

Gender as more than a dummy variable: feminist approaches to discrimination

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To avow that gender is more than an independent--or dummy variable is to posit the centrality of gender (as well as race and class) in economic analysis. Conventional economic methods tend to neglect the process by which gender interacts with and shapes other social forces and institutions. The basis for a feminist alternative is the assertion that the social construction of gender permeates men's and women's labor market experiences. A feminist definition of discrimination is proposed in this 1997 article that emphasizes process as well as outcomes; measurable as well as unquantifiable repercussions. Labor market discrimination is a multidimensional interaction of economic, social, political, and cultural forces in both the workplace and the family, resulting in differential outcomes involving pay, employment, and status. Several propositions toward developing feminist approaches to labor market discrimination are illustrated with examples of feminist research.

Keywords: gender, labor market, wages, feminist economics, economic methodology

When economists acknowledge gender in analysis, they do so by using simple, binary indicator functions, so-called dummy variables, to alter intercept and/or slope coefficients in regression ... though they are poor analytical substitutes for more complete models of the role gender plays in market and non-market transactions (Esther Redmount 1995: 216).

Variables interacting with other variables are only constructs with no agency to do anything. Although most theories assume some sort of process lying behind the relations between variables, those processes are rarely directly studied (Joan Acker 1991: 391).

INTRODUCTION

From the domestic labor debate to bargaining models of the household, much of the theoretical analysis of the political economy of gender has focused on understanding the sphere of reproduction. In some sense this is understandable. By asserting the social and economic significance of reproduction, feminists have demonstrated both women's economic contributions and a major site of power inequity. In contrast, when analyzing women's labor market experiences, feminist economists have tended to respond to existing theoretical frameworks or rely on existing analytical categories. (1) While exposing the limits of neoclassical approaches, segmentation theory, and other constructs for understanding women's experiences has made an enormous contribution to the literature, there is little consensus on an alternative framework.

The basis for a feminist alternative is the assertion that the social construction of gender permeates men's and women's labor market experiences. To avow that gender is more than an independent--or dummy--variable is to posit the centrality of gender (as well as race and class) in economic analysis. Conventional economic methods tend to neglect the process by which gender interacts with and shapes other social forces and institutions. Using gender as an isolated slope coefficient or measuring

discrimination as an unexplained residual adds little to our understanding of the causes and nature of discrimination. While these quantitative approaches have provided important tools for feminist advocacy, they treat gender as something to be "controlled" and discrimination as "other."

Often gender and race are added as dummies in a single equation to "control for" demographic differences, *ceteris paribus*. The influence of human capital, industry, occupation, and union status are also incorporated as independent variables which are hypothesized to affect a dependent variable such as wages. As Joyce Jacobsen and Andrew Newman (1995) demonstrated in their survey of articles published in the top labor journals from 1947-1995, there is a rising trend of incorporating a dummy variable to model gender differences, while use of gender interactions with other variables such as race has decreased. Jacobsen and Newman view this as an attempt to "control" for the effects of gender. The choice of language seems appropriate. "Controlling for" gender and race implies that gender and race are marginal to the analysis, that is, descriptive characteristics of individual labor market participants which do not fundamentally challenge the basic theoretical constructs. These traditional methods are useful in quantifying discriminatory outcomes, but do not provide a comprehensive understanding of discriminatory processes. Thus, a dummy variable can measure the effect of gender or race on wages, but it does not distinguish between different causal explanations. Women's earnings, for example, are influenced by processes which affect the mean values of the remaining independent variables themselves.

Neoclassical economists typically define labor market discrimination as remunerating employees differently when they have equivalent productivity, and argue that employment discrimination is not easily measurable. Discrimination is measured by a residual, the unexplained portion of the differential in wages (see, for example, Gunderson 1989). This residual technique, developed by Ronald Oaxaca (1973), estimates separate wage regressions by gender. It decomposes the gender wage gap into two parts: (1) differential means or characteristics (such as education and experience), and (2) differential coefficients, or returns to characteristics. The second portion, the unexplained residual after accounting for gendered differences in measurable independent variables, is termed discrimination. This crude method itself is problematic, relegating discrimination to an amorphous status. It is measurable, but not directly, shifting researchers' focus to correct specification of the directly measurable variables. Discrimination becomes "other;" we know discrimination only by what it is not. Some mainstream economists continue to assert that the residual would be small or zero if the model could be correctly specified. (2) Nevertheless, early research by feminist labor economists sought to estimate this unexplained residual in order to document the existence of discrimination according to the accepted definition. (3)

Dissatisfied with the limits of this approach to discrimination, many feminist labor economists are convinced that labor market segmentation, as well as other institutional variables and non-market factors, exert significant influences on wage differentials; and that the wage gap and women's predominance in low-paid occupations were neither productivity-based nor voluntary, individual choices to minimize atrophy over the life cycle. (4) Donald Treiman and Heidi Hartmann (1981) were among the first to demonstrate that the percentage female in an occupation was negatively associated with wages and explore techniques to overcome such discrimination. By shifting the direction of discrimination studies to occupational segregation, feminist economists had isolated a new directly measurable variable: the impact of percent female in an occupation on the wage. (5) Feminist researchers, including many non-economists, refocused their efforts toward consideration of what explains occupational segregation by gender. A variety of explanations for occupational segregation have been proffered. The most sophisticated approaches have focused on the power dimensions of the wage-setting process, presenting historically and even geographically and organizationally specific accounts of the process of defining labor market segments. Through occupational segregation certain jobs have become identified as "women's work," and these jobs pay less because they are feminized and deemed "unskilled." (6) Several studies examine the contemporary process of feminization, arguing that occupational integration leads to "tipping," resegregation, and deskilling (Strober and Arnold 1987; Reskin and Roos 1990; King 1993). This new wave of research was accompanied by an

explicitly feminist campaign for equal pay for work of comparable value (or pay equity) as a public policy.

