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Toward a Greater Integration of Gender in Economics

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Summary. — This paper argues that feminist analysis is finally making an impact in the field of economics. It begins with an historical overview of the alternative theoretical approaches that have discussed women's issues, particularly since the 1950s and 1960s, and it argues that, during the 1980s and 1990s, these approaches have tended to converge, at least partially, through the use of gender as a central category of analysis. The influence of postmodernism and the development of feminist theory have laid the basis for the task of transforming economics and engendering theory and policy. At the same time, feminist analysis has shifted from its main concentration on microeconomics to the discussion of macroeconomics. More specifically, the paper discusses two areas in which progress toward engendering economic analysis has been made since the late 1970s: (a) the visibility of women's work and its inclusion in labor force and national accounting statistics, and (b) macroeconomic issues, with focus on the area of gender and development and of structural adjustment policies, with particular reference to alternative models to the orthodox structural adjustment packages.

1. INTRODUCTION

During the past 20 years, feminist scholarship has had a profound impact on many disciplines. It has raised difficult questions, often perceived as troubling, out of place, risky and irritating. It has challenged definitions and expanded the boundaries of knowledge by confronting and dealing with previous exclusions of gendered issues from "accepted knowledge." In the humanities and the softer social sciences, it has in many ways transformed research questions, the disciplines and the curriculum; it has also begun to raise important challenges in economics and in the hard sciences. But, as the philosopher Elizabeth Minnich (1990) said,

the old errors and exclusions and hierarchies are by no means "only" conceptual; they reveal and perpetuate the articulated hierarchy in intrapsychic, education, social, historical, and political relations that have very serious consequences indeed (p. 160).

This is why the transformation is a difficult one: it addresses deeply ingrained prejudices and it challenges deeply entrenched "ways of knowing," of theorizing and of "doing science."

This paper argues that feminist analysis is finally being noticed in mainstream economics, even though it has proven to be the least open of the social sciences to the challenges raised by feminism during the past two decades. This may sound surprising given that, first, there have been many feminist economists whose voices have been heard during this period and,

second, the economics profession has dealt quite often with women-related issues, even if not necessarily from a feminist perspective. Yet, these efforts had not made much of an impact on economic analysis in a fundamental way, so that the use of gender as a category of analysis could transform the discipline itself by altering some of its basic and often androcentric assumptions, as has happened for example in history, philosophy, anthropology, psychology and the literary and artistic fields. As will be argued below, the most obvious turning point can be situated in the late 1980s and early 1990s even though the process has been for the most part a gradual one and has built upon previous efforts. This is not to say that the transformation will be an easy task; mainstream economics is accustomed to being hegemonic and finds it difficult to admit the importance of gender as a cultural construct with an impact on the construction of knowledge. As Don McCloskey has humorously pointed out with regards to neoclassical economists:

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They are a motorcycle gang among economists, strutting about the camp with clattering matrices and rigorously fixed points, sheathed in leather, repelling affection. They are not going to like being told that they should become more feminine (Ferber and Nelson, 1993, p. 76).

In the following section, I briefly review the gradual incorporation of women-related issues in the literature and of gender as a category of economic analysis, particularly in microeconomics, labor market theory and empirical research. Sections 3 and 4 concentrate on two areas which touch upon current efforts to integrate gender in macroeconomics: the inclusion of unpaid work in national income accounts and the shift of analysis from micro to macro issues, particularly from the perspective of the gender and development literature. The paper is not a comprehensive review of the field of economics; rather, it focuses on specific areas in which feminist work and gender analysis have been carried out.

2. GENDER AND ECONOMICS: AN OVERVIEW

(a) *Alternative approaches*

Economic analysis has a history of inclusion of women's issues (i.e., as different from gender analysis) which range from the scrutiny, during the 1930s, of the reasons for the existence of wage differentials between men and women to the analysis of household production during the 1960s and 1970s. The 1930s "equal pay controversy" in Britain, carried out mostly by male economists with the notable exception of Joan Robinson, had the purpose of understanding the reasons behind male/female wage differentials. This was a topic that had already been discussed in 1918 by Millicent Fawcett, an English feminist, and which attracted names such as F. Y. Edgeworth, A. C. Pigou, J. R. Hicks and R. F. Harrod among others (Madden, 1972). The controversy focused on wage determination under imperfect competition, an emphasis which, as Janice Madden has pointed out, was replaced by the assumption of perfect competition in the neoclassical models of discrimination during the post WWII period. Both periods, however, shared the common feature of analyzing inequalities between men and women by focusing mostly on the dynamics of the market rather than on the role that gender plays in it. The notion of the social construction of gender and its links with economic analysis had yet to be born.

