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Women/Gender and Development: the Growing Gap Between Theory and Practice

Jane S. Jaquette[1]

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Abstract Briefly reviewing the evolution of the field of women development, the author argues that the field has lost the dynamism characteristic of earlier periods of constructive tension between theory and practice that led to the adoption of the gender and development framework and the incorporation of issues of multiculturalism, human rights, and political participation into a field that had largely been defined in economic terms. Today, however, critical theory is caught in an "anti-neoliberal" position that is increasingly outdated and that has interpreted women's work, individual agency, and the role of the state in ways that hinder rather than facilitate new thinking and better outcomes for women participants in WID/GAD projects and programs.

Keywords Women/gender and development · Liberalism · Neoliberalism · Feminist theory

Marking the fortieth anniversary of the creation of the Women in Development Office at USAID (in 2014), the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action (in 2015), and the continued commitment to gender equality in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, this essay reflects on the origin, evolution, and future of the field of Women/Gender and Development. I draw on my personal experiences as a scholar, bureaucrat, and activist to argue that the sometimes contentious exchanges between feminist theorists and those

✉ Jane S. Jaquette
jsjaquet@oxy.edu

[1] Department of Politics, Occidental College, Los Angeles, CA, USA

designing and carrying out women and development policies were often productive in the past.[1] Today, however, the field of women/gender and development is stalled, and the gap between theory and practice has grown wider. Many feminist theorists now argue from anti-bureaucratic and "anti-neoliberal" positions that obstruct potentially fruitful dialogues that could advance the field and increase its positive impact.

In the past, shifting ideological and practical challenges led to critical engagement between feminist theory and development practice. Development emerged both as an academic field and as a policy challenge during the 1970s, when Cold War conflicts between East and West and North-South debates over the causes of underdevelopment stimulated often heated conversations among feminists about the rationales for and effects of women and development practices. The liberal egalitarian convictions of the US feminists who lobbied for the establishment of a "women in development" (WID) office in the US Agency for International Development (and in turn provided the impetus for WID programs in other bilateral and multilateral foreign assistance agencies) were challenged by Marxist and dependency theorists as well as by "cultural" or "difference" feminists (Jaquette 1982). In the late 1980s, post-modern and post-colonial theorists added new critical perspectives.[2]

Facing several barriers, from institutional resistance to gaps between project goals and results, practitioners looked to feminist theorizing in order to adapt their strategies and buttress their arguments for prioritizing women and gender equity (Jaquette 1990; Kabeer 1994). In the late 1980s and early 1990s, this led to a shift from "Women in Development" (WID) to "Gender and Development" (GAD). Today, WID and GAD are institutionalized, but have lost dynamism, while feminist theoretical critiques have now coalesced around a rejection of "neoliberalism" and a demand for "structural" or "transformative" change (e.g., Jahan 1995; Runyan and Petersen 2014). The field of women/gender and development could be reenergized by a more fruitful engagement between feminist theorists and WID/GAD practitioners. But the longstanding feminist bias against bureaucracy (Ferguson 1985) means that critics often do not think constructively about how to address gender and development policies that must be made and carried out by government, multilateral, and NGO bureaucracies. The prevalent feminist perspective rejects "neoliberal capitalism" and, in doing so, interprets

[1] My own engagement with women and development issues began in 1975 as an amateur filmmaker and participant in the Tribune, the NGO meeting parallel to the UN International Women's Year (IWY) conference in Mexico City that launched the Decade for Women (1975–1985). In 1979–1980, I served (overlapping with another academic, Kathleen Staudt) as a policy analyst in the Women in Development Office at USAID, specializing in Latin America (Jaquette 2014), and participated as an official delegate to the regional preparatory meeting for the UN Mid-Decade Conference in Copenhagen (Jaquette 1995). Returning to teaching as the "Third Wave" of democratic transitions began to take place during the 1980s, I did interviews on how women's movements were organizing to oppose militarism and raise women's issues as democracy was restored in Brazil, Argentina, Chile, and Peru (Jaquette 1994). In the early 1990s, Sharon Wolchik and I organized a project to compare women's roles in transitions in Latin America and in Central and Eastern Europe (Jaquette and Wolchik 1998). In 1990–1991, I served as president of the Association for Women in Development, founded in 1982 to connect policymakers, practitioners and scholars. I was invited to head the Women and Development Office early in the administration of President Bill Clinton, but declined for personal reasons. Gale Summerfield and I co-edited *Women and Gender Equity in Development Theory and Practice* (2006) in recognition of Irene Tinker's impact on the field, and I continue to teach and write about gender and development issues.

[2] On the evolution of feminist theory, see Evans (1995).

women's work, women's individual agency, and the stake women have in a capable state in ways that close off rather than expand the possibilities of improved policies and practice. I conclude by suggesting some ways in which feminist theory and practice might reconnect and thereby improve the positive impact of women and development practices across the global South.

Liberal, Marxist, and Cultural Feminist Critiques of Modernization

Early in its history, the field of women/gender and development relied heavily on liberal feminist thought. The WID Office in the US Agency for International Development was established in 1973 by the Percy Amendment, which was passed by Congress in response to lobbying by US feminists riding a wave of legislative successes guaranteeing women's equal access to education and credit, a Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion, and a dynamic (though ultimately unsuccessful) campaign for the Equal Rights Amendment (Tinker 1990; Tinker 2006). The consensus that women should be taken into account in development assistance, recognizing both the negative effects of gender-blind policies as well as demand for programs and projects that could benefit women, was reinforced by the commitments of member states to the Program of Action agreed on at the first UN conference on women, held in Mexico City in 1975, and subsequent transnational organizing by women.

