

Introduction

Anneli Alba

The development debate has advanced considerably since the United Nation's First Development Decade in the 1960s, which emphasized economic growth and the "trickle-down" approach as key to reducing poverty. One of the notable advancements in the debate has been the move to consider gender equality as a key element of development. Women's concerns were first integrated into the development agenda in the 1970s. Disappointment over the trickle-down approach paved the way for the adoption of the basic-needs strategy, which focused on increasing the participation in and benefits of the development process for the poor, as well as recognizing women's needs and contributions to society. Activists articulated women's issues in national and international forums. Following these events, the women-in-development movement endorsed the enhancement of women's consciousness and abilities, with a view to enabling women to examine their situations and to act to correct their disadvantaged positions. The movement also affirmed that giving women greater access to resources would contribute to an equitable and efficient development process.

The end of the 1970s ushered in the concern with gender relations in development. Microlevel studies drew our attention to the differences in entitlements, perceived capabilities, and social expectations of men and women, boys and girls. Contrary to the unified-household model, the household has been considered an arena of bargaining, cooperation, or conflict. Reflecting the norms, laws, and social values of society, the differences in the status of men and women have profound implications for how they participate in market or nonmarket work and in community life as a whole. These differences embody social and power relations that constitute the setting for the implementation of development programs, and these differences therefore influence program outcomes. In the 1980s and 1990s, research demonstrated that gender relations mediate the process of development. For example, analyses of stabilization and structural-adjustment policies showed that gender inequalities have an impact on the attainment of macroeconomic objectives.

The concern with gender relations in development has strengthened the affirmation that equality in the status of men and women is fundamental to every society. And this concern has prompted us to refine our perspective on what development should be and how to bring it about efficiently. We realize that development requires more than the creation of opportunities for people to earn sustainable livelihoods — it also requires the creation of a conducive environment for men and women to seize those opportunities. Development implies not only more and better schools but also equal access to education for boys and girls. Development requires good governments that give men and women equal voices in decision-making and policy implementation. Bearing in mind the perspective that gender matters in development, we can go on to reexamine and redefine other development concerns and objectives.

Thus, one can only agree to the advantages gained if practitioners and students of development have a grasp of the concepts, theories, and discourses that stimulate the gender

debate. We will, as a result, be able to better analyze and understand gender issues and properly integrate gender interests and needs into policies and programs. Concepts and ideas — such as feminism, gender analysis, diversity, and gender mainstreaming — that have become buzz words in the development circle will be clarified and demystified. This will foster effective communication among development agents and result in a consistent view of overall development goals and in complementary, rather than contradictory, plans of action.

Clearly, there is scope for developing and increasing the accessibility of programs for education and research on women and gender. Such programs could reach a wide audience, institutionalize gender scholarship, and complement other avenues for disseminating the gender debate and advancing the cause of gender equality. Yet, researchers and students in developing countries have expressed frustration in accessing gender programs and resource materials. In developing countries, the spread and depth of these programs and resource materials are still more limited than in developed countries.

The Commonwealth of Learning and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) have helped to address this gap by supporting the development of this course module. The research and writing of the module benefited from the contributions of gender experts, including scholars, educators, and practitioners from the three campuses of the University of the West Indies (Barbados, Jamaica, and Trinidad), Saint Mary's University (Canada), Dalhousie University (Canada), and the International Women's Tribune Centre (United States). Further support was provided by IDRC for the publication of this module, to make it accessible to development and educational institutions in developing countries. IDRC's support for this undertaking resonates with IDRC's dedication to improving human well-being through research and the application of knowledge. Since IDRC's creation in 1970, it has funded development research in poor countries, with the objective of building the capabilities and institutions needed to conduct the relevant research in these countries. Gender is an important concern at IDRC. The Centre has taken steps to promote gender-sensitive research that improves our understanding of development problems and leads to appropriate solutions, and it has supported efforts to disseminate knowledge on gender issues, such as this book. It is hoped that this publication encourages learning, research, and action for a sustainable and equitable world.

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Preface

One of the approaches to overcoming obstacles to women's advancement is to develop and exchange materials, resources, and courses in the areas of women's studies and women and development (WAD). At a meeting in Ottawa, Canada, in October 1990, the Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs specifically mandated the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) to develop a program to address the needs of women in the Commonwealth countries of the South.

In April 1992, COL convened a week-long meeting at Saint Mary's University in Halifax, Canada, to examine ways to create course modules on women-gender and development. The meeting was attended by representatives of institutions of higher education from Australia, Canada, the Caribbean, India, Nigeria, the South Pacific, and Zimbabwe, as well as the United Nations Training and Research Institute and the International Women's Tribune Centre (IWTC) in New York. Discussion focused on identifying the needed resources and materials and examining the capacities of various institutions to coordinate the development of modules. All the participants expressed interest in contributing to the long-term project and a desire to use the modules in courses on women-gender and development and women's studies at their own institutions.

They established a project team, comprising representatives from the three campuses of the University of the West Indies (UWI) (Barbados, Jamaica, and Trinidad); the Summer Institute for Gender and Development (SIGAD), a joint project of Saint Mary's and Dalhousie University; IWTC; and COL. The team convened in Kingston, Jamaica, in February 1993 to determine the specific content and design of the course modules and to assign writing tasks to team members. Two subsequent project-team meetings were convened, in New York in January and June 1994, to review and finalize draft materials prepared by the various teams of writers. COL managed the project and coordinated the activities.

The Centres for Gender and Development Studies at the three campuses of UWI and SIGAD collaboratively developed and wrote this core module, which focuses on the theoretical justification for examining women's specific roles and contributions to development initiatives. The module is concerned with the integration and recognition of women and their inclusion as decision-makers in development planning and policy-making, as well as other development activities: it also celebrates women's contributions to social, economic, and political development. The collaborative process was complicated, but rewarding. Although individuals or small teams authored specific chapters, feedback from the various writing teams enriched and enlarged everyone's writing and thinking. For example, the presentation of black feminism and Third World feminism in Chapter 3 benefited enormously from the input of Eudine Barriteau from the Barbados UWI team. The opportunity to read each of the chapters provided new ways of addressing important issues and influenced all of our writing and thinking. Input from the writing teams also assisted in the laborious process of identifying appropriate activities, excerpts, case studies, recommended readings, and key concepts. Above all, the two editorial meetings facilitated rethinking and rewriting. Representatives of the writing teams worked through the materials with the additional input of the various participants from IWTC, COL, and the International Development Research Centre. These meetings were grueling, intellectually challenging, and enormously important. Every sentence and word was examined and contested; every concept was revisited and reexamined. Participants left humbled, but inspired, by both the challenges and the benefits of South-North collaboration.

The module that emerged from this process is a comprehensive, foundational text on gender and development (GAD). The module contains narratives or case studies to further illustrate the main topics. Exercises and study questions invite the user to enhance his or her knowledge through personal research. Related further readings are provided to direct the user to additional sources of information. Key concepts (defined in Appendix 1) are highlighted in bold in the text. The module spans the emergence of women in development (WID), bringing us to the point where the second wave of critiques and evaluation led to the emergence of the new field of GAD. It documents, discusses, and presents the major themes and practices in the

field of WID, WAD, and GAD. It also addresses emerging debates that have continued to develop since the mid-1990s, particularly those on the power of development discourse, globalization, and the concepts of difference and voice.