In the 1950s, neoclassical economics pioneered the analysis of women's labor force participation. The work of Jacob Mincer and other labor economists began with the interest in explaining why women's labor force participation was increasing at a time of rising family income (assumed to be negatively correlated with labor supply). The answer to that apparent puzzle was found in the substitution effect generated

by the increasing opportunity costs of staying at home; the increase in wages fostered by the economic growth of the period had created an economic incentive for women to participate in paid work. It is interesting to recall that this was the decade about which Betty Friedan wrote in her *Feminine Mystique*; the big gulf between her description of the housewife's multi-layered costs of staying at home and the strictly economic opportunity costs in Mincer's model was symbolic of the task ahead if feminist questions raised by Friedan were to be taken up by economic analysis.

Mincer's work represented a transition toward the increasing interest in using economic analysis to understand the sphere of the household. This process was intensified in the 1960s with the work of Gary Becker and other human capital theorists. The New Household Economics' application of market-oriented concepts and models to household production and time allocation analysis was used to explain the sexual division of labor and the market behavior of household members. Asymmetries in the division of labor and inequalities in the distribution of domestic work were explained through individual choices made under the assumptions of utility maximization and a harmonious household. The analysis opened up new theoretical and empirical inquiry into other issues such as the economics of marriage and fertility choice. Similarly, the 1960s and early 1970s saw labor economics, with many women among them, analyzing labor market discrimination, segregation and segmentation resulting in differential labor market outcomes based on gender.¹

With the emergence of the women's movement, economists interested in women's issues followed two different paths. The large majority continued using either existing neoclassical models or more critical variations of mainstream economics. The effort was taken up mostly in microeconomic analysis, with the New Household Economics playing a central role. Methodologically, and even in the case of women economists, this type of work essentially followed what Harding (1987) has called the "add women and stir" approach; "trapped" within the constraints set up by the analytical framework and basic assumptions of the neoclassical models, it was not conducive to ask, let alone answer, the kind of feminist questions about gender and asymmetric power relations that the women's movement had generated. As has been repeatedly pointed out, the assumption of a harmonious household was not very helpful to understanding conflicting interests and power relations among family members (Bruce and Dwyer, 1988); and the assumption of joint utility maximization requiring the aggregation of individual tastes and preferences among family members was problematic (Folbre, 1988). Similarly, the application of the theory of comparative advantage and of human capital models to the analysis of specialization in home or market work was

inherently static: it took as given the initial allocation of resources among household members, such as the gendered skills whose acquisition and distribution feminists were questioning. It also neglected the process by which this allocation takes place and it did not problematize the resulting differences in autonomy, power and ability to maximize the individual well-being of different household members.

This period also witnessed the emergence of new analyses of gender issues, including the application of Gary Becker's work on racial discrimination to gender discrimination, the use of human capital theory to understand gendered choices in schooling, and research on earnings and wage differentials (Benham, 1974; Blau, 1976; Beller, 1979; Lloyd and Niemi, 1979). Yet, this analysis was not transformative — in the sense of incorporating the more difficult questions of gender inequality and gender relations in order to understand and transform them. The hegemony of the New Household Economics continued through the 1980s, as symbolized by the central role played by Becker's *A Treatise on the Family* (1981) in neoclassical writings on the household, despite his essentially sociobiological explanations of the sexual division of labor in the home and the labor market.² To date, neoclassical economists writing on the economics of the family often continue to ignore gender dimensions, let alone feminist concerns, in their work (Cigno, 1994).

Yet, feminist concerns were often present in the work of women economists who raised many questions about the narrowness of the standard models and criticized them for their assumptions about preferences, ability to make choices and the role of the market in preventing optimal solutions for everyone (Ferber and Birnbaum, 1977; Sawhill, 1977). Using mainstream tools of analysis, new models were constructed to explain gender inequality in the labor market (Bergmann, 1974). But the critiques of neoclassical work grew louder during the 1980s, often with an emphasis on the negative consequences that the traditional division of labor had for women, even when these models were at the center of the analysis (Blau and Ferber, 1986). An important critique was introduced with Amartya Sen's bargaining model whose notion of cooperative conflicts captured household dynamics in a much more realistic way. Although bargaining dynamics had been discussed by feminists (Benería and Roldán, 1987), his application of game theory to the household and his view of the family as a site of cooperative conflicts was an innovative contribution and a step ahead from the harmonious rational choice model. Sen's model was less imbued with Western individualistic biases and was formulated in connection with the literature dealing with gender and development. His formulation, however, did not focus directly on gender relations even though it was conducive to analyzing feminist questions; it has subsequently been used by other economists with a more

specific feminist approach (Sen, 1990; Agarwal, 1992; Seiz, 1991; Duggan, 1994).