The implementation of the Percy Amendment in USAID, as well as women and development initiatives taking place in other bilateral and multilateral foreign assistance agencies, was shaped by Ester Boserup's pioneering book, *Woman's Role in Economic Development* (1970). Boserup challenged the conventional view that modernization was good for women. She contrasted women's roles in agricultural production in Africa and Asia to show that technological advances (going back to the plow) had marginalized women's labor and reduced women's status. In Africa, this trend was further exacerbated when cash crops were introduced by colonial bureaucracies, which gave capital, seeds, and market access to men, leaving low productivity and low-status subsistence farming to women. Early WID efforts at USAID and in various UN and bilateral foreign assistance agencies focused on righting the balance, encouraging the recognition of women as productive farmers, and funding projects to create new income-generating opportunities. Although these efforts were small in scale and not always successful, they were egalitarian in their goals of giving women more economic independence, ideological resources to fight for women's equality in the public sphere, and leverage to challenge patriarchal norms in the household (Dixon 1980).

WID initiatives in multilateral and bilateral aid agencies did not challenge capitalism, hardly surprising given that Western foreign assistance programs were designed in part to counter the appeal of communism to the "underdeveloped" countries of the "Third World." However, many feminists in the West, often activists in the radical movements of the 1960s, saw the advances made by women in revolutionary China and Cuba as evidence that political incrementalism under liberal capitalism could never make the structural changes needed to free women from male dominance. Further, the Marxist critique that capitalism always exploits labor suggested that efforts to improve women's incomes within a capitalist development model would inevitably fall short, and WID projects were dismissed as "treating cancer with a bandaid" (Benería and Sen

1981). The Marxist critique resonated with many women activists from the Global South, who were also influenced by dependency theory—the view that underdevelopment was caused by the exploitative history of trade relationships between North and South.[3] At the first UN Conference on Women, in Mexico City, in 1975, egalitarian feminists from the North were challenged by women from the global South who asserted that women's oppression was less the result of patriarchy than of "mass poverty and general backwardness of the majority of the world's population caused by underdevelopment which is a product of imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism and also of unjust international economic relations" ("The Roots of Inequality for Women," quoted in Towns 2010: 143).[4]

By the 1980s, cultural or "difference" feminism had also gained ground. It criticized both liberal egalitarians and Marxists for seeking equality on male terms (Elshtain 1981; Gilligan 1982). As Betty Friedan wrote in 1981, breaking through the "feminine mystique" meant that "we merely applied the abstract values of all previous liberal movements and radical revolutions, as defined by men" (quoted in Evans 1995: 48). It was not enough for women to achieve equality with men under a system of cultural values that emphasized individualism, competition, and violence. Instead, the system itself needed to be transformed so that traits traditionally associated with women—pacifism, cooperation, care, and solidarity—would become the prevailing social norms. Elise Boulding's *The Underside of History: A View of Women through Time* (1976) anticipated early ecofeminism, seeing women's historical commitments to peace and the family as a force that could counter the threats to human survival brought about by industrialization and war.

Practical Challenges to Pursuing Gender Equity in Changing Institutional and International Contexts

At USAID in the 1970s, as well as in other development-oriented institutions, the goals of development assistance were changing in response to growing concerns about rapid population growth and fears of devastating famines (Ehrlich 1971). USAID changed its focus from infrastructure to agricultural development, while its population program aggressively promoted family planning and contraceptive use.[5] President Jimmy Carter (1977–1981), presenting a "moral" alternative to a country that had lost confidence after its defeat in Vietnam, made human rights a priority in US foreign policy. Carter's agenda, his appointment of an effective activist to head the WID Office, and the active involvement of several US women's organizations gave the WID Office some

[3] In 1974, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution calling for a New International Economic Order (NIEO), basing its claims on dependency theory (Frank 1969). Marxism focused on class relations within countries; dependency theory on economic power relations among countries. The NIEO called for restructuring the international economic system to address the exploitation of the "periphery" (countries producing primary products, i.e. the Global South) relative to those of the "center" (the advanced industrialized countries of the North).

[4] On IWY, the Decade and on the origins and early implementation of WID at the UN, see several chapters in Fraser and Tinker (2004), Winslow (1995), and Jain (2005).

[5] For a critique, see Jaquette and Staudt (1985).

bureaucratic clout and the opportunity to help define a new field (Jaquette 2014; but see Staudt 1985).

The WID Office staff tried a variety of initiatives, contracting with agricultural universities to include women in agricultural extension and training programs and promoting women's income-generating projects in urban and rural areas. With advice from the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), it saw programs directed at female-headed households as an effective way to reduce poverty (Buvinic and Youssef 1978; but see Chant 2006). These efforts met with considerable bureaucratic resistance, leading practitioners to seek out feminist research and theorizing to strengthen their case. Within the bureaucracy, "moral" arguments for women's equality did little to move agency staff to change their priorities. Boserup's claim that African women had in the recent past been equally involved as men in agricultural production helped counter the view that directing resources to women would impose "women's lib" on non-Western societies. Boserup made it clear that women's economic roles were almost always invisible to the Western men doing development work, as they were accustomed to thinking women as "housewives."

