doubt publicly. On June 30, 2011, prosecutors sent a letter to DSK's attorney, reporting that "during the course of this investigation, the complainant was untruthful with assistant district attorneys about a variety of topics concerning her history, background, present circumstances and personal relationships." On August 23, 2011, the charges were officially dropped, with a statement from Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus R. Vance, Jr.: "I determined that I was no longer convinced beyond a reasonable doubt that I know what happened—not that something didn't happen, but whether we, as an office, knew beyond a reasonable doubt what happened. We did not have that quantum of evidence." In court papers, the prosecuting team noted that their decision to drop the charges reflected doubts about the woman's overall credibility, not "factual findings." Prosecutors said that they still believed there was evidence to support the notion that DSK had forced the woman to perform oral sex, but that inconsistencies in her past and in her account of the moments following the episode could make it extremely difficult to persuade jurors to believe her (Associated Press 2012). This statement is telling. It was not that the evidence of the case or of the assailant (which will be discussed later) but the victim herself that weakened the case. What had happened?

Diallo's early relationship with the prosecuting team was a favorable one. It began to sour, however, when facts began to emerge about fabrications in her past and in her statement testimony. The first blow came when Diallo admitted that she had entered the country illegally on another women's visa and then later applied for asylum using a false story. She had been coached by an unidentified "immigration consultant" who made her memorize a story in which she claimed to be fleeing political and sexual persecution from Guinea. Diallo's actual story might have been enough to make these claims; she had been unwillingly subjected to female circumcision as a child

and later, as a teenager, was raped by two soldiers for violating curfew. She fled Guinea after her husband died of AIDs and with the hope of sending for her daughter so that she might avoid a similar fate of poverty and violence. The “consultant” insisted that she needed a more compelling tale, one she used to successfully gain asylum and later recounted convincingly to the prosecution team. In the scripted story, she claimed that she and her husband faced retaliation from a ruthless regime **(p.151)** that they opposed, her husband was tortured and left to wither away in prison as a political dissident, Diallo was beaten and gang-raped by soldiers who ripped her two-year-old daughter from her arms. In addition to the asylum story, Diallo admitted to cheating on her taxes (claiming a friend’s child as her own) and lied about her income to attain low-income housing.

While none of these factors diminished the evidence in Diallo’s case, once she could no longer be constructed as an “ideal” victim, the prosecution and the media (who had been leaked information) lost any sympathy they had previously held for her. Many of the societal positions that rendered her vulnerable in the first place were turned against her. According to Diallo, these lies had been all about securing a safe future for her daughter and herself. The unpleasant truth is that it is not uncommon for refugees to receive similar coaching to exaggerate and even fabricate claims as a means of navigating an onerous asylum process. Asylum seekers must present a convincing case of how the violence they have experienced is persecutory and it must meet a fairly high threshold; very few cases are successful. “Distinctions are drawn about the type of violence that is worthy of an asylum grant, the type of victim a ‘credible’ asylum seeker must be, and the violence experienced by an asylum seeker versus the violence experienced by an undocumented immigrant” (Nayak 2015). The asylum system as it is creates incentives for claimants to carefully craft their stories so as to provide the most compelling case (Nayak 2015). Gender-based claims are particularly difficult to navigate, in part because of the universal experiences of violence against women.

Exacerbating the situation were several misunderstandings that were publicized. Not long after the June 30th letter, the media began circulating a story that prosecution had a full transcript of a phone call Diallo had made to an incarcerated man within a day of the assault in which she commented that

her alleged attacker was rich and that she knew what she was doing. This new angle shifted the narrative toward painting Diallo as an opportunist. It was later revealed that there were two phone calls, both initiated by Amara Tarawally (the inmate). In the first call Diallo simply tells Tarawally about the assault, recounting details consistent with her official report. In the second phone call, Tarawally suggests that she could get money from this, but Diallo responds that she will let the lawyer deal with that issue. In this instance, the officers' interpretation of the conversation reflects and reinforces the rape myth in which lower class women accuse upper class men for monetary. They focus on the script they know, the discussion of money, even though it is not initiated by Diallo, and ignore the parts of the story that illustrate her vulnerability and that support earlier testimony. This narrative was reinforced when Diallo's lawyer filed a civil **(p.152)** suit against Strauss-Kahn in August, before the criminal charges were officially dropped. Sensing trouble in the criminal case, it was a sound strategy, one often used for victims of sexual assault because such cases have a lower standard of proof than do criminal trials and become an alternative mode of recourse for crime victims when the criminal case route is exhausted. The case was filed with the State Supreme Court in the Bronx, the complainant's home community, where the odds for a sympathetic jury were greater than in Manhattan. In sexual assault cases, however, choice of venue becomes an additional reason to question the motivations of the accuser, particularly in highly publicized cases where the defendant is very wealthy. Such questions were raised in this case, as the lawyers for Strauss-Kahn stated that they had always maintained that the motivations of the accuser included making money (Rashbaum and Eligon 2011).