Alternative routes to neoclassical models were also followed by women economists who used either a Marxian or an institutional framework (or both), beginning in the 1970s. In particular, the Marxian focus on exploitation, inequality and the market's systemic tendency to generate social hierarchies seemed to be more conducive than the neoclassical framework to answer the questions raised by feminists. It also seemed more open to interdisciplinary approaches and more appropriate to analyze gendered social relations and power inequalities. Thus, the domestic labor debate of the late 1960s and early 1970s focused on the nature of domestic labor and its function within the economic system as the source of maintenance and reproduction of the labor force. More specifically, the debate focused on how unpaid domestic work contributes to lowering the costs of maintenance and reproduction of the labor force (Himmelweit and Mohun, 1977). The debate was useful to legitimate feminist questions within the Marxian paradigm but it failed to identify and analyze implicit gender relations behind domestic work and the household division of labor and to address more specific questions about gender inequality and reproduction. Feminist critics of the debate also pointed out the limitations of the traditional Marxist conception of accumulation which ignored the role of reproductive labor in the process (Molyneux, 1979; Mackintosh, 1978).

A similar analysis was applied to the role of rural women's work in subsistence economies with male labor in the "modern" capitalist sector of developing countries. As in the case of domestic work, the literature emphasized women's concentration in unpaid productive and reproductive activities in situations where men were engaged in wage labor, either locally or as migrants (Deere, 1976). The analysis underlined the crucial contribution of women's unpaid work to social reproduction and pointed out that women constitute a source of cheap labor for the noncapitalist sectors of the economy. Similar to the domestic labor debate, this analysis legitimated the introduction of gender issues within an orthodox Marxian framework; and, similar to the New Household Economics, it represented the new use of economic analysis in the previously ignored areas of unpaid work. Given their essentially androcentric biases, however, the models were unable to incorporate an understanding of the dynamics of gender relations and of the complexity of "cooperative conflicts" within the household and in subsistence economies.

Feminists dealt with this problem, first, by pointing out the shortcoming of orthodox Marxism and, second, by integrating Marxian categories with a feminist framework (Hartmann, 1979 and 1981; Folbre, 1982). At a wider level of analysis, a Marxist-feminist approach was also used in debates about more sys-

temic issues, such as the connection between capitalism and patriarchy, and between patriarchy, the household and the labor market (Hartmann, 1976). Within the development literature, feminists elaborated a critique of modernization theory, pointing out that development had had a different impact on men and women as a result of both the division of labor based on asymmetric gender relations and the hierarchical structures generated under capitalist institutions (Benería and Sen, 1981). This critique built on Boserup's recognition of women's role in economic development; it pointed out that the problem for women was not so much a lack of integration in the development process as it was their primary concentration in the area of the household and their participation in the market under precarious and gendered conditions. Likewise, labor market studies focusing on class and gender issues contributed to engendering economic analysis in the areas of employment, migration, demographic change, household dynamics, the informal market and the feminization of the labor force, among others.³

In the United States, if not elsewhere, one of the problems of using a Marxian framework was that it was relegated to the margins of the economics profession. As such, it developed with little interaction and dialogue with other feminist economists. More important perhaps, the postmodern critique of "grand theories" and the tendency of such theories to essentialize what is not universal paralyzed its development and potential impact. Although this critique applies equally to the mainstream, the latter has remained much less sensitive to it, even if not totally immune.⁴

Institutional economics provided another avenue for feminist analysis, mainly focusing on the labor market. For example, the critique of the competitive labor market model inherent in segmentation theory had many implications for an analysis of gender inequality (Reich, Gordon and Edwards, 1980). But, here too, segmentation theory did not incorporate gender as an integral part of the model; at least initially, women were "added on" to the analysis as a way of describing their location and conditions of participation in the labor market rather than as a way of explaining why segmentation was gendered (Benería, 1987). Feminists, however, made use of this approach by drawing the connections between labor market segmentation and sex segregation and emphasizing how segregation is linked with socialization processes outside of the workplace (Hartmann, 1976; Strober, 1984).

(b) *Gender as a central category of analysis*

During the 1980s and 1990s, the different approaches followed by feminist economists tended to converge for a variety of reasons, at least in the United States. First, a significant shift to the right in the 1980s

threatened to do away with many of the gains made since the emergence of the women's movement. This threat affected women of different persuasions and provided a common cause for political struggle and intellectual work. The result was a partial erasing of political boundaries between the different approaches which set the basis for an increasing dialogue between them. Interestingly enough, this happened at a time of emphasis on "difference" within feminism, focusing on the importance of distinguishing between the varied experiences of women from different social and cultural backgrounds. From an academic perspective postmodern emphases on difference were equally relevant to all theoretical approaches, thereby providing another basis for convergence among them.⁵

Second, the intellectual currents of postmodernism resulted in the tremendous growth of feminist theory during the 1980s. The power of gender as an analytical category was combined with the critiques of positivism and of the "grand universalizing theories" that had characterized earlier approaches. The postmodern critique undermined stable categories of analysis and opened up new questions about the most effective way of theorizing and doing research. To be sure, postmodernism has had a major impact on the humanities and literary fields, but it has also reached the social sciences. The new literature on the rhetoric of economics, as can be found in the work of economists Donald McCloskey, Arjo Klamer and William Milberg, is an indication of the shift of emphasis from an analysis of causality to that of meaning. These currents have had a clear impact on feminist economists, as symbolized by some of the articles included in Ferber and Nelson's volume *Beyond Economic Man* (1993). This type of work has facilitated the formulation of new questions about the discourse of economics and its androcentric biases and continues to raise new and fundamental questions about its nature and basic assumptions.