1980 marked a turning point that would force feminist practitioners to further adjust their rationales for including women in development. The election of Ronald Reagan (1981–1989) led to a shift away from Keynesian "demand side" economics toward "supply side" monetarism and government austerity, with both domestic and international repercussions. The "Washington Consensus" reforms (Williamson 1990) gained traction as the debt crisis gave the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank considerable leverage to require a series of "structural adjustment programs" (SAPs) across the global South as a condition of debt restructuring. These reforms demanded cuts in government social programs and public sector employment to balance budgets and repay debts; such cuts would have disproportionately negative consequences for poor women and their families. Many women were forced into the labor force, largely into marginal jobs in the informal economy (Bakker 1999; Visvanathan and Yoder 2011; Sparr 1994; Elson 2002; Benería et al. 2016).

Reagan rejected the view that underdevelopment in the global South had resulted from exploitation by the North, countering that statism and protectionism rather than neo-colonialism and neo-imperialism were the real barriers to development. In this new environment, feminist practitioners were increasingly forced to justify their programs on efficiency rather than egalitarian grounds, though welfarist arguments also played a role as aid could be justified to "compensate" for the negative effects of SAPS on women and families. In terms of practice, "women and development" became nearly synonymous with microcredit programs, which fit the pro-market approach and had the added advantage that, as studies showed, women spent more of the money they earned on children's nutrition, health, and education than men (e.g., Thomas 1990). By 2010, it was estimated that there were 3100 microfinance institutions with 205 million clients across the globe, 75% of whom were women.[6]

At the end of the 1980s, postmodern and postcolonial feminists brought about a major shift in thinking about women and development. Postcolonial feminists emphasized the heterogeneity of women's experiences, criticizing Western feminists for portraying women from the global South as helpless victims of patriarchy (Mohanty

[6] Klugman and Morton (2013), 136.

1991). Challenging the Marxist and liberal emphasis on materiality and foregrounding the role of culture and subjective experiences, postcolonial and postmodern theorizing (Marchand and Parpart 1995) helped stimulate the development and adoption of a new policy paradigm, Gender and Development or GAD.

GAD built on WID's successes but saw in its shortcomings the basis for re-energizing the field. GAD (Moser 1989; Rathgeber 1990) prescribed three important changes in the WID approach. Because WID projects were seen as too narrowly concerned with improving access to resources for individual women rather than addressing the structural causes of women's subordination, GAD proposed that gender relations become an explicit focus and that men be brought into the process (Rowan-Campbell 1999: 25–30). As WID projects were too small and isolated from broader foreign assistance goals, GAD called for gender mainstreaming: women and development would be integrated into all projects and programming. Responding to the critique that WID projects imposed a "universalist" Western viewpoint, GAD emphasized participatory development (Momsen 2004) that would recognize the diversity of women's experiences and allow local participants to define their "strategic gender needs" for themselves.[7]

The adoption of the GAD approach stimulated both bilateral and multilateral aid agencies to rethink and restructure their women and development programs. Over time, financial support for such programs increased dramatically. By 2010–2011, OECD countries were spending an estimated $25 billion on women/gender in development (Klugman and Morton 2013). GAD reinvigorated the field, bringing about changes in the way bureaucracies were organized to reach women (mainstreaming) and addressing gender power relations at the project level ("doing gender"). The global turn toward democracy opened new avenues for women's political participation and aid agencies sought programs that could increase the capacity of women's groups to press for reforms in laws affecting women's rights, from family law to violence against women.

Yet the field has failed to progress beyond the GAD framework. There are several reasons for this, including backlash, bureaucratic resistance, and the sheer enormity of the tasks of "reducing women's poverty" or making real progress in changing gender roles. But an additional reason is the distance that has grown between feminist theorizing and WID/GAD practice. The feminist rejection of bureaucracy and the dominance of an anti-neoliberal perspective have made it difficult for theorists and practitioners to return to the pattern of critique and response that proved productive in the past.

The Benefits and Constraints of Bureaucracies

Feminist skepticism about bureaucracies helped pave the way for GAD, but GAD too has now come under criticism, in part because of bureaucratic barriers to its implementation. As Andrea Cornwall et al. (2007: 5) observe, the arguments for GAD "are now taken for granted," but this acceptance has not led to dramatic reductions of women's poverty. And "all but the most stoic defenders of "gender mainstreaming"

[7] The adoption of GAD meant that the European bilateral agencies and UN programs displaced USAID as an innovator in the field and redefined women's gender "interests" (Molyneux 1985) as gender "needs" (Moser 1989). See Jaquette and Staudt (2006).

would admit that for all the effort that has been poured into trying to make mainstreaming work, many agencies would be hard pressed to boast much in the way of effects in terms of institutional policies and practices."[8]

Their critique of gender mainstreaming points to an important constraint: bureaucracies alone are ill-equipped to bring about "transformational change" (Standing 1997). Further, the expectation that bureaucratically designed WID or GAD projects can "reduce women's poverty" on a global scale, even at current expenditure levels, is unrealistic, as is the belief that particular projects or programs can have a dramatic effect on gender power relations, despite efforts to apply the latest technologies to empowering ends, like those documented in the articles by Jolene Fisher and by Leslie Steeves and Janet Kwame in this issue. The literature examining how WID and GAD programs are administered suggests, however, that although bureaucracies are unlikely to lead to transformational change, they do offer important opportunities.