The task facing feminist economists has been to merge the lessons gained from both neoclassical economists, who have emphasized the measurable manifestations of wage discrimination, and feminist scholars, many of them in other disciplines, who have focused on historical and organization processes in assigning jobs and wages. In this article, I synthesize several decades of feminist research on discrimination and present a new, feminist definition of discrimination. Upon reviewing research from a range of alternative paradigms within the social sciences, I suggest five propositions underlying feminist approaches to the study of discrimination. These propositions are culled from both theoretical critiques of existing economic frameworks and the insights of empirical research on women's paid employment. My process for deriving these propositions was largely inductive, rather than deductive, developing a framework for analyzing discrimination from concrete studies. Each proposition is illustrated with examples of feminist research, both by economists and other social scientists, since the study of gender crosses disciplinary boundaries. My goal in the following discussion is not to elaborate a complete theory or model of discrimination, but rather to present a representative view of the direction of feminist research.

RETHINKING DISCRIMINATION FROM A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

Although feminist economics places gender (and, sometimes, class, race, ethnicity, and sexuality) as the center of analysis, it is more than a study of the status of women (see Emami 1993). Feminist research in economics also points to sources of bias in traditional theory. (7) Feminist economists support methodological and pedagogical pluralism, diverse epistemologies, and emphasize praxis (Bergmann 1987; Ferber 1995; Nelson 1995a). Feminist approaches to the study of discrimination share some critiques of neoclassical discrimination models with institutionalist and radical analyses of labor markets, but also provide a unique contribution through the development of gender theory. From institutional and radical analyses, a feminist theory of discrimination recognizes that the structure of labor markets and other economic and social institutions influence individual economic actors. In the words of Barbara Bergmann:

Feminist economists ... see employment discrimination not as a personal foible of the individuals who make hiring decisions, but as deriving from a system of social organization in which woman's role is as a servant of men (1987: 136).

In addition to the material and systematic elements of women's oppression, often incorporated into theories of patriarchy, postmodern and socialist feminists have challenged us to recognize the power of culture and ideology in constituting gender. Gender theory focuses on the process by which gender shapes social institutions, including economic institutions (see Beechey 1988; Acker 1988; Chafetz 1989; Folbre 1994). Veronica Beechey provides an excellent formulation of gender theory which does not "lose sight of material reality and reduce everything to an analysis of discourses and texts." She suggests that such formulations of gender:

... move beyond the interminable questions which have not proved very fruitful for feminist analysis about the relative primacy of 'the economic' and 'the ideological' and they have a much more complex view of what constitutes gender which can embrace the kinds of questions which feminist empirical studies of work have identified as being important--questions to do with the experience of work as well as its structural organization, questions of culture and subjectivity as well as questions of job segregation and pay (1988: 58).

Each of these themes and theoretical constructs can be detected in my propositions about feminist approaches to labor market discrimination.

For purposes of a broad-based research agenda, I propose a feminist definition of discrimination which emphasizes process as well as outcomes; measurable as well as unquantifiable repercussions. Discrimination is not "other;" it is more than an unexplained residual and cannot be controlled for through the use of dummy variables. Labor market discrimination is a multidimensional interaction of economic, social, political, and cultural forces in both the workplace and the family, resulting in differential outcomes involving pay, employment, and status. This definition provides a basis for the five propositions I outline below.

Proposition #1: Feminist approaches are motivated by a concern for understanding and rectifying the discrimination faced by women and other groups.

Choosing to study women and/or use women's experiences to analyze labor markets is not the easiest path to academic recognition. Feminist research implies a commitment to relating theory to not only changing consciousness but to praxis. Bergmann articulates that the task that feminist economists have set is to produce the design for a more equitable future (1987: 145). Thus, feminist scholarship has enormous potential for public policy and political activism. Specifically, public policies which eradicate employment and wage discrimination are central subjects of inquiry. For investigations of employment inequity, feminist research has assessed ways to reduce occupational segregation (Figart and Bergmann 1989) and evaluated affirmative action in hiring and promotion (Reskin and Hartmann 1986; Bergmann 1995, 1996; Badgett 1995c).

There is extensive overlap between feminist advocacy research on discrimination and the comparable worth movement in the United States, Canada, and Great Britain. The work of Ronnie Steinberg in both the U.S. and Canada, Helen Remick in Washington, Joan Acker in Oregon, and Lois Haignere in New York comes to mind, just to name a few. These researcher-activists have worked with labor unions and women's organizations. Many have served as technical advisors and witnesses on pay equity and also as members of commissions implementing comparable worth. (8) In modeling the estimated impact of implementing pay equity nationwide across the U.S., June Lapidus and Deborah Figart (1994) found that eliminating wage discrimination by implementing comparable worth would also reduce poverty among women workers by approximately 40 percent. Their work was motivated by contemporary debates over wage discrimination, the labor market, and welfare reform. Figart and Lapidus (1995) used the budget-based poverty line based on consumer expenditure surveys developed by Trudi Renwick and Barbara Bergmann (1993) in addition to the federal poverty line published by the Census Bureau, illustrating the interrelatedness of feminist economic research and its commitment to change policy and improve women's lives.