The module was made available to educational institutions and nongovernmental and women's organizations throughout the Commonwealth for local adaptation and use in traditional educational settings and informal situations. Its publication, in revised form, as a book is intended to enhance its usefulness and increase its availability around the world. The attribution of general editors reflects the work of moving the manuscript from a module to a book. Individual authors are listed on the chapters they wrote, but the manuscript as a whole reflects our collective endeavours.

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The opinions expressed in this document are entirely those of the authors and should not be attributed in any manner to COL, the members of its Board of Governors, or the countries they represent.

Chapter 1. Why theory ?

◀Document(s) 2 of 11 ▶

Barbara Bailey, Elsa Leo-Rhynie, and Jeanette Morris

Introduction

In this chapter, we examine the process of theorizing and learn to appreciate the dynamic and flexible nature of this process. Much of our understanding of the world, our societies, and ourselves, today, rests on **theories** and knowledge generated historically and predominantly by men of certain nationalities and economic classes. Male-dominated and culturally specific theorizing and knowledge have generally resulted in the exclusion of women and other groups from the process of formal theorizing and knowledge-building. When applied in research, policy, and action, such theories and knowledge not only ignore women's contributions in all spheres of activity but also exclude consideration of issues particularly relevant to women.

Feminist scholars have argued that knowledge based mainly on male, culturally specific experience represents a skewed perception of reality and is only partial knowledge. The best way to correct this is to take women's daily experiences and their informal theorizing into account and, on this basis, adopt feminist approaches to building theory and knowledge.

Rationale

Theorizing and theory-building have generally been seen as the business of academics in ivory towers, yet all individuals make choices and decisions based on **assumptions** or theories about the world. These formal, mainstream (or "malestream") approaches to theorizing are being challenged by various groups of women who have engaged in different approaches to the process of theorizing. These women are bringing their unique perspectives to bear on issues affecting their daily lives. Women have used these new perspectives to **deconstruct** traditional knowledge bases and build new ones. Such reconstruction of knowledge has influenced policy and action affecting the lives of women.

Objectives

The objectives of this chapter are the following:

- To introduce the concept of theory;
- To understand that theorizing is one way in which people use their assumptions to achieve, interpret, or impose meaning;
- To understand how feminist theorizing has challenged mainstream theorizing;
- To understand how diverse assumptions about the same phenomenon result in diverse explanations, theories, and **power** positions; and To understand how theory and

knowledge are interrelated and how feminist theorizing and knowledge have influenced research, policy, and action.

What is theory?

Although we have no precise, universally accepted definition of theory, certain recurring elements appear in the literature, which allows us to roughly draw the boundaries of the concept. Theory is defined most commonly as scientific theory, which emphasizes a logically unified framework, generalization, and explanation. Ornstein and Hunkins (1993, p. 184) indicated that a theory is a “device for interpreting, criticizing and unifying established laws, modifying them to fit data unanticipated in their formation, and guiding the enterprise of discovering new and more powerful generalisation.” Common-sense understandings of theory often use the concept to describe the rules that guide action, opinion, ideals, or a particular philosophy. Stanley and Wise (1983) suggested that the majority of persons, particularly women, have been brought up to think of theory as something mysterious and forbidding, produced by clever people, most of whom are men. Nowadays, people are questioning this divide between experts and nonexperts and adopting a more inclusive approach to theorizing.

The nature of theorizing

The traditional, mainstream process of theorizing rests on the scientific method. This is summarized in the **model** presented in Figure 1.

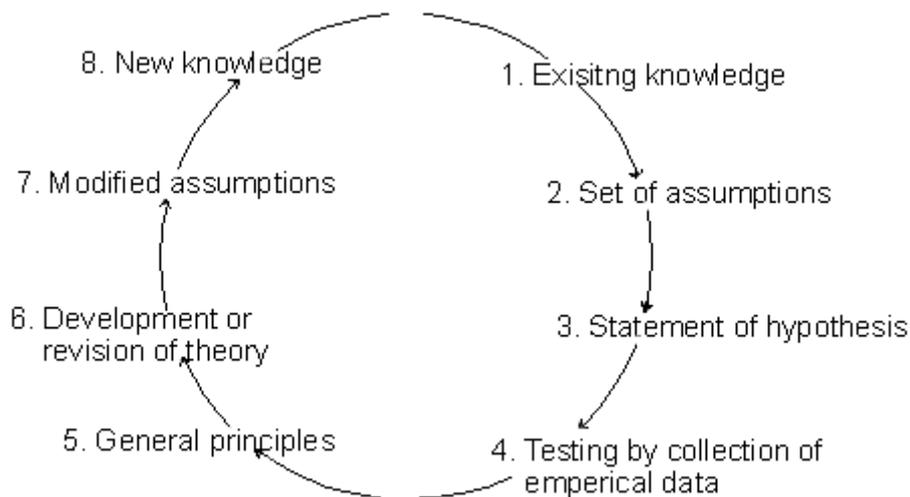


Figure 1. The process of theorizing: the knowledge spiral.

The male-centred approach to theorizing has produced particular views of many issues, including those affecting women. These views rely on **androcentric** assumptions. An example of such an assumption is that women’s work is biologically determined and therefore is or should be home based and restricted to nurturing and domestic chores. Such assumptions provide the basis for hypotheses such as, in this case, the hypothesis that the waged workforce tends to be predominantly male and women work at home. The information gathered during the testing of such an **hypothesis** has traditionally been limited to quantitative data, which are used to support the general principles posited as offering valid explanations about this issue.

Researchers have, for a long time, uncritically accepted these explanations as factual and have produced theories about women's work based on questionable assumptions. Despite their questionable nature, such theories have also informed policy and action.

Some problems associated with mainstream theorizing are listed below:

- Unrecognized and value-laden assumptions, based on the (male) researcher's biases;
- Overemphasis on empirical and quantitative data and the denial of the validity of qualitative data;
- Lack of involvement of the researcher with the subject(s) of the research;
- Impersonal and detached nature of the process; and
- The supposed "objectivity" of the researcher and knowledge.

Sandra Harding expressed the following view of the traditional, scientific approach: Scientific knowledge-seeking is supposed to be value-neutral, objective, dispassionate, disinterested, and so forth. It is supposed to be protected from political interests, goals, and desires (such as feminist ones) by the norms of science. In particular, science's "method" is supposed to protect the results of research from the social values of the researchers.

— Harding (1987a, p. 182)

When researchers use this traditional approach to theorizing, however, their biases can affect the process at every stage:

- In the identification of the problem;
- In the formulation of hypotheses and calculated guesses;
- In the design of the research to test hypotheses; and
- In the collection and interpretation of data.

Nonetheless, theories based on this approach have been a major force in shaping perceptions of reality.