One frequent criticism of bureaucracies is that they are over-reliant on quantitative data and that this is inimical to feminist practice and to good outcomes for women. Dzodzi Tsikata (2007:120), for example, believes that the Millennium Development Goals threaten the achievements of the Decade and Beijing because they "take the essence out of the rich analysis and detailed commitments of the various platforms," reducing them to "eight goals, fifteen targets, and forty-eight indicators."

But bureaucracies large and small (including those of NGOs) require data to identify gaps and assess progress.[9] Quantitative data can be supplemented by qualitative studies, aided by the small size of most projects and the emphasis on participatory planning and evaluation. Bureaucratic requirements caused development agencies to begin to collect systematic data to establish and measure gender inequality. To justify the need for women and development interventions, the WID Office contracted with the US Census Bureau in the late 1970s to compile sex-differentiated data on a variety of indicators (Chaney 2004), a forerunner of later indices on gender inequality developed by the UN, OECD, and the World Economic Forum (Momsen 2004; Klugman and Morton 2013). The WID Office also commissioned time-use studies in several countries that measured—and thus made visible—the extent of women's household labor. This data was used to argue for installing water pumps and designing cookstoves to reduce the many hours a day rural women spend gathering wood and carrying water; it also showed that women's labor was a scarce resource, not an endless reserve that could be drawn on to support development projects.

Some critics argue that bureaucratic constraints make WID and GAD programs too reliant on consultants and on subcontracting to NGOs. Dorienne Rowan-Campbell (1999: 18) criticizes programs that hire consultants who are paid "to do their thinking for them." Largely underfunded and populated with staff having little first-hand knowledge of the gendered contexts in which projects are unfolding, WID and GAD projects do rely on consultants and local NGOs. The results are mixed. Consultants, like anthropologists, are both "inside" and "outside," able to see and articulate the inevitable conflicts between program design and implementation. At its best, the involvement of local NGOs can help to develop local leadership and make participatory

[8] On mainstreaming, see, for example, Tiessen (2007); Prugl and Lustgarten 2006; Hirschmann 2006; Walby 2005; Moser and Moser 2005).

[9] Wariness about data is part of a larger feminist critique of "science" (e.g., Merchant 1988).

planning meaningful in practice. The positive impacts of involving local NGOs are unlikely to be uniform or automatic, however. Conflicts may emerge between NGOs and women's ministries or other state agencies set up to address women's issues (Tripp et al. 2009: 181). In their competition for national and international contracts, NGOs can become professionalized, lose touch with the women they are trying to reach, and become mere service providers, no longer able to act as effective advocates for structural change (Alvarez 1999). NGOs, whether they employ professionals or rely on volunteers, can reinforce social hierarchies based on class, race, rural/urban differences, and education, and they may promote particular feminist agendas rather than engage in dialogue with the women they are trying to reach (e.g., Hernández Castillo and Aída 2010: 334–35). Personalistic leadership styles may repress the voices and interests of the women the projects are intended to empower. Erin Beck's essay in this issue illustrates many of these dynamics in play in two very different microfinance NGOs in Guatemala.

But these are issues that, if recognized, can be addressed (see Alvarez 2009); NGOs remain on the cusp of connection between the global and the local, between the voices of women who are the "objects" of WID and GAD interventions and the perceptions, intentions, and actions of women (and men) who are committed to trying to improve their lives. Activists should not "turn their back on the official agencies of development," Naila Kabeer concludes, as they are "still the most powerful mechanisms for resource allocation, with the potential capacity to satisfy or exacerbate the desperate imbalance in resources and responsibilities that underpins women's subordinate position in most societies" (1994: 88). Although NGOs and activism surrounding development projects can help make up for the rigidities of bureaucratic implementation, bureaucracies remain the principal means by which substantial resources can reach women. For practitioners and policymakers, the question is whether they can do it better. Addressing this requires ongoing dialogue between practitioners who face the daily constraints and opportunities that bureaucracies introduce and theorists who are less beholden to bureaucracies and therefore freer to imagine alternative strategies.[10]

Indeed, as shown above, changing bureaucratic and international contexts have historically forced practitioners to engage feminist theory creatively, in part to develop rationales for women and development policies and distinguishing their pros and cons. When WID practice was on the verge of "exhaustion," it was theorizing on the part of GAD scholars that reinvigorated the field, providing an infusion of energy and ideas.

Today, the kind of paradigm shift GAD represented would be difficult to replicate. As Beck's introduction to this collection illustrates that the field has taken on so many issues that it is now highly fragmented, making it difficult to identify "best practices," determine realizable goals, and compare outcomes in different sectors and across different cultures and spaces. GAD is no longer cutting edge, but there is no obvious alternative in the wings. If bureaucracies need to be shaken up periodically to perform well, that is a cause for concern.

[10] On scholar-policymaker interactions, see Lowenthal and Bertucci, eds. (2014).