The decade of the 1990s has therefore opened new doors for the integration of gender as a category of analysis in economics. In particular, the time has come not only to continue the work carried out at the micro and meso levels but also to integrate gender issues in macroeconomics, an area in which gender dimensions have been underanalyzed. This work has already begun, as represented by the collection of articles in Bakker's *The Strategic Silence* (1994). Monetarist and supply-side policies have provided feminists many opportunities to analyze their effects from a gender perspective in many countries. In particular, development policies and the structural adjustment packages of the 1980s and 1990s have raised a variety of questions regarding gender biases in macroeconomics and have, as a result, set the stage for further integrating gender in macroeconomic models.

The following section will concentrate more specifically on two areas in which progress toward

engendering economic analysis has been made since the 1970s: the visibility of women's work and its inclusion in labor force and GNP statistics; and macroeconomic issues, with focus on the area of gender and development.

3. CONCEPTUALIZATION AND VISIBILITY OF WOMEN'S WORK

Traditional economic analysis tended to make a large proportion of women's work invisible because economic activity was directly or indirectly associated with the market. Income-earning activities were conceptualized as work; so was agricultural "family labor" that produced market-oriented goods (even when labor was unremunerated). A wide range of unpaid activities, however, producing goods and services for own family consumption were not, economically speaking, considered work. This included domestic production as well as voluntary work in institutions and communities. Given that a high proportion of women concentrate in these activities, the result was the economic invisibility and statistical underestimation of women's work. It was also an illustration of what Elizabeth Minnich has called "reality eclipsed or falsified" as a result of a "faulty generalization" (Minnich, 1990). That is, women's economic activities were (and are) undervalued as a result of viewing the market as the central criterion for defining "economic."

At the tenacious insistence of women working at different levels, particularly in UN organizations and academic circles, this situation has changed considerably during the last 20 years. Women's work has become more visible at the theoretical and empirical level. From a theoretical perspective, the two approaches mentioned above made an important contribution. The New Household Economics applied market-oriented criteria to time allocation, the division of labor and individual choices regarding labor force participation, thereby underlining the economic significance of household production and women's work. Likewise, the domestic labor debate of the 1970s legitimized analytically many of the questions raised by feminists. These formulations led to subsequent empirical and theoretical work on gender inequalities in household time inputs by different family members, an analysis that had demographic as well as macroeconomic implications (Folbre, 1982). Similarly, the conceptual divide between production and reproduction — and the analysis of the connections between the two — opened up new possibilities for understanding women's role in social reproduction (Benería, 1979). The analysis has subsequently been used in studies of women's work roles and for analyzing and in discussions of family and welfare policy (Amott and Mathaei, 1991; Folbre, 1994).

The invisibility of women's work, together with the gendered views of the proper role of men and women in society, resulted also in the traditional undercounting of women's (and some men's) economic activities. This issue has been a subject of debate since the late 1970s and much progress has been made regarding the conceptual, methodological and practical implications of improving labor force statistics and incorporating unpaid work in national income accounts. Of the four areas of work affected — subsistence production, the informal sector, domestic work and voluntary activities — all have required a methodological and practical effort, but only the last two, and particularly domestic work, have also required an important shift in conceptualization. Subsistence production, while being unpaid work, was viewed as producing marketable goods; estimates of this output have been included in many countries' national income accounts since the 1950s.⁶ In the same way, the problem with the informal sector is not conceptual — given that it consists of paid activities — but is due to its underground and unrecorded character.

This has not been the case for unpaid domestic and volunteer work, the inclusion of which in national accounting statistics has been met with more resistance. Domestic work has been viewed primarily as the female private sphere of daily life and often contrasted to the predominantly male public sphere of the market; the two were viewed as separate and not comparable because "work" was defined in relation to the market sphere (Benería, 1982; Folbre, 1989). The notion of including unpaid domestic production in GNP accounts seemed a farfetched idea to many, even in the late 1970s; it was often met with hostility among the same academic and professional circles that were eventually instrumental in developing the theoretical and practical tools needed to account for it. Yet, much progress has been made since then, not only in the ideological acceptance of such a concept but also in its practical implementation.