An investigation of women's work conducted by researchers with a feminist perspective would, in all likelihood, rely on a variety of assumptions related to their own experiences, as well as to the experiences of women in other situations. Such assumptions would differ according to factors such as race, class, ethnicity, and age. An investigation such as this would therefore be more likely to give the following results:

- Some women do unpaid work in the home;
- Some women do both unpaid work in the home and waged and unpaid work in wider society;
- Some women work only in wider society and employ other women to work in their homes;
- Women are found in a variety of occupations;
- Women work at all levels in the workplace; and
- Women, both in their paid and in their unpaid work, contribute greatly to the national economy.

Based on this wider view, the general principle would be that women's work is not restricted to the home. Female perspectives and experiences would help to challenge the hypothesis

(generated from the male perspective) that women's work is in the home and show it to be invalid. Theorizing is therefore an important, flexible, and dynamic process.

We each have assumptions about people, events, issues, etc., in our everyday lives. We may explicitly state these assumptions or allow them to remain implicit in our opinions, attitudes, and behaviours. We each interpret things differently as we bring our assumptions to bear on a situation. We test some of these assumptions formally and others informally. Informal testing of our assumptions is, in fact, a process of hypothesis testing, and the results often cause us to change our assumptions. Sandra Harding's views, reprinted in Box 1, are particularly interesting.

Box 1

Feminist empiricism

Though feminist empiricism appears in these ways to be consistent with empiricist tendencies, further consideration reveals that the feminist component deeply undercuts the assumptions of traditional empiricism in three ways: feminist empiricism has a radical future. In the first place, feminist empiricism argues that the "context of discovery" is just as important as the "context of justification" for eliminating social biases that contribute to partial and distorted explanations and understandings. Traditional empiricism insists that the social identity of the observer is irrelevant to the "goodness" of the results of research. It is not supposed to make a difference to the explanatory power, objectivity, and so on of the research's results if the researcher or the community of scientists are white or black, Chinese or British, rich or poor in social origin. But feminist empiricism argues that women (or feminists, male and female) as a group are more likely than men (non-feminists) as a group to produce claims unbiased by androcentrism, and in that sense objective results of inquiry. It argues that the authors of the favored social theories are not anonymous at all: they are clearly men, and usually men of the dominant classes, races, and cultures. The people who identify and define scientific problems leave their social fingerprints on the problems and their favored solutions to them.

Second, feminist empiricism makes the related claim that scientific method is not effective at eliminating social biases that are as widespread as androcentrism. This is especially the case when androcentrism arrives in the inquiry process through the identification and definition of research problems. Traditional empiricism holds that scientific method will eliminate any social biases as a hypothesis generated by what men find problematic in the world around them. The problem here is not only that the hypotheses which would most deeply challenge androcentric beliefs are missing from those alternatives sexists consider when testing their favored hypotheses. It is also that traditional empiricism does not direct researchers to locate themselves in the same critical plane as their subject matter. Consequently, when non-feminist researchers gather evidence for or against hypotheses, "scientific method," bereft of such a directive, is impotent to locate and eradicate the androcentrism that shapes the research process.

Finally feminist empiricists often exhort social scientists to follow the existing research norms more rigorously. On the other hand, they also can be understood to be arguing that it is precisely following these norms that contributes to androcentric research results. The norms themselves have been constructed primarily to produce answers to the kinds of questions men

ask about nature and social life and to prevent scrutiny of the way beliefs which are nearly or completely culture-wide in fact cannot be eliminated from the results of research by these norms. A reliable picture of women's worlds and of social relations between the sexes often required alternative approaches to inquiry that challenge traditional research habits and raise profound questions which are no longer marginalized as deviant.

— Harding (1987a, pp. 183–184)

Activity 1

Making assumptions

Answer the following questions.

1. What assumptions do you think are held by various groups across cultures about the following issues?
 - (a) Parenting
 - (b) Abortion
 - (c) Violence against women
 - (d) Marriage
2. Identify and state assumptions that women could propose to challenge the assumptions you listed in answer 1.
3. What are the essential differences between the assumptions in answers 1 and 2?

The differences identified in this activity can reveal the ways the perspectives of men and women differ, and these differences also relate to the problems experienced by men and women. As Harding noted,

Many phenomena which appear problematic from the perspective of men's characteristic experiences do not appear problematic at all from the perspective of women's experiences On the other hand, women experience many phenomena which they think do need explanation. Why do men find child care and housework so distasteful? Why do women's life opportunities tend to be constricted exactly at the moments traditional history marks as the most progressive? Why is it hard to detect black women's ideals of womanhood in studies of black families? Why is men's sexuality so "driven," so defined in terms of power? Why is risking death said to represent the distinctively human act but giving birth regarded as merely natural?

— Harding (1987b, p. 6)

If we concede that men and women often view issues differently and have different experiences, it follows that we must consider a phenomenon in relation to the individuals who experience it. Harding therefore further suggested that

Reflecting on how social phenomena get defined as problems in need of explanation in the first place quickly reveals that there is no such thing as a problem without a person (or group of those) who have this problem: a problem is always a problem for someone or other. Recognition of this fact and its implications for the structure of the scientific enterprise quickly brings feminist approaches to enquiring into conflict with traditional understandings in many ways.

— Harding (1987b, p 6)

Feminists have challenged the view of women that has developed from male theorizing.

Hilary Rose explained the nature of the challenge:

Increasingly, the new scholarship drew on the concept of gender to illuminate a double process of a gendered science produced by a gendered knowledge production system. Was the seemingly taken for granted androcentricity, even misogyny, of science, a matter of “bias” which good unbiased science turned out by feminists and their allies would correct, or was the problem more profound, one that only an explicitly feminist science could displace, so as to become, in the language of the enlightenment, a “successor science”?

— Rose (1994)

Feminist approaches to research and theorizing

Once we undertake to use women’s experience as a resource to generate scientific problems, hypotheses and evidence, to design research for women, and to place the researcher in the same critical plane as the research subject, traditional epistemological assumptions can no longer be made. These agendas have led feminist social scientists to ask questions about who can be a knower (only men?); what tests beliefs must pass in order to be legitimated as knowledge (only tests against men’s experiences and observations?); what kinds of things can be known (can “subjective truths,” ones that only women — or some women — tend to arrive at, count as knowledge?); the nature of objectivity (does it require “point-of-viewlessness”?); the appropriate relationship between the researcher and her/his research subjects (must the researcher be disinterested, dispassionate, and socially invisible to the subject?); what should be the purposes of the pursuit of knowledge (to produce information FOR men?).

— Harding (1987a, p. 181)

The aim of feminist theorizing is to deconstruct and redefine concepts previously defined from a male perspective and generally accepted as factual. The deconstruction and redefinition of concepts, as well as the creation of new ones, have emphasized the following:

- Women’s experiences and knowledge;
- Conduct of research FOR women;
- Problems that, when solved, will benefit both researcher and subject;
- Interaction between researcher and subject;
- Establishment of nonhierarchical relationships;
- Expression of feelings and concern for values; and
- Use of nonsexist language.

The result is the generation of theories from a view of the world through feminist lenses. The aim has been to change conditions adversely affecting women’s lives by critically analyzing

existing theories and developing new policies and social action. Hilary Rose (1994) elaborated on this in her address entitled “Alternative Knowledge Systems in Science,” an excerpt of which is set out in Box 2.