Feminist Theory: the Hegemony of Anti-Neoliberalism

Anti-neoliberal feminists portray women as economic victims suffering the consequences of structural adjustment policies. Yet their portrayals over-simplify the initial goals and effects of the neoliberal reforms of the 1980s, conflate neoliberalism with liberalism and ignore the dramatic changes that have occurred since the height of neoliberal policy implementation in the 1980s and 1990s. Today, when theory is needed to re-energize and strengthen WID/GAD practice, feminist theory on women and development seems caught in an anti-neoliberal time warp. Concepts of women's work and individual agency are forced into an ideological straitjacket, while the challenge of increasing state capacity is largely ignored.

Critics of the neoliberal reforms of the 1980s and 1990s deny that such reforms were necessary, arguing instead that international financial elites took advantage of the 1980s debt crisis to impose economic models that would in turn hurt the poor and favor global financial and business interests. Yet this account lacks nuance. A key goal of the reforms was to cut government spending to curb inflation, which falls hardest on the poor. By the mid to late 1980s, inflation rates were in the double and triple digits, and several countries experienced hyperinflation. To control inflation, government spending must be matched to government revenues. High levels of indebtedness and low levels of savings required major reductions in government spending, with deep cuts to infrastructure investments and social programs. Another reform—although it was rarely fully implemented—called for eliminating price controls and subsidies on the grounds that they distort investment decisions. Price controls did not universally benefit the poor; they often favored one group over another, typically urban consumers over rural farmers. Government-run enterprises, in some cases popularly supported as symbols of national pride, were often inefficient, taking funds from the national budget that could have gone toward social uses. Billions in foreign debts had to be restructured and trade liberalized for foreign investment to return and growth to be restored; without growth, redistributive policies were not politically or economically sustainable.

What makes sense in theory, however, may fall short in practice: state enterprises were often made available at "fire sale" prices to foreign investors or to "crony capitalists" with close ties to the government, leading to charges of corruption. Removing price controls and subsidies on scarce resources (such as water and fuel) without providing compensatory programs dramatically increased poverty and had very negative effects on the daily lives of women. President Reagan's pro-market views, backed by Britain's Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, were hostile to the state and imbued the Washington consensus reforms with an ultimately counterproductive anti-state and anti-welfare bias.[11]

Reaction to structural adjustment reforms produced a new wave of feminist theorizing, for example on the male biases of economic theory (e.g., Elson 2002) and on the exploitation of wage and care work done by women in a globalized economy (e.g., Beneria 2003). Today, however, the anti-neoliberal bias among feminist theorists needs reassessment. Chinese growth and imports spurred economic recovery in many

[11] During the 1990s, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, considered economic successes, countered the Anglo-American position, emphasizing the role of the state in creating the conditions for the success of their export-led growth model.

countries during the first decade of the twenty-first century, and social spending was restored and in several cases dramatically increased. Effective tax rates rose and collections improved. The growth of middle classes has led to a rise in "middle class" issues, as citizens in many countries began to demand transparency, security, market regulation, and redistribution without clientelism; they call for judiciary systems that enforce the laws without impunity for the wealthy and powerful and for governments to address environmental issues and ethnic exclusion. In general, women have benefitted from these trends, but they suffer greatly when they live in countries divided by civil war and/or are threatened by powerful criminal organizations that engage drug and human trafficking and extortion or lack personal security and an effective judicial system—all symptoms of a weak state.

For many feminists, however, neoliberalism has become the default explanation for all our current ills. The shock of structural adjustment brought Marxist and difference feminists into closer alignment portraying women as the new proletariat that can be mobilized to create the world envisioned by difference feminism: selfishness would be replaced by compassion, states by community self-government, and capitalism by a system of production driven by the desire to serve the common good. Today, 30 years after the "imposition" of neoliberal policies, the persistence of capitalism threatens the unwary with cooptation. Activists are encouraged to "stay alert in order to avoid the huge risk of becoming involved in neoliberal reasoning or serving its processes of restructuring" (Kauppert and Kerner 2016).

Anti-neoliberal feminism today reflects a larger trend of "resurgent utopian thinking" that "embraces collectivism, egalitarianism, the rejection of capitalism, and individualism," and dismisses critics as "politically cynical and in complicity with the global forces of oppression" (Kapur 2016: 66). The problem with utopianism is not that it is unworthy or uninspired, but that it is a barrier to incremental solutions and real reform, especially when it remains divorced from the experiences and input of those who are involved in the daily work of practice. A more promising path forward would be to differentiate the many processes—globalization, modernization, cultural homogenization, democratization, migration, climate change, and terrorism—that are reshaping our lives in order to gain a clearer sense of what can be changed and how, what can be ameliorated, and what must be confronted head-on.[12] Further, by rejecting anything short of "structural change," the anti-neoliberal consensus is distorting the ways we think about issues that are key to women's well-being the world over, namely women's work, women's individual agency, and the stake women have in a capable state.

Work

WID and GAD scholars and practitioners both saw in women's work the potential to increase women's choices and sense of self-worth, although some were more optimistic than others about regarding the positive effects of wage labor for women's broader empowerment. Like Marxist feminists, anti-neoliberal feminists dismiss work done under "neo-liberal capitalism" as exploited labor, which has the effect of denying that

[12] Benería et al. (2016) offer a detailed analysis that is anti-neoliberal and utopian but provides some practical suggestions for reform.

women's work outside the home can have value in itself. By making "structural transformation" code for jettisoning capitalism, these scholars avoid the hard task of devising policies and making concrete efforts to improve the actual conditions under which women participate in the labor market.