This effort has taken place among academic and government circles in different countries and in international organizations such as the International Labor Office (ILO) and the United Nations. It has resulted in a historical revaluation of women's work (Ciancanelli, 1983; Folbre, 1991) as well as in the necessary groundwork for an improved system of accounting. On the conceptual side, the definition of the economically active population has been broadened to include unpaid production. It has also led to the realization that "one single definition is not likely to be adequate for all purposes" (Dixon-Mueller and Anker, 1988). Thus, a system of multiple definitions for multiple uses has been suggested so that different sets of data can be constructed for different purposes.

On the methodological side, substantial progress has been made on two fronts. The first is country-level

statistical collection to capture women's labor force participation with greater accuracy than in the past. Second, different methods have been designed to estimate the value of home production. The two dominant approaches — an input method based on imputations of the value of labor time spent on housework and an output method requiring some list and evaluation of different produced outputs — are promising even when some difficulties still remain to be worked out. Work by academics and experts at different institutions such as the UN Statistical Commission has led to recommending the construction of satellite accounts to provide estimates of the contributions of unpaid domestic work to national income. For this purpose, time allocation surveys can yield the systematic data needed to measure all forms of unpaid work. The implementation of these efforts is now primarily a matter of political will, and, to this end, several countries have already introduced changes in their statistical surveys and legislation.

More accurate and conceptually sophisticated gender-sensitive statistics will be useful not just to generate quantitative measurements of women's work and increase its visibility; it will also allow more accurate analysis of: (a) the inequality in the distribution of leisure and domestic work; (b) productivity changes in unpaid production; (c) shifts in domestic work and family welfare as a result of changes in family income and employment status of household members; and (d) the extent to which fictitious measurements of GDP growth can be avoided, as in the case of shifts of production from the household to the market sphere. More specifically, it will permit a more rigorous and systematic analysis of, for example, the effects of cyclical changes in income and employment on household production and on women/men's work, and of the social costs of shifting production from nontradeables to tradeables under structural adjustment. Likewise, it will contribute to the construction of gender-disaggregated indicators of social and economic conditions prior to and during adjustment processes, an objective that has often been emphasized in the literature on the gender dimensions of structural adjustment. All of this should provide more systematic and accurate information for family and welfare policy and it should prepare the terrain for gender-sensitive macroeconomic models and policy making.

4. MACRO ISSUES IN GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT

The publication in 1970 of Boserup's book *Women's Role in Economic Development* made clear that development policies are not necessarily neutral with respect to gender. The significant amount of research carried out since has confirmed Boserup's

thesis and moved beyond it. During the 1970s, a good proportion of the work on women and development concentrated on the "discovery" of gender dimensions in the previously genderless development literature. Boserup's analysis was shaped by its acceptance of modernization theory; it also typified the "add women and stir" approach without raising feminist questions while a great bulk of the literature that followed focused both on a critique of modernization and the introduction of gender analysis dealing with gender relations and inequality (Pearson, 1992). Economists made an important contribution to the field through the 1980s, pursuing micro, often interdisciplinary studies focused on a variety of issues: the nature of women's work, the labor market and the gendered divisions of labor, studies of the informal sector, employment issues in international development, the feminization of the labor force, gender and technology, the environmental crisis, migration and other demographic issues, and female/male ratios and the problem of "missing women," among others.⁷

By the time of the 1985 UN Decade of Women conference in Nairobi, feminists had begun to pay more attention to macroeconomic issues. Thus, they identified the gender dimensions in structural adjustment programs and in environmental degradation. Likewise, economic restructuring, the virtual dismantling of the welfare state in many countries, the feminization and informalization of the labor market, and the effects of globalization of production and of trade liberalization have provided further evidence of the importance of gender-sensitive analysis at the macro level (Standing, 1989; Cohen, 1987; Elson and Pearson, 1989; Rowbotham and Mitter, 1994; MacDonald, 1993).

The literature dealing with gender and structural adjustment can be distinguished between empirical studies focusing on the unequal distribution of the burden of adjustment between men and women and those that challenge the gender neutrality implicit in the theoretical and policy models themselves. Despite claims to the contrary, a variety of studies carried out in different countries have documented the enormous social costs of adjustment for a large percentage of the population (Cornia, Jolly and Stewart, 1987; Commonwealth Secretariat, 1989; Moser, 1989; Benería and Feldman, 1992; Floro, 1994). They have shown the distributive effects of adjustment which have resulted in increased income inequality, tendencies toward social polarization, recomposition of social classes, shifts in control over resources and the biases in the distribution of the costs of adjustment at the household level. These studies point to the existence of class, gender and ethnic biases in the adjustment process, leading to the questioning of the assumed neutrality in macroeconomic policy (Elson, 1992; Blackden and Morris-Hughes, 1993). Women have been affected both as members of households

and of specific social groups and as a result of the gendered division of labor. The gender dimensions of the costs of adjustment range from the intensification of women's domestic and market work to the interruption of children's education (girls' in particular) to increases in time inputs either to obtain basic services or self-provision them. These are in addition to other costs — much less tangible and more difficult to measure — such as stress and domestic violence.