The case was settled in 2012 for an undisclosed amount. According to one of her attorneys, "the agreement to settle the matter will provide her with a new beginning so that she and her daughter can move forward and begin the process of healing." He also noted that Diallo has been unable to work, disabled by a shoulder injury she suffered in the assault.

### DSK's Narrative and Narratives of DSK

Strauss-Kahn has persistently maintained his innocence. Several months later, in his first public interview, he stated, "What happened involved neither violence nor constraint nor aggression nor any offense." According to him, Diallo looked "surprised but in no way terrified."<sup>5</sup> He has characterized it as "a hurried sexual encounter" with a woman half his age whom he had never met (Palvia 2011). In a somewhat apologetic tone, he framed his actions, not as rape, but as "moral failing." "What happened was not only an inappropriate relation, but more than that, a mistake vis-à-vis my wife, my children and my friends, the French ... I regret it infinitely."

While the media and ultimately the prosecution focused much scrutiny on the victim's credibility, there was also significant public attention directed at the high-profile Dominique Strauss-Kahn. Two competing narratives emerged, one of DSK as a sexual aggressor and unrepentant serial sexual harasser, the other as "*le grand séducteur*" for whom consent, as per the "rape script," is never an issue. But the line between the two was often blurred, as demonstrated in Christophe Deloire and Christophe Dubois's 2006 book *Sexus Politicus* in which they dedicate a chapter to DSK's proclivity for "seduction to the point of obsession." In 2007, when Dominique Strauss-Kahn became the French candidate for the IMF, increased media (p.153) attention was drawn to his sex life. Jean Quatrema, a journalist for *Libération*, states that "[t]he only real problem with Strauss-Kahn is his attitude to women. Too insistent, he often comes close to harassment. It is a problem known to the media but that nobody talks about" (translated and quoted in *New York Times* 2011).

In 2008, Strauss-Kahn admitted an affair with Piroska Nagy, a Hungarian economist in a subordinate position at the IMF. The affair was ruled to be an "error of judgment" but not sexual harassment, despite the fact that Nagy wrote a letter to the IMF warning them of his behavior and stating that the relationship was not entirely consensual: "I was damned if I did and damned if I didn't, [he is] a man with a problem that may make him ill-equipped to lead an institution where women work under his command." During this time there were numerous reports, as well as firsthand accounts, of his advances on women. One French female politician, Socialist MP Aurélie Filipette, said that she had once been the object of a "very heavy-handed flirt" and that she made sure to never be

alone with him in a closed room. Danielle Evenou, the wife of a former Socialist minister and a well-known French actress, said flippantly in a radio interview, “Who hasn’t been cornered by Dominique Strauss-Kahn?” A more damning account of DSK’s behavior was reported by French writer Tristane Banon, in the aftermath of his arrest. She alleged that Strauss-Kahn attacked her when she was interviewing him in 2003. She reports that during an interview with him in an empty apartment, he forced her to the floor, tried to open her jeans and bra, and put his fingers in her mouth and underwear. She claims to have had to fend him off with kicks and punches. While Strauss-Kahn has admitted to making sexual advances, he claims that he only tried to kiss her and stopped when she objected. He has dismissed her claims of assault as “imaginary” and slanderous. Banon lodged her complaint after his arrest in New York, explaining that her mother and others had discouraged her from coming forward earlier because of his powerful political stature. French prosecutors decided against pursuing charges, citing that the case had exceeded the statute of limitation for sexual assault charges.

While there is persuasive evidence characterizing DSK as a sexually aggressive man with a penchant for sexual harassment, his persistent characterization as “*le grand séducteur*” implies consent on the woman’s part and ignores the pattern of behavior, as well as the positionality of the women with whom he allegedly engages in “consensual” sexual activity. An alternative account of the assault is told by biographer Michel Taubmann, ostensibly from the perspective of Dominique Strauss-Kahn, whom he interviewed extensively.