Early feminist assessments of increasing female labor participation were not so harsh. Kabeer (1994) saw women's work as empowering in some ways, and in their 1985 statement written for the transnational feminist group DAWN (Development Opportunities for Women in a New Era), Gita Sen and Caren Grown (1985:12) speculated that structural adjustment policies that forced women to work outside the home could have the positive effect of promoting more self-reliant national development in which women would play a key role. Aili Tripp's research in Tanzania in the late 1980s defended the informal sector. She argued that women were not passive victims of economic hardships, but that their employment gave them control over their earnings, increased their autonomy, and encouraged their involvement in public life (1997: Ch. 5). But from the anti-neoliberal perspective, the structural adjustment policies of the late 1980s and subsequent pro-market policies have had only negative effects: "instrumentalizing" women's labor, "disciplining subaltern female bodies" (Carrasco-Miró 2016), and "letting the state off the hook."

Changes in the global economy since the 1980s have made the issue more complex (López-Calva and Lustig 2010). As countries emerged from the debt crisis of the 1980s and the Asian currency crises of the 1990s, growth resumed and many women stayed in the labor force, countering the assertion that women worked outside the home only for survival. There is a lot of research on "kitchens hit by priorities," to cite the evocative title of Lynn Bolles's essay on the impact of structural adjustment policies on poor women in Jamaica (Bolles 1983). But where is the research on how have women adjusted to the improved economic conditions during the last two decades, as poverty decreased on the global level and more families entered the middle class?

For those who see labor under capitalism as inevitably exploited, women's factory work on the "global assembly line" provides a powerful example. Factory work, however, has the potential for collective action, and international pressure can help to enforce labor laws. This should and could catalyze feminist support for unions and for implementing the labor clauses of international trade agreements, as Günseli Berik's article in this special issue forcefully argues.[13] These efforts would offer a more effective strategy for improving the lives of millions of women than insisting that the only solution is to halt the "ever-greater consumption of disposable goods and people" (Runyan and Petersen 2014: 248). The latter may assuage Northern guilt for depleting the planet's resources but would take jobs away from women who choose factory employment and urban life over early marriage and unpaid labor on increasingly marginal family farms (Lim 1990; but see Eisenstein 2015). Looking into the future, feminists need to study what the effect of automation will be on factory labor in countries of the North as well as the "low wage" global South, with what implications for the economic futures of women as well as men? If, as predicted, labor force participation will increasingly be in service sector jobs, many of which are gendered "feminine," what can be done to increase the wages and bargaining power of service workers?

[13] See also Staudt (1998) Chapter 5; Benería, Berik and Floro, 164–173; and Franzway and Fonow (2011).

One of the criticisms of the liberal egalitarian feminist agenda was its belief in the positive benefits of formal sector employment for women and the corresponding devaluation of the reproductive labor that women undertake. Care work has since received a great deal of thoughtful attention (e.g., Folbre 2001), and there have been repeated calls for it to be "revalorized." I believe that doing so will require increasing the market value of care work and that doing so will significantly alter gender, class, and race hierarchies. Yet among anti-neoliberal feminists, the "commodification" of care work makes this a non-starter, despite the fact that reconceptualizing care work as belonging to the wage-paying service sector could promote the collective action of care workers and legitimize their demands for decent wages and benefits.[14] One potentially negative effect is that improved wages for care work might increase the numbers of women choosing to migrate long distances as domestic and health workers, separating mothers from their families (Benería et al. 2012). But the answer certainly cannot be to keep wages low; rather, domestic work must be better rewarded (Chaney and Castro 1989).

Programs like Conditional Cash Transfers, in which the state pays women for work they do in the home—keeping their children in school or seeking pre- and post-natal care—have been widely adopted after proving successful in reducing poverty in Brazil and Mexico (Fizbein and Schady 2009). By one measure, these programs can be considered "welfarist," but there is also an important element of "efficiency," measured in terms of improved health and educational outcomes. Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs) can even be seen as egalitarian, if that is defined as recognizing women's work as equally worthy of cash payments as men's (e.g., Crittenden 2001). State subsidies for women's work may be more compatible with the radical feminist desire to recognize women's particular roles and skills while avoiding market exploitation; they are more difficult to reconcile, however, with egalitarian feminist concerns that they reinforce women's traditional roles within the home (Molyneux 2006). Whatever the verdict, like all redistributional programs, CCTs require a growing economy to be politically and economically sustainable. Feminist alternatives that oppose trade find "capital accumulation" immoral (although without it there will be no investment) and substitute mutual care for the selfishness of the market do not face this uncomfortable truth.[15] But then, as Louis Menand recently wrote (2016:96), Marx "seems to have imagined that, somehow, all the features of the capitalist mode of production could be thrown aside, and abundance would naturally persist." If anti-neoliberalism is in fact a critique of capitalism per se, its proponents need to say so openly and to suggest viable alternatives.[16]

[14] See Applebaum (2016) for the case that the myopic focus in US politics on factory jobs that will never return is preventing US activists and policymakers from focusing on empowering the service workers who now comprise the US working class.