Feminist explorations on the economics of wage discrimination are being extended to include sexuality. In the first study of its kind, M.V. Lee Badgett (1995b) confirmed wage discrimination on the basis of sexual preference, paying attention to any differential affect by gender. Like the pioneering research on gender-based wage discrimination in the 1970s, Badgett used conventional semi-logarithmic wage equations to assess discrimination as a basis for contrasting estimated sexual orientation coefficients with other independent variables. However, unlike conventional studies, Badgett's commitment to a sexuality research agenda caused her to seek out data collected by the National Opinion Research Center, the General Social Survey, which includes social as well as economic information. Badgett's research has been relied upon by the Institute for Gay and Lesbian Strategic Studies to dispute the stereotype that lesbian and gay people are disproportionately prosperous.

The development and the flourishing of feminist economics has also corresponded with the founding of the Institute for Women's Policy Research in 1987 by economist Heidi Hartmann and anthropologist Teresa Odendahl. IWPR is both national and international in scope, established "to meet the need for women-centered, policy-oriented research." The biennial IWPR conferences continue to be a showcase for new feminist work on labor market discrimination, bringing academics and advocates together. The Institute's own research has responded to attacks on the social welfare system with superior examinations of the real labor market opportunities for women on welfare. Upholding the

importance of unionization for improving women's labor market status, IWPR researchers have documented the positive impact that unions have had on women's wages and job tenure (Spalter-Roth, Hartmann, and Collins 1994). Further, the Institute's research on family and medical leave promoted a policy which legitimates rather than penalizes working women's family responsibilities.

Although discrimination has been primarily a topic in applied microeconomic research, feminist macroeconomists concerned with economic development have integrated women's labor market status into their critique of development policies. One example of recent work is the special gender issue of *World Development* with guest editors Nilufer Cagatay, Diane Elson, and Caren Grown (1995). Feminists have found that discrimination in labor markets is intensified by structural adjustment and other economic liberalization policies promoted by international development agencies. Policies which are presumed to be gender neutral have, in fact, marginalized women due to cutbacks in government social programs which negatively affect public sector (social service) employment. To the extent that market liberalization and privatization are international trends, women workers in industrial countries suffer similar setbacks.

Attempting to influence public policy is not simple. Sometimes, feminist viewpoints which challenge the status quo, the market, or the existing hierarchy, as in the case of comparable worth, are quickly dismissed. Further, the feminist researcher is involved with her subject matter which can pose its own challenges. In reflecting upon her involvement with the pay equity movement, Ronnie Steinberg writes: "Throughout this work, I have juggled the explicit contradiction between the openly political and biased character of advocacy for specific policy objectives and the supposed political neutrality and bias-free assumptions of scientific inquiry. Advocacy researchers, thus, live within these and other tensions" (1996: 2).

Proposition #2: Feminist approaches discern the limits of static models of labor market outcomes and investigate the lived experience of discrimination.

The traditional neoclassical portrayal of discrimination as the unexplained residual in well-specified wage equations renders discrimination as a nebulous, invisible construct. Yet women's experiences of discrimination are quite concrete, and broader research methodologies (including those borrowed from/developed within other social sciences) can be used to elucidate these experiences. In economics, I would argue that qualitative methods which supplement traditional positivism strengthens research, and that is a feminist contribution. (9) Another contribution feminist economists have made to the study of discrimination is their dedication to developing innovative data sets rather than relying upon usual measures in the Current Population Survey and National Longitudinal Survey. This necessarily expands our traditional conception of data requirements and encourages us to learn from and work with sociologists and psychologists who have experience with survey research, as pointed out by both Esther Redmount and Siv Gustafsson in the economic measurement section of *Out of the Margin: Feminist Perspectives on Economics* (1995).

One such example is provided by Marianne Ferber, Carole Green, and Joe Spaeth, who amassed a unique data set through telephone interviews in the State of Illinois. The researchers computed aspects of employer and job characteristics which could contribute to gender-based wage differentials, especially indicators of employee power or work authority (control over human and financial resources). While the additional variables increased the explanatory power of the wage regression, the researchers disagree that decreasing the residual implies less discrimination. Instead, they interpret their findings as suggesting that men and women differ in their access to control over human and financial resources, in addition to facing different reward structures. Thus, they uncover another dimension to discrimination, focusing on the process behind the quantifiable variable (Ferber et al. 1986; Ferber and Green 1991).

Feminist economists have looked to and received support from other social scientists and humanities scholars in their efforts to supplement statistical studies of discrimination with qualitative analysis. (10) Two recent feminist economic studies of child care centers as workplaces are indicative of the insights

to be gained from participatory research and oral interviews. Marilyn Power summarizes her involvement with the Child Care Council of Westchester County, New York (1994). As a participant as well as an observer, she worked with county child care employees to rewrite their own job descriptions to capture unacknowledged skills. This is an example of a local, creative effort to raise the value of women's work without a technical, full job evaluation study. Myra Strober, Suzanne Gerlach-Downie, and Kenneth Yeager (1995) evaluate the work environment and material conditions of child care workers by interviewing them and "allowing them to tell the story of the economics of their industry and occupation" (94). Although the wages of child care workers need to be raised significantly, as a realistic policy priority, the authors underscore the importance of improving job satisfaction among child care workers by means other than raising wages.