**(p.154)** Emerging from the shower as naked as Adam, the director general of the IMF was confronted with Nafissatou Diallo, whom he had never seen before. He watched her walk down the corridor. Nafissatou Diallo turned around. She stares him straight in the eyes. Then she unashamedly looked at his private parts. The flesh is weak. Dominique Strauss Kahn saw this as proposition. Rarely in his life has he refused the possibility of a moment of pleasure. (Translated and quoted in Lichfield 2011)

The picture painted is one of Strauss-Kahn as a lover of pleasure, a sexual opportunist, or perhaps even a sexual hedonist, but not a predator. More troubling than this

caricature of “*le grand séducteur*” were more blatant iterations of the rape script, such as that exemplified by leftist editor Jean-Francois Kahn: “Why all the fuss? It’s merely a bit of hanky panky with the help” and his reference to the incident as “*troussage de domestique*,” roughly translated as “trussing of a domestic” and used to refer to the situation of an employer having forced sex with a servant. This characterization relies on either the assumption of consent or a dismissal of the need for consent, a persisting perception of non-rapability.

Contributing to this dismissive attitude regarding the seriousness of DSK’s actions is an established culture in which sexual exploitation is not only allowed, it is expected. As discussed earlier in the chapter, high finance, an industry that is highly male dominated, is one in which money, power, and sex are combined into exploitative practices where prostitution becomes a normalized part of doing business. This type of behavior is replicated not only within Western countries, but in Western-dominated global “aid” institutions. An example of this came to light in the based-on-true-life movie *The Whistleblower*, when UN peacekeepers and contractors were implicated in the sexual exploitation of the vulnerable populations whom they were sent to help.

As a wealthy white man in a very powerful position, the power dynamics align such that the “rape script” for Dominique Strauss-Kahn legitimates sexual violence. For this reason, it has been very difficult to sustain any of the charges made against him. Regardless of the varied intersectional privileges retained by various victims, he is always put into a position of credible access. While there have been attempts to disrupt this script, such as the coverage of his initial arrest, the protest of various women’s organizations, and the civil suit, he has yet to be held fully accountable for any of these sexual assaults.

At the same time, he has been held more accountable than most. The fact that he and fellow economic reformer Eliot Spitzer are two of the few actors associated with the financial industry who have faced political **(p.155)** repercussions for their sexual behavior has been fodder for conspiracy theories. While it is curious that two of the few oppositional voices to neoliberal practices should have their “indiscretions” aired above those of others who are likely involved in similar activities, it should not diminish the seriousness of their

behavior. Rather, this might serve to highlight the veil of power that contributes to and protects exploitative practices at both micro and macro levels. Furthermore, it demonstrates that even critics of neoliberalism fail to recognize the full implications of the harm being done to certain segments of the population. That they would engage in the exploitation of women whose very vulnerability to sexual exploitation is created by the system they are fighting against demonstrates not just a personal hypocrisy, but an incomplete analysis of the gendered (and raced and classed) repercussions of the global order.

### Power Differentials in the Macro-Narrative

Beyond the obvious individual-level power differentials in the “DSK Affair,” the case also parallels and connects to the narratives of the global political economy. Dominique Strauss-Kahn, as a French national and contender for the presidency, stands as a symbol of colonial power and the hegemonic West. While attempting to reform its policies, DSK still stood as head of the IMF, an organization with a long history of harmful and exploitative practices. Nafissatou Diallo, on the other hand, as a native of Guinea, represented the developing world at which this Western power is directed. Furthermore, as an asylum-seeker employed in domestic work, she represented the disadvantaged populations displaced by colonial legacies and structural adjustment policies. In this section, I identify the parallels between micro- and macro-level power differentials. This type of analysis has multiple implications. Examining the macro level provides geopolitical context, which illustrates the particular positioning of Diallo and Strauss-Kahn and allows insight into the complexities of the case at the micro level. Moving from the micro to the macro level provides a vivid analogy for the gendered, raced, and classed exploitations of the global economy.