Box 2

Feminist theorizing

The problem for feminist materialists is to admit biology — that is, a constrained essentialism — while giving priority to the social, without concluding at the same time that human beings are infinitely malleable ... the very fact that women are, by and large, shut out of the production system of scientific knowledge, with its ideological power to define what is and what is not objective knowledge, paradoxically has offered feminists a fresh page on which to write. Largely ignored by the oppressors and their systems of knowledge, feminists at this point necessarily theorised from practice and referenced theory to practice. ... thinking from the everyday lives of women necessarily fuses the personal, the social and the biological. ... while there is general agreement that the first move is to challenge and overthrow existing canonical knowledges, the question of what we might replace them with produces broadly speaking two responses. The first is feminist standpoint theory which looks to the possibility of a feminist knowledge to produce better and truer pictures of reality; the second is feminist post-modernism which refuses the possibility of any universalising discourse but which argues instead for localised reliable feminist knowledges.

— Rose (1994)

Feminist theorizing seeks to uncover

- The pervasiveness of gendered thinking that uncritically assumes a necessary bond between being a woman and occupying certain social roles;
- The ways women negotiate the world; and
- The wisdom inherent in such negotiation.

The social roles and the ways women negotiate the world also differ among women in diverse contexts (cultural, social, political, racial or ethnic, religious, etc.) and with diverse personal characteristics (age, education, sexual orientation, etc.). The excerpt from Sandra Harding’s “Is There a Feminist Method?,” reprinted in Box 3, expands on this point.

Box 3

Women’s experiences

Notice that it is “women’s experiences” *in the plural* which provide the new resources for research. This formulation stresses several ways in which the best feminist analyses differ from traditional ones. For one thing, once we realized that there is no universal *man*, but only culturally different men and women, then “Man’s eternal companion ‘woman’” also disappeared. That is, women come only in different classes, races, and cultures: there is no “woman” and no “woman’s experience.” Masculine and feminine are always categories

within every class, race, and culture in the sense that women's and men's experiences, desires, and interest differ within every class, race, and culture. But so too, are class, race, and culture always categories within gender, since women's and men's experiences, desires, and interests differ according to class, race, and culture. This leads some theorists to propose that we should talk about our "feminisms" only in the plural, since there is no one set of feminist principles or understandings beyond the very, very general ones to which feminists in every race, class, and culture will assent. Why should we have expected it to be any different? There are very few principles or understandings to which sexists in every race, class, and culture will assent!

Not only do our gender experiences vary across the cultural categories; they also are often in conflict in any one individual's experience. My experiences as a mother and a professor are often contradictory. Women scientists often talk about the contradictions in identity between what they experience as women and scientists. Dorothy Smith writes of the "fault line" between women sociologists' experience as sociologists and as women. The hyphenated state of many self-chosen labels of identity — black feminist, socialist feminist, Asian–American feminist, lesbian feminist — reflects this challenge to the "identity politics" which has grounded Western thought and public life. These fragmented identities are a rich source of feminist insight.

— Harding (1987b, pp. 7–8)

In examining problems and carrying out analyses, feminists recognize that factors other than gender shape perceptions and understandings. Class, race, and culture are also powerful determinants and therefore create differences that must be taken into account. The category "women" is pluralistic, so treating women as a homogenous group results in a theorizing process no better than that of the traditional, androcentric approach.

To further accommodate these differences, feminist inquiry highlights the importance of placing the inquirer on the same "critical plane" as the subject of inquiry, with the aim of ensuring less bias and distortion. Researchers can then no longer hide behind the language of "objectivity"; they must situate themselves in their research. The excerpt from the work of Sandra Harding in Box 4 elaborates on this point.

Box 4

Feminist research

The best feminist analysis goes beyond these innovations in subject matter in a crucial way: it insists that the inquirer her/himself be placed in the same critical plane as the overt subject matter, thereby recovering the entire research process for scrutiny in the results of research. That is, the class, race, culture, and gender assumptions, beliefs, and behaviours of the researcher her/himself must be placed within the frame of the picture that she/he attempts to paint. This does not mean that the first half of a research report should engage in soul searching (though a little soul searching by researchers now and then can't be all bad!).

Instead, as we will see, we are often explicitly told how she/he suspects this has shaped the research project — though of course we are free to arrive at contrary hypotheses about the influence of the researcher’s presence on her/his analysis. Thus, the researcher appears to us not as an invisible, anonymous voice of authority, but as a real, historical individual with concrete, specific desires and interests.

This requirement is no idle attempt to “do good” by the standards of imagined critics in classes, races, cultures (or of a gender) other than that of the researcher. Instead, it is a response to the recognition that the cultural beliefs and behaviours of feminist researchers shape the results of their analysis no less than do those of sexist and androcentric researchers. We need to avoid the “objectivist” stance that attempts to make the researcher’s cultural beliefs and practices invisible while simultaneously skewering the research objects, beliefs and practices to the display board. Only in this way can we hope to produce understandings and explanations which are free (or, at least, more free) of distortion from the unexamined beliefs and behaviors of social scientists themselves. Another way to put this point is that the beliefs and behaviors of the researcher are part of the empirical evidence for (or against) the claims advanced in the results of research. This evidence too must be open to critical scrutiny no less than what is traditionally defined as relevant evidence. Introducing this “subjective” element into the analysis in fact increases the objectivity of the research and decreases the “objectivism” which hides this kind of evidence from the public. This kind of relationship between the researcher and the object of research is usually discussed under the heading of the “reflexivity of social science.”

— Harding (1987b, p. 9)

Feminists have proposed various theories to explain their experiences on the basis of differences in their class, race, and culture. Substantial discourse among feminists has focused on these various theories. Discussing a paper by Amrita Chhachhi (Chhachhi 1988), Rawwida Baksh-Soodeen noted that

The variety of approaches within feminist theory reflect, on the one hand, divergent perceptions, and on the other, different social and historical locations in which feminists exist. From Chhachhi’s point of view, the rejection of all feminist theory as “western,” “eurocentric,” or “**ethnocentric**” results from a failure to distinguish between the application of feminist theories to the historical, political and socio-cultural specificities of black/Third World women, and the notion of all theory as “white.” She distinguishes ... three levels of analysis in most contemporary social theories, including feminism.

1. Basic concepts which are abstract and function as tools of analysis (e.g. relations of production, relations of reproduction, etc.);
2. Intermediate level concepts (such as patriarchy, mode of production, etc.);
3. Historically specific analysis of a concrete social phenomenon (e.g. slavery in nineteenth century Caribbean society, dowry in north India, etc.).

— Baksh-Soodeen (1993, p. 31)

Chhachhi had argued that at the first level of basic conceptual analysis (that of basic concepts), little disagreement occurs between black and white feminists who share similar approaches. However, she noted that black–Third World feminists have encouraged an important sensitivity to the need for historically specific research at levels 2 and 3 (those of intermediate-level concepts and historically specific analyses). As Baksh-Soodeen remarked,

most often the limitations of Euro-American feminist studies lie at the second and third levels of analysis in that abstract concepts are imposed mechanically and historically, and hence become a substitute for an historically specific analysis which takes into account the complexities of social reality.