Utilizing interviews as a research method in work on discrimination also open doors to employing other qualitative evidence. Much of what we know about the practice of job evaluation and pay equity or comparable worth implementation has resulted from case studies by feminist participant observers, combined with in-depth interviews, and use of original sources, especially analyses of compensation policies, personnel law, and wage data. Analyses of bargaining agreements and personnel policies can document wage and career ladder differences within internal labor markets in civil service and public sector employment (see Figart 1989). Confidential employment records with salaries and career progression information were utilized by Maryellen Kelley (1982) in her study of discrimination in seniority systems at a private employer in the Boston, MA area. Heidi Hartmann (1987) analyzed occupational gender segregation, wage differentials, and the predominance of women in lower-paid jobs at a large insurance company. Bergmann was one of the first economists to point to structural, internal labor market barriers which impeded women's career advancement and contributed to the wage gap by exploring the discrimination suit against Liberty Mutual Insurance Company (cited in 1986). The case study method has yielded great advances in feminist work on wage and employment discrimination.

Proposition #3: Feminist approaches focus on relative power in the workplace and the process by which employers and workers act on their various competing interests.

In the United States, and even in more centralized industrial relations systems, many of the decisions which replicate or modify women's employment status occur at the level of the individual firm. The analysis of firm behavior in feminist work on discrimination does not begin and end with corporate decisions concerning the hiring of individuals, but in creating and maintaining gendered job categories and assigning wage rates to those categories. In other words, firms are not impenetrable boxes which may have tastes and preferences for white men (Nelson 1995: 121, commenting on Polacheck), disconnected from societal forces and discrimination. When we look inside the box, we find specific practices, policies, and behavior which influence occupational segregation, the social construction of skill, and pay inequality. Jerry Jacobs and Ronnie Steinberg (1990) suggest that "... power arrangements will affect the conditions of work, its content, and its assessment for purposes of compensation" (462). By conducting research at the level of the firm or organization, feminist researchers can avoid functionalist analyses and focus directly on the processes by which discrimination is implemented and replicated. (11) Further, organizational studies indicate the rigidity of gender labels and wage differentials. Once jobs are gender-typed and relative pay rates are established, they are difficult to change. Even when traditionally male job categories begin integrating, there is a tendency toward resegregation as gender composition tips toward feminization (Reskin and Roos 1990).

In a pivotal qualitative and quantitative study of the Washington State pay system, William Bridges and Robert Nelson (1989) evaluate the relative importance of both market and organizational forces in determining pay in male- and female-dominated job categories. Their work is an excellent example how literature and methodology in labor economics and the sociology of organizations can be complementary, bridging internal labor market theory, efficiency wage theory, and aspects of economic institutionalism with studies and critique of job evaluation and personnel administration. They test two

models: an "administered-efficiency model" and a "bureaucratic-politics model." The former relies upon theories of the internal labor market and efficiency wages, and the relationship between key jobs (benchmark jobs) and other jobs. Compensation schemes in the bureaucratic-politics model are derived from political and organizational interests and administrative rules regarding the definition and pay of jobs, and gender inequality stems from imbalance of political resources between the incumbents of traditionally male and female jobs. The administrative efficiency model assumes that wages inside the organization mirror the external labor market without commenting about whether and to what extent the labor market is tainted with gender discrimination.

Bridges and Nelson find both market and organizational forces play a role in large organizations, contrary to the assumption of many internal labor market studies. Employers devote substantial effort to monitoring market wages with information gleaned from regional salary surveys, and thus believe that their pay-setting practices reflect market conditions. Nevertheless, use of market comparisons is ad hoc, selective, and gendered. Gender bias is intensified by bureaucratic politics, influenced by custom, power within the organization, and political expediency. For example, in job categories where external market comparisons were unavailable, management and employee organization officials admitted a reluctance to change custom, especially since this tended to generate claims and appeals by interested groups of workers who felt their relative position threatened. Thus, the first systematic pay plan developed in 1963 was intact two decades later, a "preservation of historical disadvantage" (652).

Marlene Kim (1989) also emphasizes the rigidity of wage differentials by studying the origins of pay policies within the California civil service. Her study shows how historical wage-setting can influence current wages and gender inequality, contrary to neoclassical comparative statics. She found that an explicitly gendered occupational and salary structure developed in the 1930s continues to persist, as the employer never altered the relative pay differentials. Kim uses historical memos and interviews to document the gendered assumptions overtly built into the original classification structure at a time before equal opportunity policies and the threat of litigation. In Kim's words, "companies that never changed their discriminatory salary structure continue to pay inequitable wages" (1989: 39). Salary surveys ostensibly designed to adjust wages to reflect external labor markets reflected the subjective judgments of individuals and tended to reinforce existing wage differentials (Kim 1996). However, out of thousands of job classes, Kim was only able to trace just over 100 to the present, demonstrating the difficulties in applying this methodology broadly. Outside of the public sector, it is even more difficult to document the evolution of classification schemes and document the historical "smoking gun" of explicitly gendered assumptions.