In this section of the chapter, I provide a brief overview and discussion of the IMF, its policies and practices, and related critiques regarding its role in perpetuating inequalities between its recipients and the West through the enactment of debt politics, as well as within individual countries through structural adjustment policies. Included in this discussion is the role played by neoliberal policies, such as those enacted by the IMF, in the feminization of labor and migration. These feminizations have contributed to the **(p.156)** increased vulnerabilities of women in transnational flows of labor, facilitating the types of exploitations and assaults that occurred in the “DSK Affair.” Next, I extend this analysis to look at the case of Guinea and its relationship in the global political economy, as a former French colony and as an IMF recipient. Through this examination we can see the larger global processes that are at work in the “DSK Affair.”

### The IMF and the Neoliberal Rape Script

[The DSK Affair] ironically underscores years of failed economic policies championed by the IMF on the African continent, the very reason that increasing numbers of

Africans have become vulnerable second class citizens in Western capitals, often exploited as sex slaves, maids, and nannies by powerful capitalist oligarchs.

—Sahara Reporters 2011

The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank were both established in the post-World War II era to promote international trade and monetary cooperation by loaning money to governments in times of severe economic crisis. The IMF is made up of 184 countries, but votes are allocated according to each country's contribution. Thus, the organization's direction is often dictated by the five countries that contribute the most money and control 50% of the votes: France, Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Feminist and postcolonial critiques have been aimed at the organization not only for its hegemonic power configuration, but for the neoliberal policies it imposes on lender states in form of structural adjustment programs. Structural adjustment policies (SAPs) are the policy changes required by the IMF and the World Bank as conditions for getting loans. They are market-oriented adjustments that include internal reforms, especially privatization and deregulation, as well as the reduction of trade barriers. Many critics see these reforms as exploitative, because they position stronger states and/or multinational corporations to access valuable resources (including both natural and human resources), often at significantly lowered prices. Other policy aims include cutting state expenditures (commonly referenced as austerity measures) that may come in the form of cutting back on social welfare policies, including health care, education, and social safety nets. These types of reform tend to hit poorer citizens, not only because they result in fewer government-provided public goods, but because they have been associated with lower wages, poorer working **(p.157)** conditions (due to decreased bargaining power for workers), fewer public sector jobs, and environmental degradation.

A critique levied by Spurr (1993) and again by Chang and Ling (2011) is that globalization and its neoliberal policies reiterate colonialist rhetoric. Globalization creates exploitative relationships that benefit only a small segment of the world to the detriment of the remaining majority. Critics dismiss

structural adjustment policies, such as those advocated by the World Bank and the IMF, as neo-colonial attempts to “sustain and reinforce conditions that will invite foreign investors to exploit either the labor or natural resources of a country to produce foreign currency for balance of payment purposes and to repay national debt ... [which] encourage[s] the use of a country’s resources for export development rather than for domestic development” (Fall 2001, 71).

Chang and Ling (2011, 34) invoke the “rape script” language discussed in the introduction of this chapter in their description of how liberals “outrightly embrace one-way penetration of the local by the global.” Use of the sexual assault metaphor and of a “rape script” reveals many parallels. Some countries, characterized by wealth and political power, are the perpetrators of violence against other poor and developing countries. Whether or not that violence is perceived as legitimate depends on the contextual political positions. As long as the violation follows traditional power differentials (particularly in regard to Western hegemonies), it is permissible. If the violation challenges these hierarchies, it is condemned. Furthermore, the scrutiny is almost always placed on the developing countries: What did they do to put themselves in their current situation? What can they do to prevent future instability and poverty? There is little questioning of how the past or current actions of Western capitalist nations have contributed to the perpetual underdevelopment of the poorest countries. Consent is implied, and resistance to Western interventions is frequently condemned.

Somewhat ironically, Dominique Strauss-Kahn was working to change some of these practices. As a social democrat, he believed in balancing the free market policies of globalization with those aimed at preserving some degree of social equality. In a speech on November 1, 2010, he spoke of globalization as having “delivered a lot” and helping “hundreds of millions of people break the bonds of poverty.” But he also spoke of globalization as having a “dark side,” “lurking behind it was a large and growing chasm between rich and poor.” Such a growth model was “unbalanced and unsustainable.” Not long before his arrest, in a speech at the Brookings Institution, he quoted Keynes: “The outstanding faults of the economic

society in which we live are its failure to provide for full employment and its arbitrary and inequitable distribution of wealth and incomes.”