— Baksh-Soodeen (1993, p. 31)

Let us examine how women from different social contexts might have divergent perceptions and explanations of the same phenomenon.

Activity 2

Considering poverty

In this activity, we consider the phenomenon of poverty — Why are people poor?

1. State the assumptions you think the following women would have about this question:
 - (a) The wife of a successful professional who does not work outside the home
 - (b) A retired civil servant on a pension
 - (c) A rural subsistence farmer
 - (d) An executive from a donor lending agency
2. Based on the assumptions you have identified, what explanation would each woman likely give for poverty?
3. Are there any commonalities or differences among these explanations?
4. How do you account for these commonalities or differences? (The differences in the explanations you identify are due to the fact that each of the individuals considered in the above exercise occupies a unique position, role, and status in society. These positions are usually unequal. Some women exercise greater authority and power than others. As a result, their assumptions and interpretations are more valued than those of others with less authority and power.)
5. In your opinion, which of these four categories of women would have the most, the least power? Give reasons for your choice.

Hilary Rose's comments in Box 5 illustrate how theoretical positions can also be used to exert power and influence over the lives of women.

Box 5

Biological determinism and patriarchy

The recrudescence of biological determinism during the seventies was committed to the renaturalisation of women; to an insistence that, if not anatomy then evolution, X chromosomes, or hormones were destiny; and to the inevitability of patriarchy. Such views fed upon the work of IQ advocates, whose views had become an important location for social and political struggle around issues of race and class. Within the U.S. these interventions were greedily taken up by a government looking for ways to justify the withdrawal of resources from the Poverty Programme, as a laissez-faire approach to welfare was more in accord with nature. Despite resistance by the Welfare Rights Movement, scientific racism helped justify cutting welfare benefits of poor — primarily black — women and their children, thus enabling more resources to be committed to the Vietnam War. In Britain, IQ theory was extensively cited by the racist campaign for immigrant restriction and fed racist sentiment that genetic inferiority explained high levels of unemployment and thence excessive demands on the welfare system by black people. The critical counter attack mounted by anti-racists helped prevent the new scientific racism spreading unchallenged.

In the prevailing political climate, the relationship between biological determinists — especially in the guise of the new sociobiology — and the New Right was a love match. In Britain, a New Right government happily seized on biological determinism as a scientific prop to their plan to restore women to their natural place, which at that point was not in the labour market. (By the mid-eighties the view changed and part-time women's work became the ideal solution to achieve unpaid labour at home and cheap labour in employment. From then on we heard little about women's natural market place.) No one put the government's view in the early 1980s more succinctly than the Secretary of State for Social Service, Patrick Jenkins, in a 1980 television interview on working mothers: "Quite frankly, I don't think mothers have the same right to work as fathers. If the Lord had intended us to have equal rights, he wouldn't have created men and women. These are biological facts, young children do depend on their mothers."

While it was perhaps overkill to draw on both creationism and biology to make his point, in the political rhetoric of government ministers and other New Right ideologues, the old enthusiasm for biological determinism was given fresh vigour by the fashionable new socio-biology. This at the height of the struggle of the feminist movement to bring women out of nature into culture, a host of greater or lesser socio-biologists, their media supporters and new Right politicians joined eagerly in the cultural and political effort to return them whence they came.

— Rose (1994)

Activity 3

Learning from a case study

Read the case study of women's work in the Philippines that follows (Case Study 1) and then answer these questions:

1. What factual information about women's work in the Philippines can you extract from this case study?
2. What principles about women's work in the Philippines emerge from these facts?
3. Do these principles coincide with those obtaining in your own society?
4. Have the facts in the case study caused you to change your assumptions about women's work? How?
5. Based on the data and your own experience, what explanation or theory would you develop of women's work?

Case Study 1

Women's work in the Philippines

In the mid-1970s, Gelia Castillo noted that about 60 percent of the women in the rural areas of the Philippines were engaged in agriculture or related activities, such as fishing, an increase from the 1965 figure of 53.6 percent. In roughly two decades (from 1956 to 1974), the proportion of all Filipinos in agricultural and related activities decreased from about 59 to 55 percent, and the proportion of all women and girls over ten years old decreased slightly more (from 48.1 percent to 36.6 percent). The overall decline in the proportion of women employed in agriculture coupled with the increased proportion of rural women in agriculture from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s could suggest that there were more opportunities for urban employment and/or fewer opportunities for non-agricultural rural employment. It is also possible that farm women were counted differently in the 1970s, if, as may people contend, agricultural women are generally underenumerated, the 1970s figures could reflect greater accuracy (Castillo did not address this issue in her study).

Of these agricultural women, the vast majority are crop workers in rice and corn farming, and the burden of the women's work is in non-mechanized tasks such as weeding and transplanting. In one study carried out in the provinces of Bulacan and Tatangas, planting/transplanting, harvesting, and post-harvest activities accounted for nearly 70 percent of the female contribution to farming those regions. These are activities that can be done in a relatively short span of time, so they are compatible with the major household duties for which the women are also responsible. The kind of work Filipinas do helps to explain why there are substantial seasonal variations in the agricultural employment of women. Castillo notes, for instance, that the percentage of women working full time in agriculture can increase between 6 and 10 percent between February and May.

A detailed study of time allocation in rural households in Laguna, a province of the Philippines, showed that mothers were less involved in agricultural activities than either fathers or children. On the average, the women in the sample spent slightly over one hour a

day on pre- and post-harvest activities, vegetable production, livestock raising, and the like — men and children spent well over three hours a day on these same activities — but the 5 percent of the women in the sample who reported that their primary occupation was farming averaged about three and one-third hours a day on farming alone. Overall, farming and non-farming women in this rural area spent an additional seven and one-half hours on household work or home production.

As in most countries, rural women are among the most economically disadvantaged people in Filipino society. There are more unpaid family workers among women than among men, and almost 90 percent of all male unpaid workers in 1975 were in the rural areas and engaged in agricultural work. Despite this general condition, however, both rural and urban Filipinas are viewed by a number of scholars as having considerable status and power compared to women in other Asian countries, and Filipina influence extends to important decision-making roles in agricultural matters. Justin Green, for example, noted that women are better educated than men, and he has also argued that women have a good deal of behind-the-scenes or privately exercised power. People who think that the traditional method of reckoning kinship and the prevalence of bride price or dowry are indicators of male–female status might note that historically, Filipinos have traced kinship through both parents and bride price has been common (whereas dowry prevails in India). For rural Filipino women, a practical consequence of this relative equity is that the sexual division of labor is not as rigid as in many societies. Women can handle a plow if necessary, and a husband will do the cooking if his wife is away or do the laundry if his wife has just delivered a child.

— Charlton (1984)

Relationship of theory and knowledge

The theorizing process both uses and produces knowledge. Androcentric theories generate knowledge that embodies the assumptions of these theories and ignores the experiences and perspectives of women. One of the tenets of feminist theorizing is that knowledge should be formulated from a broader base of experience. Thus, a new, more comprehensive, more all-encompassing knowledge is built up through feminist theorizing. Such theorizing seeks to provide a more complete representation of women's realities. As Sandra Harding expressed it,

Knowledge is supposed to be based on experience, and the reason the feminist claims can turn out to be scientifically preferable is that they originate in, and are tested against, a more complete and less distorting kind of social experience. Women's experiences, informed by feminist theory, provide a potential grounding for more complete and less distorted knowledge claims than do men's.