Discrimination varies in its forms and manifestations across employers. A study of North Carolina employers found that gender earnings inequality was higher where organizational resources were greater (oligopolies, large firms, and other enterprises able to create high-paying and desirable jobs) and lower where employment relationships were more formalized, as in state employment (Anderson and Tomaskovic-Devey 1995). This study tended to confirm earnings inequality was linked to organizational characteristics which enabled male workers to preserve access to higher-paid jobs through rigid segregation. In contrast to this emphasis on institutional characteristics, Acker (1991) reminds us that wages are set by people in interaction with other people. Upon completing interviews with managers, union officials, employees, and other respondents inside Swedish banks, she found significant and surprising individual managerial authority even within a highly centralized bargaining structure. This was especially true in setting wages at initial hire and in allocating merit and equity raises. Both gender segregation and managerial decision-making helped to perpetuate wage differentials.

According to Cynthia Anderson and Donald Tomaskovic-Devey (1995), women and men, acting alone or in interest groups, have power to exacerbate and erode gender inequality at work. In one of the most revealing studies of gender inequality within organizations in Great Britain, Cynthia Cockburn (1991) spent four months as an observer and interviewer in four organizations: a retail employer, a

civil service employer, a local government unit, and a trade union. She defined the compromised equal treatment policies instituted at most workplaces as a "short agenda" for feminists. Male workers and managers were resistant to fundamental alteration of traditional power relations at work, the "long agenda" toward which feminists aspire. Even within this framework, the contours of equality policies varied according to internal politics and other factors. Occupational integration and positive action (affirmative action) were less of a priority in retail and civil service employment than in the other two cases. As an employer, the trade union's commitment to equality, in part, paralleled their priorities at the bargaining table which included comparable worth and improving pay among the lowest paid members, child care, and paid maternity leave.

Based on their research on a variety of organizations in the north of England, Carol Buswell and Sarah Jenkins (1994) argue that organizations develop a variety of public patriarchal strategies which disadvantage women in the labor market. For example, the extensive use of part-time versus fulltime workers serves to maintain women's inferior status. In contrast, managers are expected to work very long, even nonstandard, hours. The development of equal opportunity policies which themselves perpetuated gender distinctions in the labor market coincided with an historical expansion from private patriarchy in the household to public patriarchy embedded in employment and government institutions. Institutionalized public patriarchy provides a feedback effect which fortifies a gendered division of labor in households.

These organizational studies from the U.S. and Europe, as well as other intra-firm studies by sociologists and other researchers, indicate the relative rigidity of segmentation and wage differentials, even when employers are pressured to engage in equal opportunity. Managers and male workers both exert power in constructing and perpetuating gender-based wage discrimination, yet the relative power of each varies between organizations. Women may have the greatest opportunities to contest discrimination in situations where individuals have less ability to implement their gender-biases (or where there is an institutional commitment to equality). However, Kim also points to the hazards of organizational rigidities which ossify discriminatory attitudes into pay structures.

Proposition #4: Feminist approaches demonstrate the integrated analysis of economic, social, and political institutions in maintaining discrimination.

Along with attention to firm dynamics, feminists analyze the role of larger social institutions and forces external to the firm. Feminist studies of discrimination can entail exploring the relationship between gendered employment and (1) economic development and fluctuations; (2) family and household institutions; and (3) the state and public policy. While other social and community institutions such as religion also contribute to discrimination, there has been far less attention to these in the literature. Although feminists from different perspectives often emphasize the high degree of autonomy of one or more of these sets of institutions, I would suggest that each interacts with and constrains developments in the other spheres. To match the extensive research chronicling discrimination at the firm level, there is a need for more inquiry into the interrelationship between labor markets and economic, social, and political institutions--as well as the interactions between these three spheres.

Economic Factors

Clearly the contention that economic institutions play a role in discrimination is not a new insight. The explorations of organizational structure and dynamics described in Proposition #3 presume distinct economic interests of employers, managers, and male co-workers, and differences between firms based on market structure. Indeed, many explanations of occupational segregation have been grounded in the core insight of labor market segmentation theory: that employers benefit from the persistence of labor market discrimination by race and gender. More controversial has been whether white and/or male workers gain from earnings inequality, at least in the short run (see Rubery 1978; Williams 1987).

These economic interests interact with economic trends which also affect the process of discrimination. Feminist researchers have been exploring the ways economic change and development contribute to historical variation and diversity in women's labor market experiences. Contemporary economic restructuring affords a lens for analyzing the impact of economic change on gender relations (and vice versa). Women's increased labor force participation and the concomitant growth of feminized sectors of the economy have been analyzed as central to the emerging global economy (Bakker 1988; Standing 1989). M.V. Lee Badgett and Rhonda Williams (1994) have examined the role of economic restructuring in race and gender discrimination in the U.S. Comparing the costs of ending versus continuing discrimination, they analyze how these costs are influenced by labor supply, labor costs, public policy, and worker resistance; each of these factors is, in turn, affected by economic restructuring. For example, they suggest that the resistance of male workers to increased hiring of women is likely to fall during restructuring as the importance of women's earnings to families increases, but that the benefits of this decreased resistance generally accrue to white women while African American women and men more likely to remain in the expanding low-wage economy. Marcia Van Wagner (1993) also finds a class dimension in the impact of feminization of labor on women in the U.S.