**(p.158)** Gendered Impacts, Direct and Indirect

Feminist critiques of the IMF and its policies abound. The gendered costs of structural adjustment are now well documented (Beneria and Feldman 1992; Sparr 1994; Haddad et al. 1995; Pyle 1999; Sassen 2000; Beneria 2003; Pyle and Ward 2003). While the poor are generally among the hardest hit by SAPs, women are disproportionately impacted because of the gendered patterns associated with such policies. Cuts in public sector jobs, especially in education and health services, increase levels of female unemployment. Wage gaps widen, as women are pushed into informal sectors and their unpaid work increases. Education slows, food consumption decreases, girls' health and mortality worsens, women become reliant on credit as they become poorer, women take on more household responsibilities and are subject to greater domestic violence and stress. Care work is simultaneously assumed and devalued, meaning that women are required to pick up the slack when social programs are cut, at the same time that they are compelled to seek income-generating work. Essentially, women absorb the costs of cuts in state expenditure. As characterized by Diane Elson (1998, 71), women's supply of non-market work has been regarded as "infinitely elastic."

Global restructuring and SAPs have been linked to the feminization of migration (Enloe 1989; Castle and Miller 2003; Mills 2003; Pyle and Ward 2003; Hart 2005; True 2012). Women are pushed to migrate when colonial and capitalist processes disrupt or destroy former livelihoods and are pulled to migrate to places where women are preferred workers (Peterson and Runyan 2010). Enloe (1989, 186) points directly to international debt politics in her discussion of how some countries have come to rely on feminized migrant labor, whose overseas earnings help "keep foreign creditors and their financial policeman, the International Monetary Fund, content." In the last several decades, female domestic workers have joined migrant worker streams that have outpaced those of male migrants. Mills argues that "[s]tructural adjustment plans mobilize women's unpaid labor as domestic nurturers and economizers to subsidize costs for international capitalism and to guarantee the debts incurred by poor states" (2003, 47). Or put another way, SAPs transform women into an "arsenal of exportable goods" (Hart 2005, 2). Women in the

developing world are sent to wealthier countries where there is a shortage of domestic services.

Research on gendered migration shows that crossing borders can be empowering, opening up new opportunities to challenge established gender norms; however, it can also lead to new dependencies **(p.159)** and the reinforcement of existing gender boundaries and hierarchies (Morokvasic 2007). The feminization of migration is characterized by an increasing number of migrant women in precarious and low-paid jobs in manufacturing and service (Anderson 2000; Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003). Morokvasic (2007, 71) notes that “[t]he preservation of hierarchies of class and gender means that—whatever gains that may be achieved by immigrants—they are offset by the loss of status, overwork, declassing, and exploitation. Depending on the context and the sector of work, there is also a high real risk of being confronted with experiences of extreme humiliation and violence.” Many migrant workers are undocumented, which renders them dangerously vulnerable due to a lack of political recourse against employers (Anderson 1997; Misra et al. 2006).

Transnational migrants represent a pool of vulnerable, feminized labor in the lowest wage sectors of the world’s wealthiest economies (Mahler 1995; Kwong 1998; Sassen 1998; Foner 2000; Mills 2003). Feminized migrant labor is characterized not only by lower wages and limited job security, but by the racialization and sexualization of female workers (Chang and Ling 2011; Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003; Mills 2003). Domestic workers are typically isolated with unregulated work conditions sometimes characterized by substandard living quarters, harassment, and abuse. While much of this literature focuses on manufacturing jobs or domestic care work (conducted in individual households), housekeepers in hotels are also at risk for sexual exploitation. Hotel housekeeper and hotel security experts report having to deal with sexual harassment and assaults made by male guests (Greenhouse 2011). Housekeepers, many of whom are low-paid immigrants, might be offered money or simply taken advantage of. Some hotels even hire security guards with the explicit responsibility of watching over the housekeeping staff.

Nafissatou Diallo, first as an undocumented migrant and later as an asylum seeker, was relatively lucky to find a job that was as well paid as her position at the Sofitel, and she appears to have been well supported by her fellow employees and supervisors in making the criminal complaint. Yet it was still a position in which there are implicit vulnerabilities created by the highly differential social location of the domestic workers and hotel guests. A not insubstantial footnote to the story was that Diallo was wearing two pairs of pantyhose when the assault took place. The mostly female housekeeping staff had recently been required to start wearing skirts instead of pants. Wearing two pairs of pantyhose was a means of preserving “modesty” in a job that often calls for bending over. The change was made ostensibly for its gendered aesthetic appeal.