— Harding (1987a, pp. 184–185)

Harding's analysis represents a feminist-standpoint theoretical approach. Like others, feminist-standpoint theorists have their own assumptions. They assume there is an objective reality that can be made better if women's experiences and knowledges are added to mainstream or androcentric **epistemologies**.

Postmodernist-feminist theorizing supports the investigation of women's experiences and knowledges as a basis for creating new feminist-informed knowledges. This approach differs from feminist-standpoint theorizing in several ways. Postmodernist-feminist theorists do not assume there is a complete, coherent reality to which women's experiences can be added; rather, they assume there are multiple realities and experiences. Postmodernist-feminist theorists see these experiences and their influence on the generation of knowledge as fluid, contingent, diverse, and historically and culturally specific. They do not argue that feminist claims are scientifically preferable, as they are more sceptical about the faith placed in rationality, objectivity, and science. However, they support the position that knowledge claims should be formulated from a broader base of experience and should recognize that women's experiences will differ across race, class, culture, and sexual orientation.

Thus, there are diverse feminist theoretical approaches. Although they converge on the core issue of women's subordination, they differ in their assumptions about the causes or sources of that subordination. These differences reflect the richness of women's lives and the need to integrate the experiences and knowledges of women in the South, as well as all women in the North, if we are to move toward a more inclusive, sensitive theorizing about both women's subordination and their power. Hilary Rose's remarks in Box 6 illustrate some of the new thinking of feminists in the South and North.

Box 6

Feminists using theory

Staying Alive by Vandana Shiva is a marvellous example of the ways that feminists relate to theory, using it as a resource in the defence of both women and nature. First the book is written from within a struggle of the Chipko women to defend the trees on which their lives depend. While without the mass movement there would be no story, it is also a story in which her skills as a scientist are integral. Her account of the struggle is a story of transformation ... of the people and also an exposition of the science (the definition, the analysis and explanation of the problem). She makes solid technical arguments about what is happening to the land and the water. Her training as a physicist — part of that universalistic highly abstract discourse so criticised by feminism — is both a crucial element within, and transformed by the struggle. She reports different ways of collecting data, organising in fresh ways, producing a holistic ecological knowledge specific to the locality and people. This careful rethinking of the environmental endemic generates a highly “situated and embodied knowledge” with strong claims to objectivity, out of the “universalistic and disembodied knowledge” of the physicist.

Nor are the activities she reports limited to new knowledge building, for she also describes and endorses essential myth making (which historically has often given energy to social movements of the excluded) but which unquestionably often makes their intellectual allies uneasy. Whereas Western feminists have mostly fought the notion that women are naturally nearer to nature, seeing that as a patriarchal cage, Shiva casts Indian peasant women (and the myths they construct cast themselves) in the role of the natural protectors of the forest. Essentialism is used as a source of strength. It is a dangerous move yet the situation is already a matter of staying alive. But the point I want to make is the extraordinarily divergent strands which Shiva weaves together. Nothing that can be made useful within a struggle is

disregarded, she takes very different discourses and radically recycles them, adapting them with strength and imagination to political purposes. In Shiva I think we get something of a reply from a feminist scientist to Audre Lorde's question, can the master's tools be used to dismantle the master's house? I think the reply goes something like this, providing we are prepared to select, to adapt, to use for hitherto unimagined purposes and weave them in with the entirely new, then yes, we can use the master's tools. But in the process it is crucial to understand that the tools are themselves transformed. As well as tearing down the master's house, that crucial preliminary act, a feminist science also begins to build anew, to construct a feminist science.

— Rose (1994)

This more comprehensive knowledge base enables a wide cross section of experiences and measures to inform policy and action. Chapter 4 will examine existing policies and those being developed, to illustrate how they reflect and satisfy the needs of women.

Conclusion

This chapter discusses theorizing as a process used to test assumptions about a number of phenomena in order to generate principles and theories to explain these phenomena. This chapter also points out that traditionally this process has been male centred and related to the cultures, nationalities, and dominant economic classes of the theorists, who did not take into account the perspectives and experiences of women or the problems and issues that affect women. Until feminist theorists began critiquing existing knowledges, these theories were used to produce programs and policies that adversely affected the lives of women.

The readings highlight the feminist challenges to the traditional, androcentric approach to theorizing and discuss some of the characteristics of feminist approaches. These approaches not only take into account differences in experiences of women and men but also recognize that women themselves do not constitute a homogenous group.

Using these approaches, feminists have deconstructed androcentric theories and knowledge and produced a comprehensive view of women's multiple realities. The knowledges they have generated provide a basis for critiquing existing policies and determining alternative policies and activities to address the problems affecting women.

Recognizing that factors such as class, race, ethnicity, age, social status, and sexual orientation shape perceptions and experience points to the social character of gender and gender relations. In the next chapter, you will examine a number of theories on gender and development that have evolved from a process of both women's and men's theorizing in different contexts and situations.

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Chapter 2. Why Gender? Why Development?

◀Document(s) 3 of 11 ▶

Rhoda Reddock

Introduction

This chapter introduces the concepts of gender and development and the factors that gave rise to their emergence. It also provides an explanation of the precolonial experience of so-called Third World people, especially with respect to gender relations and the experiences of women and men in social, political, and economic life. The discussion challenges simplistic characterizations and generalizations of precolonial societies and points to their rich diversity and difference.

This chapter provides a framework for considering alternative ways of perceiving human social and cultural development and organizing social, economic, and political life. It also provides information that challenges traditional monolithic assumptions about women and the **sexual division of labour**.

Objectives

The objectives of this chapter are the following:

To explore the evolution of the concepts of gender and development and to critically examine their underlying assumptions;

To recognize the diversity of human experience and the alternative measures of value and standards for the assessment of progress and human achievement; and

To provide a general historical understanding of the lives of Third World people before the institutionalization of development.

Why development?

In ordinary usage, *development* (a noun derived from the verb *develop*) implies movement from one level to another, usually with some increase in size, number, or quality of some sort. In the Penguin *English Dictionary*, the verb *develop* means “to unfold, bring out latent powers of; expand; strengthen; spread; grow; evolve; become more mature; show by degrees; explain more fully; elaborate; exploit the potentialities (of a site) by building, mining, etc.” (Penguin 1977).

For our purposes, these meanings of *development* apply to human societies. The usage of the word in this context was popularized in the post-World War II period to describe the process through which countries and societies outside North America and Europe (many of them former colonial territories) were to be transformed into modern, developed nations from what their colonizers saw as backward, primitive, underdeveloped societies (see Box 1).

Box 1

Colonialism

Colonialism refers in general to the extension of the power of a state through the acquisition, usually by conquest, of other territories; the subjugation of the inhabitants to a rule imposed

by force; and the financial and economic exploitation of the inhabitants to the advantage of the colonial power.