In many countries, SAPs have resulted in an increase in poverty — as in Latin American countries where the “new poor” have been added to the “structural poor” of the past. Adjustment policies have led to the privatization of social reproduction, that is, to a shift of reproductive costs from the public sector to the private sphere of the household. The virtual absence of social policies, coupled with cuts in social services have left the family/household as the only refuge where the devastating effects of adjustment are dealt with on a daily basis (Benería, 1992). As Elson (1992) has argued, macroeconomic policies have assumed a totally elastic endurance on the part of those affected and an ability to deal with whatever problems are generated by the process. The shifts in resource allocation and the increases in productivity assumed to take place through structural adjustment programs do not take into consideration the transfer of costs from the market to the household: “the hidden ‘equilibrating factor’ is women’s ability to absorb the shocks of stabilization programmes, through more work and ‘making do’ on limited incomes” (Elson, 1993, p. 241). Given that poor families have been most affected by these shifts, women’s special burden does not imply that men have not been affected; there is both a gender and a class dimension to the adjustment process which must be emphasized. In addition, SAP studies have made clear the extent to which economic policies focus on the market and the sphere of paid production while ignoring unpaid economic activities and the sphere of reproduction.

Despite the optimistic reports, in the early 1990s, on the part of the international press that the debt crisis is over, the prolonged debt accumulation and adjustment policies in many countries, the continuing social costs generated by the International Monetary Fund/World Bank model of adjustment and particularly the recent financial crisis in Mexico make more urgent the need to question the deficiencies of the orthodox macro models — and the implicit micro and meso assumptions on which they are based. From a gender perspective, it is important to design alternative models and policies and to introduce transformative feminist analysis implicit in the models. This is, however, not an easy task.

One problem associated with macro models is that the complexity of gender divisions might be lost through the high level of aggregation used. Similarly, to the extent that feminist theory focuses on the use of

“the lenses of gender” and on an understanding of power relations, macro models are likely to miss the richness of information available at more disaggregated levels of analysis. But computable general equilibrium (CGE) structuralist models, by incorporating structural factors with a significant degree of disaggregation, offer the possibility of including variables with a gender dimension. As summarized by Nora Lustig,

Among the structural factors are the distribution of income and wealth, tenancy relationship to the land, the type and degree of specialization in foreign trade, the density of chains of production, the degree of concentration in markets, control of the means of production by distinct types of actors (the private sector, the state, or transnational capital), the functioning of financial intermediaries and penetration of technical advance, as well as sociopolitical factors associated with the extent of organization of the working class and other influential sectors of the population, the geographical and sectoral distribution of the population and its level of skills.⁸

Each of these factors can be thought of as having a gender dimension which can be captured through a more disaggregated level of information than that used in orthodox models. The objective is the incorporation of sources of gender differentiation in macro models, such as intrahousehold income flows and gendered labor market outcomes in order to design appropriate policies. The challenge is to connect macro analysis with its meso and micro foundations whose dynamics from a gender perspective are better known and easier to investigate. Micro studies are essential for engendering macroeconomics; we cannot totally understand markets without being aware of how families and households function and how they evolve over time, while those constructing macro models need to understand how markets function or fail to do so.

In the same way, the mechanisms of horizontal redistribution (between households) and vertical redistribution (in terms of intertemporal and intergenerational pension systems, for example) are affected by family dynamics and gender divisions. Adelman and Robinson (1989) have argued that to incorporate income distribution into CGE models, both the institutional structure and the household accounts need to be disaggregated using several steps, including interhousehold transfers. Similarly, tax and subsidy policies need to be decomposed according to their gender impact since the budgetary and welfare effects of government interventions on equity and efficiency grounds will, to a great extent, depend on (gendered) household responses. Again, policies addressing poverty or children’s needs cannot ignore how households function. For example, to the extent that women use a higher proportion of their earnings for children’s needs than men do (Benería and Roldán, 1987; UN, 1984), government

subsidies to help children should be handed to their mothers rather than to the fathers or other male income earners with family responsibilities.

Even the World Bank (1990) has recognized the need to collect data at the household level as a prerequisite "to enhance the social dimensions of adjustment" and it has called the task of understanding what determines the microeconomic outcomes of these social dimensions "a challenge of significant proportions." Further, the Bank has suggested that a research methodology combining macromeso and micro modeling would be useful; this methodology "would involve a combination of more formal modeling techniques to investigate macro-meso linkages . . . with survey-based meso-micro analysis of household welfare" (p. 81). This comes close to setting the stage for a more feminist analysis of these processes since research at the micro level has shown that the neoclassical assumption of a harmonious household is often not warranted (Benería and Roldán, 1987; Bruce and Dwyer, 1988). Instead, the household "unit" should be decomposed to understand the distribution and flow of resources within it and to analyze structural constraints preventing the maximization of welfare, with implications for macro policy.