**(p.160) Guinea**

Whereas most African families live on one dollar per day, Mr. Kahn was soaking in luxury in a lavish \$3,000 per night hotel suite. That amount alone, without even one French cigar, croissant or a shot of cognac added to the bill, equals the sustenance of 3,000 African families in Guinea today.

—Sahara Reporter 2011

While the larger global patterns of gendered and racialized migration might be enough to link the micro and macro components of the “DSK Affair,” Diallo’s positioning as a migrant from Guinea, a country once colonized by France and a recipient of IMF funding, adds another dimension to analysis linking her interpersonal interaction with Strauss-Kahn to its uncanny parallel and connection to their intersectional global positioning. Guinea was once a part of French West Africa, an area colonized by France in the 1890s. It declared its independence from France in 1958 and has since had a fairly steady history of authoritarian rule. It was only in 2010 that the country held its first free and fair elections, led by a transitional government under the leadership of General Sekouba Konate. Guinea is, by many indicators, one of the poorest countries in the world. Its 2011 estimated GDP purchasing power parity is \$11.53 billion, which ranks it as 149th in the world, with a GDP per capita estimated at \$1,100, 210th in the world. It is estimated that almost half of the population lives under the poverty line.

The living conditions for Guineans are among the worst in the world. Life expectancy is 58, ranking Guinea as 191 out of 221 countries (CIA Factbook 2012). Women are particularly hard hit in many regards. Fertility is high at 5.04, as is maternal mortality at 680 per 100,000 births (CIA Factbook 2012). Female illiteracy was estimated at over 80 percent in 2002, with women averaging seven years of school (CEDAW 2007). Low education and illiteracy rates are a major contributing factor to women's low levels of employment and wages. Sexual assault rates, like in many other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, are considered to be high (US State Department 2011). Although there is national legislation guaranteeing the equality of men and women in Guinea, women (especially rural women) continue to experience discrimination under traditional law, which bars them from owning land and thus limits their economic opportunities.

As one of the world's poorest countries, Guinea has been a regular recipient of foreign aid. From 1985 to 2002, as stipulated by providers, Guinea engaged in a process of economic liberalization. Between 2003 and 2006, **(p.161)** growth subsided, and with the 2007 global economic crisis, the economy deteriorated further. This contributed to the violent coup that followed the death of long-time President Lansana Conte, which led to significant reductions in aid. In opposition to the new regime, international donors, including the IMF, World Bank, and the G-8, dramatically cut back on development programs. With the new democratically elected government, foreign aid and international investment is expected to return, along with intense scrutiny from aid providers and international investors.<sup>1</sup>

Migration from West Africa is fairly high and is driven by a variety of factors, including population pressure, poverty, poor economic performance, and continual conflict (Adepoju 2005). Rates of migration are hard to determine, and are usually estimated using temporal population comparison. At times, Guinea has been a destination for refugees fleeing war in other countries, such as Liberia. In Guinea, a 2007 study estimated an inflow of 405,772 immigrants, approximately 4.81 percent of the population, and an outflow of 520,835 emigrants, approximately 6.18 percent of the population (Haas 2007); however, this was before the coup. There is little information regarding migration flows during the political unrest, but it is reasonable to assume an increase in

emigration. Even without political unrest, the push factors increased during this time with the withdrawal of aid. According to the Global Commission on International Migration (2005), women migrants in West Africa are increasingly drawn to the wage labor market as a survival strategy to augment meager family income. It further reports that migratory streams in West Africa are increasingly feminized with independent female migration a major survival strategy in response to deepening poverty in the region.

While much of the Western African migration flows stay within the region, there is movement to the developed world, including to Western European countries and the United States. Relatively little is known about the status of African female migrants in the United States. What is known shows that many of these migrants are trading one difficult location for another. While the tribulations of this new space may not compare to those left behind, they are still arduous. Migrants are safer, but they are not necessarily safe (Arthur 2009, 81). Many migrants, especially those who are unskilled, poorly educated, foreign-born women of color, occupy a peripheral status in their host country. Thus, the experience of Nassifatou Diallo is likely not that different from other Guinean or Western African woman who have been dislocated by global restructuring—the biggest distinction being that her case was cast into the public spotlight because of the powerful position of her accused assailant.