Characteristic of this form was the maintenance of a sharp and fundamental distinction (often expressed in law as well as in fact) between the ruling nation and the subordinate (colonial) populations. This led to entrenched forms of racism. In the modern period, that is, since 1492, colonial powers initially included the Dutch, English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish. Later, other European states also became involved, such as the Belgians and Germans. In the 20th century, the United States, too, became a colonial power.

It is necessary to differentiate between settler colonialism and nonsettler colonialism. In the case of the United Kingdom, for example, special status of dominion (or protectorate) was given to settler colonies, such as Australia, Canada, the Irish Free States, Newfoundland, New Zealand, Southern Rhodesia, and the Union of South Africa, which had large communities of European migrants. They were usually self-governing territories of the British empire. *Protectorate* was used to refer to territories governed by a colonial power although not formally annexed by it.

In these areas also, including the United States, *internal colonialism* is often used to describe the relationship between the settlers and the native or indigenous people and minorities. Although other forms of domination and hegemony have existed in human history, this chapter concentrates on the specific form of European colonization and colonial domination that has taken place since the 16th century.

Source: Fontana (1988)

Which were these societies?

These areas comprised most of Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, the Middle East, the Pacific region, and South and Central America. Today, this grouping includes former colonial, largely but not totally tropical, countries, peopled mainly by non-Europeans. It is usually referred to as the Third World, underdeveloped countries, developing countries, and, more recently, the South or the economic South.

Although it would be helpful to have one term to designate all of these countries, none of the above terms is really adequate. All are based on assumptions that we should be aware of when we use them. They are an improvement, however, on the terms first used in development writing, such as *backward* or *economically backward countries*.

It is important to note that before European colonial domination, many societies had already felt the impact of other dominating forces. For example, in North Africa the spread of the Islamic influence wrought great changes in the lifestyle of the native people — so much so that, now, some people hardly have any memory of a pre-Islamic past. In India, the spread of Hinduism over the continent had a similar, although more varied, impact. In some instances, the colonizers entered countries already controlled by well-established, stratified, patriarchal structures and introduced yet another controlling force into women's lives.

In this chapter, I briefly explore each of these concepts and the contexts within which they arose.

Underdeveloped-developing countries

The concept of underdeveloped-developing countries emerged as part of the work of early development economists in the 1950s, who theorized very simplistically about the stages of development that societies had to pass through to become “developed,” or “modern.” These concepts sought to encompass all of the countries and areas to which I referred earlier, ignoring the vast differences among them. In addition, the history of Western industrialized countries was used as a broad model for the process through which all societies were to pass.

These development economists coined the following triad:

Underdeveloped » Developing » Developed

Around the 1960s, with nationalist sentiments becoming vocal, the term *less developed* was added, as it was considered less pejorative than *underdeveloped*. This approach is sometimes critically referred to as developmentalism.

Not much later, a school of mainly sociologists and political scientists emerged. They were eventually referred to as modernization theorists because they described this process as one of becoming modern. They, too, developed a triad:

Traditional » Transitional » Modern

In the words of Shyama Charan Dube,

Modernity may be understood as the common behavioural system historically associated with the urban, industrial, literate, and participant societies of Western Europe and North America. The system is characterised by a rational and scientific world view, growth and ever-increasing application of science and technology, together with continuous adaptation of the institutions of society to the imperatives of the new world view and the emerging technological ethos.

— Dube (1988, p. 17)

One of the main features common to these two approaches is that they equated development (or modernity) with industrialization. Industrialization and its companion, urbanization (the emergence of towns and cities), were considered the only ways for backward societies to become modern, or developed. Progress and advancement were also seen in this light.

There was little appreciation of the social, cultural, economic, or political attributes of non-Western societies. Indeed, these approaches accepted to a large degree the colonial feeling of superiority over indigenous peoples, many of whom were decimated, robbed of their land, or confined to reservations or territories (for example, in Australia, Canada, and the United States), or marginalized and forced to flee into the mountains (for example, in parts of Asia and most of South and Central America) (see Box 2).

Box 2

Staying alive

Thus are economies based on indigenous technologies viewed as “backward” and “unproductive.” Poverty, as the denial of basic needs, is not necessarily associated with the existence of traditional technologies, and its removal is not necessarily an outcome of the growth of modern ones. On the contrary, the destruction of ecologically sound traditional technologies, often created and used by women, along with the destruction of their material base is generally believed to be responsible for the “feminisation” of poverty in societies which have had to bear the costs of resource destruction.

— Shiva (1988, p. 12)

Exercise 1

Indigenous technologies

What does the author mean by “indigenous technologies”?

Give examples of indigenous technologies used in your society today by

Women

Men

These approaches also had little to say about women. Women were largely linked to the traditional and backward aspects of these societies and most resistant to change. Because the theorists used *traditional* in such a general sense, with little recourse to history or social anthropology, they little realized the diversity in women and men’s relations, in modes of domestic and family organization, or in social, economic, and political life.

Third World

“Third World” is the English translation of *le tiers monde*, developed in France in the 1950s. It emerged with the heightened anticolonial consciousness that arose with the coming of the new nation-states in Africa and Asia. This was also a time when the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union – Eastern Europe was dividing the world along ideological and geopolitical lines.

In this context, the newly independent states of Africa and Asia (including Ghana, India, Indonesia, and Nigeria), as well as Yugoslavia, met in Bandung, Indonesia, in April 1955. They adopted the position of nonalignment with either camp, arguing the need for a third, alternative world grouping. The term *Third World* was adopted by many of these countries to differentiate themselves from the First World (the North Atlantic capitalist world, or the world of advanced market economies) and the Second World (the centrally planned economies of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union). The Third World consisted of all other nations — usually in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, the Pacific, and South and Central America, including the centrally planned economies in these areas.

One of the main criticisms of the concept of the Third World has been that it suggests a hierarchy of nations. Some people argue that to accept third place is to accept a lower status in the world order. The people who coined the phrase probably never considered this but simply

saw *Third World* as an alternative to the two main options their countries were being pushed to accept, options that, as history would show, they would eventually agree to.

North–South

North–South became a popular term around 1980, after the publication of the report of the Independent Commission on International Development Issues, popularly known as the Brandt Commission because it was led by the late Willy Brandt, former Chancellor of West Germany (see Brandt 1980). According to one source,

The expression was selected by the Commission to emphasize the economic divide between the North (rich nations) and the South (poor nations) and to highlight the presumed desirability of a North–South dialogue grounded in a common concern for global problems and freed from the complications of East–West political interests.

— Hulme (1990, p. 8)

This division, like many associated with relations of power, is geographically incorrect. Some countries in the South are neither low income nor not former colonial countries; likewise, some economies and conditions of life in the North, such as can be found in Eastern and Southern Europe, have little in common with the leading industrialized capitalist economies of the North. For some, this terminology reflects global restructuring and the changes taking place in the global economy. *Economic South* was a term coined to further delineate this grouping in economic and political terms, rather than in purely geographic ones.

Development today

The heyday of developmentalism — in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s — fostered some strong beliefs, such as

That state or government should play the central determining role in introducing development policies and strategies that could lead to improved standards of living and conditions of life; and

That international investment, loans, and aid can redirect economies away from their traditional bases — usually in agriculture — toward industry and manufacture.