5. INCORPORATING FINDINGS FROM FEMINIST RESEARCH

While feminist research so far has focused mainly on the impact of macro policies at the micro level, the opposite also needs to be done to engender macro policies. In this regard, the feminist literature offers a variety of suggestions for macro modeling and policy making, as the following list illustrates:

First, alternative models should not assume that people have an infinite capacity to bear the costs of adjustment. The limit to this capacity is obviously reached when people cannot survive, but the literature has actually illustrated the tremendous endurance of people at the high cost of pain, suffering and depletion of human resources. Alternative policies should aim at preventing these human hardships and avoiding class, gender and ethnic biases. The insensitivity toward these issues on the part of the policy makers during the first decade of adjustment has been obvious and has led to accumulated social tensions. It has also generated current efforts to open a new debate on social policy. The turn to the left in recent elections in several Latin American and Eastern European countries undergoing adjustment programs also points to the level of discontent felt by the majority of the population in many countries. The financial crisis in Mexico since December 1994 has again raised the spectrum of hardships imposed by the new measures even after 12 years of adjustment; as a result, the issue

of who bears the burden will also not disappear. Here we can draw a parallel between micro and macro models. Feminist criticism of rational choice, utility maximization and efficiency models has emphasized the problems with the individualistic, "separate self" assumptions behind neoclassical microeconomics. As England (1993) has argued, these models assume an individual without connection to others and whose behavior has no room for empathy, altruism and relational decisions. Likewise, macro models pursue macro efficiency and the maximization of the wealth of nations without regard to either their distributive aspects or to the linkages and connectedness between those who design and implement policies and those who experience their impacts. If we are to put people at the center of development, this is no longer acceptable.

Second, more specifically, alternative policies should take into consideration the hidden costs of adjustment documented by different studies, such as the deterioration of infrastructure, discontinuities and interruptions in schooling of children — girls in particular — with the corresponding long-term losses in productivity, intensification of domestic work, and increase in crime and violence. As early as 1987, UNICEF's pioneer study of the costs of adjustment called attention to the need for adjustment policies "with a human face" (Cornia, Jolly and Stewart, 1987). The years of prolonged adjustment that have followed, however, reinforce the problems of the study's approach: although it emphasized the need to stimulate growth in order to design an adjustment with a human face, it did not address the structural factors and, in particular, the division of labor and asymmetric gender relations behind the costs of adjustment. Nor did it capture the changes necessary to deal with them. In the 1990s this challenge is still before us.

Third, from a gender perspective, adjustment policies need to be accompanied with two types of social policy. First are short-run compensatory measures dealing with the most urgent needs and negative effects of adjustment. The only measures of this sort in current adjustment programs are those associated with the creation of social investment funds which have tended to neglect gender issues and have, to a great extent, been designed to avoid social tensions rather than as long-term social policy schemes dealing with the biases of adjustment.⁹ The second type of social policy encompasses transformative measures that generate long-term change, such as distributive policies focusing on property rights and income, changes in the division of labor in paid and unpaid production, the participation of women in the paid labor force, educational and retraining programs to prepare women for the requirements of technological change, and productivity increases in the nonpaid sectors of the economy. Although it is unrealistic to expect that all of these changes can be generated through macro

policies, structural models could incorporate them through alternative assumptions.

Fourth, one basic objective of macro models should be a clear recognition of the links between the paid and unpaid sectors of the economy or between productive and reproductive activities. The implementation of SAPs has often accentuated and made more obvious the nature of these links: increasing importance of women's income-earning activities as male earnings decline, intensification of domestic work as household budgets shrink, difficulties encountered by women in terms of access to markets, time-input effects of budget cuts and of privatization of social services, and others. In particular, feminist scholarship has emphasized the importance of accounting for time and resources spent on reproductive activities and it has pointed out the special needs of female-headed households (Benería, 1992; Floro, 1994). These are crucial issues if we are to view macro models as a means to design policies for the provisioning of needs and maximization of social welfare rather than just a means of setting the prices right or maximizing efficiency and economic growth.

Fifth, macro models need to take into consideration that technological change stimulated by structural adjustment may not be neutral with respect to gender. There is evidence showing that, at least in some industries, the new technologies requiring multi-skilled, flexible labor engaged in high-performance production are reversing the process of feminization of the labor force. Likewise, some industrialized areas with a high proportion of female labor such as the US-Mexico border, have experienced a similar reversal since the mid 1980s (Roldán, 1994; Benería, forthcoming). The reasons for defeminization range from the elimination of low-skill jobs held by women and their fewer opportunities to undergo training for the new technologies to experiments with new work schedules. This calls for policies to counteract the bias, such as subsidies for specific training programs for women. To the extent that SAPs result in deep economic restructuring, they accelerate technological change and intensify these processes. It is therefore important that macro policies take them into consideration.