[15] For example, "The Dakar Declaration on Another Development with Women," which states that national economic models should be "self-reliant" (as capitalist trade is inevitably exploitative) and that democratic practices "would ensure wide general participation…in the definition and actual provision of the basic needs of all citizens…" Quoted in Bunch and Carrillo (1990:79).

[16] Benería's answer is worker control of the means of production so that production "responds to social *need* rather than *profit* and to collective rather than individual planning (2011: 378).

Individual Agency

Anti-neoliberal feminism makes it difficult for feminist theorists to engage with those working to empower women economically under conditions of global capitalism, while post-colonial theory favors identity politics over strategies to enhance women's individual agency. Nancy Hartsock decried postmodernism for "deconstructing the subject" just as women were beginning to claim their rights as subjects. But she was more concerned that the postmodern acceptance of multiple perspectives would prevent women's collective action. This fear has been proved unwarranted, as transnational movements have continued to thrive (e.g., Mohanty 2003; Basu 2010; Moghadam 2012; but see Thayer 2010).

Feminist theorists Anne Runyan and Spike Petersen do think that it is possible to combine the politics of recognition and the politics of redistribution, but they call for scholars who support these goals to be "anti-imperialist, antiracist, anti-global-capitalist, anti-heteronormative, and anti-homononormative" in their inquiries and political commitments (2014, p. 241). This agenda is a formidable list of antis; it is less clear what women should unite *for* or who will decide the goals of collective action. The path to "structural transformation" is very demanding. As Maria Lugones writes in a similar vein, drawing on the "decolonial" feminist perspective, activists must affirm "life over profit, communalism over individualism, [being] over enterprise…."[17] Meanwhile, liberalism has fallen out of favor among feminist theorists, while "individualism" is portrayed as encouraging only selfish and competitive forms of behavior (e.g. Hawkesworth 2001).

Anti-neoliberal feminism seems to have lost the vision that was once at least implicitly shared by all feminists that the goal of structural change is ultimately to empower individuals and to increase their "authority, freedom, and opportunity to control their own lives and bodies."[18] Instead, resistance and protest are valued, while those who argue for reforms within liberal capitalism are seen as morally compromised. Martha Nussbaum is one of the few feminists who defend liberal values, boldly arguing that what women need, as members of families, communities, and nations, is "more, not less liberal individualism," and to see themselves as "autonomous, free human beings capable of making their own choices."[19]

The State

Slow growth, the corruption associated with privatization and banking failures, the precariousness produced by globalization (all experienced by advanced as well as less developed economies), and the increasing inability of states to provide personal

[17] Maria Lugones, quoted in Runyan and Petersen (2014), p. 256.

[18] From a White Paper presented to the Netherlands Parliament in 1990 by the Women and Autonomy group of the University of Leiden, quoted in Staudt (1998), p. 184. As Sayla Benhabib writes, "Are we "able to offer a better vision than the model of autonomous justice thinking and empathetic care? (1995, 30). See also Anne Phillips (2008) and Ruth Phillips (2015)

[19] Nussbaum as summarized by Molyneux and Razavi (2002), p. 9. See also Phillips (2008). On the need for women's moral autonomy in care work, see Hampton (2001). Carolyn Elliott points out that empowerment defined as choice "does not capture all the possibilities. To be useful…the notion of empowerment must include strategies of deception, subversion, passivity and adherence, as well as resistance and alternative-seeking" (2008, p. 8).

security have led to growing public cynicism about government, further undermining the capacity of states to tackle these issues. Anti-neoliberal feminists fault the state for failing to meet its social responsibilities, but increasing state capacity does not make it onto their agenda.[20] Instead, states are attacked for being hierarchical, coercive, and militarized; concern for the "rule of law" is dismissed as a "framework for institutionalizing market neoliberalism," and the concept of "good governance" is scolded for being "disciplinary in the global sense" (Rai 2008: 120).[21] Yet it is overwhelmingly the task of national governments, not local communities or global civil society, to tax and redistribute, discipline markets, regulate financial institutions, implement social programs, and carry out the progressive policies that feminists and others have long sought.

Feminist theorists focused on "anti-neoliberalism" may forget the stake women have in liberal democracy. The commodities boom fueled by Chinese demand in the first decade of the twenty-first century made it possible for many governments in the global South to engage in generous social policies that reduced poverty and inequality. In Latin America, some leaders claimed to be on the road to "2lst Century Socialism." Celebrating Latin America "as a site of resistance to neoliberal governance," Runyan and Petersen praise the leaders of Venezuela, Ecuador, and Bolivia for "experimenting with much greater involvement of civil society" and for their commitment to redistribution. But experience suggests that these "challenges to neoliberal governance" were more populist than revolutionary. Social programs, funded by dramatic increases in oil and gas prices after 2003, allowed these leaders to govern by plebiscite, increase executive power, undermine the judiciary, and attack the media. For different reasons, but with dismaying effects, both the left and the right appear to be finding common cause in attacking the checks and balances of liberal representative democracy, despite the growing threat of populism on both sides of the political spectrum.