Family and Household Institutions

Supply-oriented analyses of women's labor market status start by assuming a division of labor in the family as exogenous to the labor market. As Francine Blau and Marianne Ferber (1992) have pointed out, when this is coupled with Becker's model of the allocation of time between household and market work, the neoclassical framework reduces to a series of feedback effects. Women's lower labor force attachment yields lower wages which yield lower labor force participation, and so on. Historical changes in women's relationship to market work are left unexplored. By considering the role of the household as an economic institution, feminist analysis sees the distinction between market and non-market discrimination as blurred. According to Ann Jennings, feminist institutionalists "... explore the historical origins of modern cultural beliefs and practices, and describe the gender dimensions of existing distinctions between 'economic' and 'noneconomic' pursuits" (1993: 119). To accomplish this, the analytical boundaries between family and economy, household work and paid work must be broken. For example, feminists have criticized neoclassical economics for applying different modes of behavior (acquisitive versus altruistic) to the market and the family (England 1993; Folbre 1994).

Unfortunately, much of feminist theorizing about the household has also assumed married women's limited participation in the market economy (see Glenn 1987 for a summary). (12) Yet historical research indicates that women's lower labor force attachment is not exogenous to the economy and is socially constructed. Full-time homemaking was rarely an option for most women of color and many working class women. Married white women's relationship to market production declined in the 19th century U.S., in what Claudia Goldin (1990) depicts as the downward side of a U-shaped trend reinforced by social norms, institutionalized barriers, and the process of economic development. In a cross-country study, Nilufer Cagatay and Sule Ozler (1995) also find that women's share of the labor force exhibits a U-shaped pattern over the course of development. Finally, assumptions of heterosexuality are also embedded in many feminist treatments of the household (Badgett and Williams 1992; Badgett 1995a; Matthaei 1995). M.V. Lee Badgett points out that lesbian and gay families face different social norms and institutions which may influence the household division of labor.

In feminist models of discrimination, the diversity of family structures should be recognized to avoid simplistic formulations. Furthermore, the interactions between production and reproduction must be analyzed in a way that overcomes the supply and demand dichotomy (see Bruegel and Perrons 1995). While traditional models present us with two options---either women choose certain jobs (supply-side) or employer discriminate and segment (demand-side)--in reality, these dynamics of choice and constraint can not be isolated from each other. Patriarchal relations within the household

and society influence both suppliers and demanders of labor, and both dynamics are integral to understanding discriminatory processes and outcomes.

The State

The state's role in maintaining class, gender, and racial hierarchies deserves greater attention in feminist analyses of discrimination. There has not been enough study by feminist economists on the role of the state in labor market inequality in industrialized countries. If one were to conduct a literature search on the keywords "women" and "state," the citations would be almost exclusively on the social welfare system. (13) One possible exception is research on how the state as an employer develops and maintains discriminatory salary structures in the comparable worth literature. In fact, state policies can also have a tremendous impact on the direction of economic development and thus on the opportunity structures by race and gender. Thus, feminists need to evaluate the state as an agent in private sector labor markets.

Equality policies can be structured in ways which sustain gender, race, and class divisions. In two studies of the Republic of Ireland, Jean Pyle (1990) and Deborah Figart (1992) document that state policies which recognize women's family responsibilities may also reinforce segmentation, pay differentials, and traditional family structures. Drawing on the work of welfare state analysts, Kim Blankenship (1993) critiques the historical development of U.S. employment discrimination policies: the Equal Pay Act of 1963 and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Legislation was constructed and interpreted in ways which distinguish between gender discrimination (as a problem of unequal pay) and race discrimination (as a problem of unequal access). She indicates that this bifurcated approach led to a modified version of family wage ideology. Black men gained access to jobs earning a family wage and some white women who worked alongside men were guaranteed equal pay for equal work. However, many women, including the vast majority of women of color, worked in service and agricultural occupations which were excluded from coverage under the Equal Pay Act. Further, the construction of separate equality policies provided obstacles to comparable worth advocates' attempts to pursue remedies to wage discrimination for women in female-dominated occupations under Title VII.

A legal commitment to equality may be less significant than broader differences in national labor regulation. Several researchers undertaking cross-cultural research have emphasized national variations in women's labor market position as a reflection of institutional differences (Rubery 1992; Blau and Kahn 1992). For example, Jill Rubery's study of Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom finds that cross-cultural differences in labor market structures, employment regulation, and collective bargaining systems all contribute to the magnitude of pay differentials. The wage gap and wage dispersion were higher in the U.K., with stronger equal pay and equal value provisions, than in countries with centralized bargaining and wage solidarity policies. In a comparison of eight industrialized countries, Francine Blau and Lawrence Kahn also find that centralized wage-setting institutions which decrease interfirm and inter-industry wage variation reduce the gender pay gap more than a legal commitment to equal employment opportunity. The role of the state is highlighted by Rubery's finding that a higher level of employment regulation--in the form of minimum wage legislation, mandatory benefits for part-time work, and centralized bargaining apparatus--benefits working women.

Feminist macroeconomists have made a substantial contribution to comparative economics and development economics by evaluating how state economic liberalization and structural adjustment policies have affected the division of labor in the household and in the labor market. Among the published collections, two such studies Unequal Burden (Beneria and Feldman 1992) and Women in the Age of Economic Transformation (Aslanbeigui et al. 1994) present the following arguments. The policy shift from import substitution to export-led development coupled with the demands of governments and lending institutions for free markets, privatization, and fiscal constraint are assumed to be gender neutral. In reality, these policies have reinforced patriarchy, as the costs of privatization have fallen disproportionately on women and children while the benefits of restructuring accrue to men

with greater access to property, capital, and credit. Thus, liberalization policies have resulted in increased poverty among women and their families, the reliance on low-wage, primarily female labor in the export-dependent and informal sectors, while leaving women responsible for family maintenance in the household without any more decision-making authority. Although discrimination is traditionally viewed from a microeconomic perspective, macroeconomic analysis draws attention to the role of the state in shaping the direction of development, including employment opportunities by gender, class, and race.