**(p.162)** Nafissatou Diallo is just one of many women impacted by violence on both sides of her migrant experience. The violence she had experienced within her home country, both physical and economic, becomes part of the push factors initiating the desire to migrate. Women often flee from conditions of violence and oppression experienced within and by their home states but also in fleeing the effects of structural adjustment policies (Taylor and Jamieson 1999; Bernat and Zhilina 2010; True 2012). On the other side of the migration route, the gendered and racialized vulnerability is actualized in both the act of sexual violence and the subsequent lack of justice experienced in her new host country. Strauss-Kahn carried out the micro-level side of a macro-level narrative, ironically started by the institution he was trying to reform.

### Discussion

The domestic migrant woman worker is almost invisible in the face of international politics and economics, just as the austerity politics, for which DSK has been held up as personally responsible as IMF Chief, have reinforced the invisibility of women who have been negatively affected by his personal and public actions.

—True (2012)

Juxtaposing the macro-level politics of IMF, and neoliberal exploitation more broadly, with the micro-level exploits of its former director, Dominique Strauss-Kahn, highlights the power differentials that structure local and global society. Not only are these hierarchies shown to be parallel, they are in fact connected. The neo-colonial policies of Western elites have enacted the “rape script” of the global economy. These global assaults create and maintain the inequalities that allow for the “rape script” to continue undiminished in the lives of the most vulnerable. In the case of Strauss-Kahn, although he attempted to change the global rape script in his reform of IMF development policies, he directly enacted it in his actions toward Nafissatou Diallo.

The connections between micro-level violence and the macro workings of the global political economy are entirely too prevalent. In her pivotal 2012 book, *The Political Economy of Violence against Women*, Jacqui True provides a compelling argument on the numerous ways in which the current global political economic order is implicated in widespread and pervasive violence against women. She demonstrates the ways in **(p.163)** which the global financial crisis, brought on by the liberalization of the financial system, international development loans, and the collapse of credit, has had a disproportionate impact on women (True 2012, 95). Unfortunately, the continued commitment to austerity, despite evidence of its detrimental effects, continues to perpetuate physical and economic violence against women and undercuts efforts to combat it. Gendered violence has become so widespread and pervasive that it, in and off itself, is rarely a compelling case for asylum—thus the need for the coaching and embellishments that ultimately led to the discrediting of Diallo in the criminal case.

The need to disrupt the micro and macro rape scripts is pivotal if there is any hope in combating the gendered violence that continues across all geographic and social borders. Despite the fact that violence against women has garnered a more secure position on the global political agenda, efforts have remained more rhetoric than reality. There is an inherent contradiction found in the fact that those state and international institutions taking up the antiviolence mantel (including the United States and the United Nations) are also the biggest promoters of a neoliberal order that has had very real, gendered, racialized, and violent consequences.

The grand narrative guiding the story of DSK and Diallo has many points in which interventions might be made. In order to make these interventions, however, it must be read not as just a micro-level story of unique individuals and circumstances, but as part of widespread patterns of abuse and violence where the exploitation starts with policies enacted by private and governmental financial institutions. The power differentials between those making global economic decisions and those most significantly (and detrimentally) impacted by it remain vast. Even when the decision makers are ostensible reformers, as was the case for Dominique Strauss-Kahn, they are still embedded in social locations of privilege that are raced, gendered, and classed, as well as reflective of geopolitical location. Such positioning can lead to micro- and macro-exploitation, or, at the very least, a blindness to such exploitations. Unraveling the grand narrative of exploitation and violence requires more than just reflexivity on the part of these decision-makers, but a more inclusive democratic process in which a diversity of social and geopolitical locations are represented. While there has been a wave of such movements, from Occupy to the Indignados and beyond, there is still much to be done before the status quo has been shaken. Critical feminist organizations and analysis are a pivotal part of this organized opposition, as they help to extend the **(p. 164)** analysis of implications. It is not enough to make the distinction between the 1 percent and the 99 percent, but instead to spell out the ways in which economic exploitation is visited upon different communities, particularly the most vulnerable.

Note

(1.) Guinea is of particular interest to investors for its natural resources, which include vast iron ore reserves, as well as bauxite, gold, and diamond reserves.

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