Sixth, micro and meso studies have provided much evidence about the lack of choice facing individuals and women in particular, and about the limited horizons and possibilities associated with poverty and with patriarchal norms and traditions. Thus, alternative models should not assume that people face a wide range of choices associated with their maximizing behavior — as orthodox models tend to assume. To the contrary, and as Rebecca Blank (1993) has put it, the assumption of an empowered individual in economic models does not leave room for the fact that people might "feel dominated, repressed, passive, stuck, ill, unsure about his or her abilities, or unaware of alternatives" (p. 141). Women's ability to enter the

labor market, for example, is often hampered by tradition and sexist norms and institutions which, as North (1994) has argued, are humanly devised constraints that structure human interaction and affect the way markets work. To the extent possible, these constraints need to be incorporated into macro models and feed economic policy:

Neoclassical theory is simply an inappropriate tool to analyze and prescribe policies that will induce development. It is concerned with the operation of markets, not with how markets develop. How can one prescribe policies when one doesn't understand how economies develop? (North, 1994, p. 359).

Finally, it is important to discuss how in some cases feminist concerns might interact with macro objectives. For example, an emphasis on the demand side in policies opens up the possibility of taking action regarding some of the objectives mentioned throughout this paper. Anti-discriminatory policies such as enforcement of equal pay for equal work laws, social investment funds, employment schemes targeting women, or investment policies fostering export promotion in predominantly female industries are examples of policies that, if properly applied, can achieve both macroeconomic goals and feminist objectives, pointing out the possible compatibility between the two. Much more research, however, needs to be done about their linkages.

To conclude and return to the initial questions raised in this paper, it is difficult not to end with a note of caution about the extent to which macroeconomic models can be engendered and contribute to the formulation of alternative macro policies. The pioneer effort represented by the project on Gender, Adjustment and Macroeconomic Models is certainly encouraging and it must be seen as the beginning of long-term work integrating feminist analysis in previously genderless models. An important objective, though, is that the models be used to change economic policy so as to avoid gender biases.

A different issue is the extent to which this effort contributes to building a more humane economics centered around the provisioning of human needs rather than around the notions of scarcity, efficiency and maximization of economic growth without a human purpose. Many feminists have called for this change in the assumptions and objectives of economic analysis, but they are not alone in this endeavor. Other voices have been raised, for example, on the part of several international development agencies. As illustrated by UNDP's annual human development reports in recent years and as indicated by the work generated by the UN Social Summit in Copenhagen in March 1995, it is time to put people at the center of development. In this sense, feminist economics does not focus only on gender. For example, to the extent that the observed gender biases in SAPs are interconnected

with other factors such as class, race, resource distribution and other sources of inequality, engendering macro models requires dealing with structural factors at the root of poverty and unequal distribution of resources. This message has often been lost in the feminist eagerness to emphasize gender. While

economic analysis needs to be engendered and transformed in a fundamental way, the task would be incomplete if gender was viewed as an independent category. The biases of SAPs illustrate that this is not the case and that alternative models need to draw these connections.

NOTES

1. See Lloyd and Niemi (1979) for a discussion of this work.
2. For a summary of neoclassical writing on the economics of the family, see Cigno (1994).
3. For a summary of this literature, see Benería and Roldán (1987), pp. 1–16, and Tinker (1990), chapter 1.
4. McCloskey's work on the rhetoric of economics, for example, has pointed out the reliance on metaphors and "stylized facts," representing an implicit critique of essentialist/universalist thinking from a mainstream perspective (1990).
5. Within the field of economics, this tendency toward convergence has materialized in the creation of IAFEE (International Association of Feminist Economics), an organization in which economists of different persuasions have found a forum for debates as well as common goals.
6. For a summary of these issues and of the literature that has contributed to the debates, see Benería (1992).
7. The list of relevant literature on gender and development is too long to include here and, given its often interdisciplinary nature, it is difficult to neatly separate the work of economists from that of other social scientists. To illustrate, see Safa (1976); Benería (1982); Sen and Grown (1985); Anker and Hein (1986); Benería and Roldán (1987); Berik (1987); Joecks (1987); Deere (1990); Bruce and Dwyer (1988); Elson and Pearson (1989); Mackintosh (1989); Berik and Çağatay (1991); Elson (1991); Grown and Sebstad (1989); Tinker (1990); Kabeer (1994). With few exceptions (Sen and Grown, 1985, among them) this work was carried out at the micro and meso level of analysis, but it was rich with implications for macroeconomic policy.
8. Quoted in Taylor (1990), p. 1.
9. Some social investment funds, such as Mexico's PRONASOL, have implemented interesting experiments in decentralizing and democratizing social policies, which might have a lasting impact and could serve as a model for future experiments. However, their partisan political use by the governing party has been the subject of much criticism. For a discussion of this issue, see Benería and Mendoza (1995).

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