Proposition #5: Feminist approaches recognize the intersections of gender, race, class, and other social forces which influence the development of labor market structures.

This proposition may be more controversial than the others because it asserts that economic institutions do not develop autonomously of gender. Many neoclassical and Marxist approaches argue that labor market structures develop according to strictly economic rationales, either profit maximization or class-based accumulation strategies. Then, discriminatory attitudes and/or institutions give women certain places within the structure. Gender theory argues that socially constructed notions of gender shape the available places. Thus, what historian Alice Kessler-Harris calls "subjective judgment," "custom," or "tradition" contributes to women's lower wages (1990: 7). All of these are gendered.

Acknowledging that cultural and psychological forces play a role calls into question the extent to which labor market decisions are made by rational individuals in the neoclassical paradigm. Denise Bielby and William Bielby (1988) found that individuals accept culturally prescribed and gendered roles in planning work effort. Discriminatory cultural beliefs are prevalent when a job or organization is founded, and this is reflected in the way that positions are defined and paid (Baron 1991: 115). Using evidence of gender segregation in the British labor force, Linda Murgatroyd (1982) argues that gender is not only crucial in assigning people to "places" in the gendered division of labor, but in the very definition of occupations and thus in shaping the division of labor as a whole. The social relations of gender are crucial to how the labor market and labor process produce and maintain segregation. Gender is considered in drawing up new occupational classifications, as well as "the production and reproduction" of gender-typed jobs in economic restructuring, when there are technical and social changes that affect job creation. The process of gendering and re-gendering jobs can be explicit or implicit. Murgatroyd documents the process by which occupations become gender-typed as a result of conflicts between employers seeking to employ women as low-wage labor and groups of male workers trying to preserve their sectors and wage levels. This study is indicative of recent work of labor historians who assign an active role to gender relations in defining occupations and class identities (see, for example, Baron 1991; Rose 1992).

Gender theory has also made a major contribution to analysis of the social construction of skill (Beechey 1988; Steinberg 1990). While radical analyses of deskilling often accept socially designated skill definitions, feminists point out that skill is also a socially contingent and gendered concept. Although jobs are frequently deskilled as they are feminized, this process occurs on both material and ideological levels. Further, Sara Horrell, Jill Rubery, and Brendan Burchell (1989) suggest that the centrality of work in men's lives and self-perceptions lead to a greater tendency to view their own jobs as skilled. Relying on a comprehensive social survey in Great Britain, they uncover differences in men's and women's descriptions of the skill content of their jobs, with women understating their job attributes (see also Haigene and Steinberg 1985).

However, the social construction of gender can not be analyzed without attention to how concepts of gender are influenced by race, class, and other social constructs. Increasingly rejected is the notion that these dynamics can be analyzed as separate and additive; instead the simultaneity and interlocking nature of systems of oppression is being demonstrated both theoretically and empirically (Collins 1991; Glenn 1992). Such analyses also point to the dangers of universalizing our conceptions of what is feminine and masculine, since these concepts are themselves different by race and class.

For example, the qualities and skills frequently depicted as "male" have not been attributed to black men (Williams 1993).

Considerable literature on domestic service has provided insights into how social constructions of race, ethnicity, and gender contribute to defining the conditions under which paid reproductive labor is performed. Evelyn Nakano Glenn (1992: 32) surveys and analyzes historical studies on the Southern, Southwestern, and Far Western United States, arguing that "Two fundamental elements in the construction of racial-ethnic womanhood were the notion of inherent traits that suited the women for service and the denial of the women's identities as wives and mothers in their own right." A contrasting study by Karen Tranberg Hansen (1990) poses the question of why domestic service in Zambia (post-colonial Northern Rhodesia) has remained a male occupation. She notes that white and African women both rebelled against colonial officials' attempt to feminize the occupation during labor shortages in the 1940s. The reasons were culturally specific, linked to ideologies about the sexuality of women and men of different races.

As paid reproductive labor has shifted from independent domestic work to service sector industries, race and gender have continued to define the division of labor, pay, and opportunities for mobility (Glenn 1992; Woody 1992). Optimistic trends toward convergence in young black and white women's occupational distribution and wages during the 1970s reversed in the 1980s (King 1993, 1995; McCrate and Leete 1994). Marilyn Power and Sam Rosenberg (1995) find that "being a service worker when young contributes to a different 'life story' for women of different race and class." Young white women, especially those from middle class families, use service work as a bridge to higher paid employment while black women remain in the lowest paid service jobs. Thus, occupational segregation and the assignment of gender labels to occupations derives from the interaction of structural and economic forces with culturally constructed concepts of race, class, and gender.