Looking Forward

Perhaps, the most significant positive impact of the contestation over women/gender and development programs has been its contribution over three decades to putting women's rights on the international agenda and helping to establish global norms on wide range of issues, from labor rights and violence against women to women's reproductive rights, as detailed in the introduction to this special issue. International conferences such as the UN Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, the Population Conference in Cairo, and the Fourth UN Conference on Women in Beijing committed

[20] The definition of state capacity I am using is not the state's ability to intervene in the economy by owning enterprises, state monopolies, setting prices or manipulating exchange rates, which are likely to have perverse economic effects, but the state's ability to protect its citizens, carry out effective social programs, and enforce the rule of law. See Soifer (2013) and Hanson and Sigman (2013). Of course, the state can also play a positive role in improving women's participation in the market by improving women's wages, access to credit and educational resources, and opposing discrimination, as well as working to eliminate violence against women and reforming family laws.

[21] These critiques fit well with theories of international relations that see the state as a product of a particular historical period (and perhaps on the way out), to be superseded or at least tamed by organizing at the global and local levels to develop binding international norms and challenge state sovereignty by local acts of resistance. See, for example, Reus-Smit (1996). For a feminist defense of the state, see Pringle and Watson (1998).

states to adopt more egalitarian policies and laws that, taken together, amount to normative change in the gender dynamics of power. Of course, implementation has fallen short, and progress has required ongoing pressure from women's movements and women's organizations (Valdés and Donoso 2009). Since the first UN conference in Mexico City, women have increasingly gained the ideological resources to enter the public sphere, have a larger voice in family decision-making, and increasingly expose and resist gender violence. But these 40 years of rapid change in norms and social expectations have also polarized women, in the North and in the global South, many of whom fear change or want more control over how it affects their lives.

Women and development programs and projects will go forward. There are many practitioners, policymakers, and NGOs fully committed to this work, and they enjoy considerable public and bureaucratic support, as evidenced by central place of gender equality in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Transnational organizations such as AWID, ICRW, and WIEGO (Women in Informal Employment, Globalizing and Organizing) are committed to making change where it is possible, intent on practical outcomes and sharing information on strategies to improve women's rights, women's access to resources, and the conditions of women's labor. WID and GAD-inspired efforts inside large development bureaucracies and outside of them will survive whether or not feminist theory is supportive. But feminist theory could and should play a more relevant and effective role.

The ongoing WID/GAD agenda is far from fulfilled. "Empowering" women, ensuring that women have both access to *and control over* resources, including property (Chant 2006; Tinker 1999; Lee-Smith and Trujillo 2006) remains an important goal.[22] One arena that remains under-explored is the promotion of WID and GAD goals in the private sector. Has microcredit financing been fully utilized, or can we learn from decades of experience how to make it more effective? Given that foreign assistance funding has been eclipsed by much larger private capital flows, are there ways to influence the behavior of capitalist firms to adopt policies consistent with WID/GAD objectives? Can agreements between mining companies and local communities, for example, which now reflect to a greater degree the interests of environmental groups and indigenous communities, take gender considerations into account (Keenan et al. 2016)? Can women benefit from the new trend of "smart economics" which makes the business case for investing in women and girls?

At the project level, can "participatory" development be taken further, deepening women's involvement beyond "consultation" to include content, design, and mid-course correction? "Gender democratization" (Rai 2003) should include potential beneficiaries in selecting priorities and designing projects from their inception, which could fundamentally transform the types of projects discussed by Fisher, Steeves and Kwami, and Beck in this special issue. Steeves and Kwami find that, despite lip service supporting participatory development, even projects that are supposed to be cutting-edge in their ability to empower the poor continue to be "imposed from above… rather than originating from the needs and voices of recipients."

Projects that take these critiques seriously and that are not simply conduits for welfare require flexibility, but also time and emotional investment. Implementing programs in this way is labor intensive and is likely to be considered "inefficient" in conventional terms. But when efficiency is defined as *effectiveness*, it can be shown for

[22] For a critique of the bureaucratization of the "empowerment" agenda in UN programs, see R. Phillips 2015.

other kinds of outcomes, such as empowerment, participation, or human security. In this way, a broad range of programs can be supported and equity goals advanced.

Those of us committed to the field should proceed with pragmatism and humility, recognizing that WID and GAD cannot be expected to be "transformative" if that means replacing capitalism or remaking gender roles, a process that can engender backlash, even in the North. Yet there is still considerable room to ensure that future WID/GAD-inspired projects become more effective in improving women's daily lives, expanding their choices, and enhancing their agency. Feminist scholars and practitioners should work together to promote more dialogue between development agencies and the women they are trying to reach. This approach to projects might make WID/GAD practitioners, policymakers, and their critics aware that the "beneficiaries" of development interventions often have legitimate interests, hopes, and visions of the future that differ from the ones feminists and practitioners might want them to have. True dialogue between women, practitioners, and theorists might also give women/gender and development a renewed sense of purpose, while offering the prospect of new perspectives and new forms of empowerment that we have not yet seen or imagined.

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Jane S. Jaquette is Professor Emerita of Politics and of Diplomacy and World Affairs at Occidental College, where she continues to teach courses on Latin American Politics, Democracy and Gender and Politics. Former president of the Association for Women in Development (AWID), she has edited several books and written widely on women's movements in Latin America and on women and development. Her recent work focuses on feminism and liberal democratic values.