CONCLUSION: TOWARD A FEMINIST ECONOMIC THEORY OF DISCRIMINATION

Gender operates as more than a dummy variable and economic analysis can not simply control for gender by incorporating descriptive characteristics into wage regressions. The distinction between the biological category of sex and the social construction of gender indicates a more dynamic analysis is needed. The propositions outlined above suggest a broad analytical framework is the way in which to proceed. They are grounded in the assertion that labor market experience is a process resulting from and contributing to the historical development of labor market outcomes. These propositions draw attention to: (1) the relationship between research and praxis; (2) the importance of methodological pluralism for a complex understanding of economic outcomes; (3) the significance of power dynamics within firms; (4) the impact of economic, social, and political institutions on the process of discrimination; and (5) the intersections of gender, race, class, and other social constructs.

From the feminist studies of discrimination, a vision of the labor market emerges which is quite different than the textbook view. Rather than a sign of imperfections which can be smoothly eradicated by market forces, gender inequality is extensive and adaptive. Feminist economists are developing new theories which indicate that gender is fundamental to how the economy is constituted. At the same time, we must keep in mind that getting the theory right is only one part of the project; eliminating discrimination must be our ultimate objective.

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(1) Several feminist scholars have summarized competing theories of discrimination, including: tastes and preferences; statistical discrimination; error discrimination; the crowding hypothesis; institutional approaches; and segmentation theory (Beechey 1988; Blau and Ferber 1992; Woolley 1993; Folbre 1994).

(2) In what seems like an escalating battle of technique (more measured variables, fixed-effects regressions, use of simultaneous equations, etc.), neoclassical wage regressions have become nearly overloaded with independent variables in an attempt to decrease the unexplained residual (see, for example, Killingsworth 1985; Filer 1985, 1989).

(3) Many of these ongoing investigations have used log-linear multiple regression analysis and decomposition techniques; such surveys are not unique to the U.S. labor market (see Darity 1989:335 336 for a review).

(4) Human capital theorists maintain that women's expectations of labor market intermittency provides a rational basis for choosing (lower-paid) female-dominated occupations. In 1982, sociologist Paula England engaged in "debate" with Solomon Polacheck, arguing that human capital theory was inadequate in explaining occupational segregation and therefore gender-based wage differentials. The literature abounds with studies challenging human capital explanations (see England 1984; Kiefer and Phillips 1988; Tienda, Smith, and Ortiz 1987; King 1995). By no means should this imply that human capital theorists threw in the towel. According to Polacheck (1995) a "careful look at the data" today still indicates that the human capital model, relying upon labor supply differences, is the best explanation for both occupational segregation and the gender-based wage gap. For a recent human capital approach to the status of women in the economics profession, see Shulamit Kahn (1995).

(5) Elaine Sorensen (1989, 1994) has published exceptional research utilizing the gender composition of occupations as an explanatory variable. Feminist economists can look to and appreciate the contributions that sociologists Jerry Jacobs and Ronnie Steinberg (1990) have made to discredit the role of compensating differentials in explaining away the pay gap between women and men.

(6) There is certainly an excellent body of research here, from historical studies of the feminization of occupations (Cohn 1985) to sociological studies of segmentation within organizations (Bielby 1991; Bielby and Baron 1984; Reskin 1984).

(7) Feminist economists, for instance, have criticized neoclassical economic thought as positivistic, atomistic, androcentric, ahistorical, and emphasizing market behavior to the near exclusion of the household (see, for example, Ferber and Nelson 1993; Strober 1994; Strassmann 1994; Kuiper and Sap 1995; Nelson 1995a).

(8) For studies of comparable worth implementation in Canada, Australia, the U.S., and Great Britain, see Judy Fudge and Patricia McDermott (1991), Morley Gunderson and W. Craig Riddell (1992), Peggy Kahn and Elizabeth Meehan (1992), Heidi Hartmann and Stephanie Aaronson (1994).

(9) This is not meant to imply that quantitative research is inherently male and qualitative inherently female (Nelson 1993, 1995a). This difference and hierarchy is socially constructed.

(10) More continues to be written on feminist research methods. A collection of essays edited by sociologists Mary Margaret Fonow and Judith Cook (1991) present feminist epistemological ideas (see also Reinhartz 1992; Cancian 1992). Diana Strassmann and Livia Polanyi (1995) have written about the importance of story-telling in feminist economics.

(11) In her analysis of social reproduction, Nancy Folbre (1994) has focused on the matrix of collective identities and collective interests which can motivate human behavior, including gender, race, ethnicity, class, age, sexuality, and nationality. She maintains that we can not predetermine which of these competing interests will be acted upon in a given circumstance; none is primary. Applied to a

feminist theory of discrimination, this suggests the need to be specific about how gender, class, racial, and other interests interact in organizational power structures. Power within organizations is conditioned by individuals' place in a social hierarchy (Dugger 1987, 1994; Pfeffer and Konrad 1991).

(12) Early contributions by Marxist- and socialist-feminists focused on the relationship between productive and reproductive labor. While some writers focused on the ways in which women's unpaid domestic labor served the interests of employers by reducing socially necessary wages, others emphasized that men reap the material gains in the form of domestic services and jobs with higher wages. More recent formulations apply game theory and bargaining models to analyze women's weaker bargaining position within the household (McCrate 1987; Seiz 1991, 1995; Folbre 1994). In most feminist economic research, the household is "envisioned as a contested terrain" (Feldman 1992: 11).

(13) Among the exceptions are historical studies on the development of policies such as protective legislation and marriage bars in industrialized countries (see, for example, Steinberg 1982; Lehrer 1987; Rose 1992).

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