Today, although much of this sentiment has changed, much has remained the same. The dominant thinking in the late 1980s and early 1990s has been that the state has a leading, but only facilitating, role in the economy. Development is now seen as the responsibility of private companies and, increasingly, private nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). In addition, the market is seen as the main arbiter of decision-making.

This approach is based on the renewed influence of liberal economic thinking (now called neoliberal economics), which has affected international economic policy and development thinking. All this has taken place within the context of a Third World debt crisis, within which economic restructuring and structural-adjustment policies are advocated as mechanisms for generating income to repay debt. Such thinking has become reality through the conditions on the stabilization and structural-adjustment loans offered by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (the World Bank) to countries facing balance-of-payments difficulties.

The IMF and the World Bank were established in 1944 at Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, in the United States. At this meeting, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States set up a system to facilitate the reconstruction of Western Europe after World War II. The main purpose of the new organizations was to provide a basis for monetary and currency stability for increased trade and expansion of these economies. This was to be accomplished by providing financial support during periods of balance-of-payments difficulties, that is, when imports exceeded exports. The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade was later added, and, according to Dennis Pantin, each of these institutions would play a complementary role in the management of a world economy that did not restrict the movement of goods, services, and money (Pantin 1989).

Since the emergence of the new nation-states in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and the Pacific in the 1950s and 1960s, the Bretton Woods Agreement has widened in scope. As a result of the current trend in monetarist, or neoliberal, economics, the role of this agreement has expanded. The IMF provides short-term stabilization assistance to countries with balance-of-payments difficulties, on condition that they implement certain fiscal and monetary policies. The World Bank, on the other hand, is more concerned with long-term adjustment through restructuring of host economies along fixed lines. Its policies can be summarized as follows (Blackden 1993):

Stabilization or reduction of budget or balance-of-payments deficits, reduction of budget deficits or freezes in public-sector employment, cutbacks in public-sector investment, removal of public-sector subsidies (usually away from the agriculture and social sector to the private commercial sector), and tax reform;

Promotion of the private sector through contracting of public services, sale of state enterprises, and deregulation;

Market liberalization and price reforms, in which the local market is opened to greater foreign and domestic competition; exchange-rate liberalization, usually devaluations or floatation of local currency to encourage exports; and removal of price controls and supports to local industry; and

Rationalization of public-sector institutions, including civil-service (public-sector) reform, privatization of state enterprises, and reform of the social sector to make it cost-effective.

Aspects of these neoliberal policies have also been implemented since the 1980s in Northern countries, such as Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States, and, more recently, in continental Europe. Additionally, many governments have implemented economic-adjustment programs without being involved in an IMF or World Bank program.

In the Third World, these programs have been severely criticized for the following reasons:

They are not tailored to the particular needs of individual economies;

They contribute to major declines in standards of living, including nutritional levels, educational standards, employment rates, and access to social-support systems;

They shift more of the responsibility for health care, education, and care of the sick and elderly to women already burdened by unpaid work;

They increase social ills, such as violent crime, drug abuse, and violence against women; and

They result in increased levels of migration (legal and illegal) from the South to the North.

Sustainable development

In many parts of the North and South, women's organizations and NGOs are involved in developing sustainable and economically feasible alternatives to these neoliberal policies of structural adjustment.

The term *sustainable development* came into popular use after the 1987 report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, popularly known as the Brundtland Report and the Brundtland Commission, respectively. The report was largely a response to the growing international environmental and ecological lobby. It defined sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED 1987, p. 43). According to Donald Brooks (1990), the paradigm, or worldview, emerging around this concept recognized the need to ensure and facilitate the following:

Integration of conservation and development;

Maintenance of ecological integrity;

Satisfaction of basic human needs (see Chapter 3);

Achievement of equity and social justice; and

Provision of social self-determination and cultural diversity.

This comprehensive approach does not reflect all approaches to sustainable development. Some economists, for example, speak of "sustainable growth." Critics agree, however, that economic growth (that is, continuous increase in the quantity of economic production) cannot be sustained indefinitely, given the renewable and nonrenewable resources of the planet. Nevertheless, a more equitable distribution of existing resources could lead to improvements in the quality of life.

Feminist activists have been central to the movement against environmental degradation and for sustainability right from the movement's inception. They have also often gone beyond the narrower definitions of the issues to include the struggle for peace and the struggle against the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Whereas most of the discussions on sustainable development have taken place within the context of mainstream development economics, feminist activists have for the most part seen sustainable development as part of a larger alternative model of development or societal transformation.

Kamla Bhasin [1993] identified the following components of sustainable development:

It must be in harmony with nature (if nature is to sustain us, we must sustain nature);

It must be people centred and oriented (people have to be seen as the subjects, not the objects, of development);

It must be women centred (recognizing the responsibility that women have always assumed for catering to the basic needs of society);

It must cater to the needs of the majority (consumption levels of the rich and industrialized world must be reduced);

There must be decentralization of decision-making and control over resources within countries and internationally;

Democracy must become more participatory and direct, unleashing the latent energies of the people; and

At every level, sustainable development must promote the politics of peace, nonviolence, and respect for life.

In short, sustainable development for many feminists from the South and North implies a new kind of political, economic, social, and cultural system and a new value orientation.

The women's challenge to modernization and development¹

The seeds of the women-and-development concept (a broad-based term that includes a number of approaches to women's development; see below) were planted during the 1950s and 1960s. During this time, 50 countries were freed from colonialism, and the women who had participated in independence movements acted on their convictions that they must join with men in building these new nations. For example, at the beginning of the 1960s, women of East African countries, led by Margaret Kenyatta, met at seminars to adopt strategies aimed at reaching their goals. This was at a time when the revived feminist movement in the North had not yet found a distinct voice and *The Feminine Mystique* (Friedan 1963), the book that some credit with signaling the revival of feminism and launching the women's liberation movement in Northern countries, had not yet been written.

Before that time, in 1947, just 2 years after the formation of the United Nations, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) was established to monitor United Nations activities on behalf of women. To a large extent, however, its efforts were limited within the legalistic context of human rights. By the 1950s and 1960s, women of these newly independent countries began taking their delegations to the United Nations (though in small numbers) and were able to challenge the legalistic agenda of CSW by raising development-oriented issues.

By 1970, when the United Nations General Assembly reviewed the results of the First Development Decade of the 1960s, three factors that would eventually converge to foster the various approaches to women's development had become evident:

It was found that the industrialization strategies of the 1960s had been ineffective and had, in fact, worsened the lives of the poor and the women in Third World countries.

The Second Development Decade was therefore designed to address this and “bring about sustainable” improvement in the well-being of individuals and bestow benefits on all.

Evidence was brought forward in Ester Boserup’s (1970) now classic *Women’s Role in Economic Development*. Boserup, an agricultural economist, used research data from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and Latin America to highlight women’s central positions in the economic life of these societies, and she described the disruptive effects of colonialism and modernization on the sexual division of labour through the introduction of the international market economy. Among other things, this process drew men away from production based on family labour and gave them near-exclusive access to economic and other resources. Boserup concluded that the economic survival and development of the Third World would depend heavily on efforts to reverse this trend and to more fully integrate women into the development process.

The feminist movement reemerged in Western countries around 1968, alongside other social movements for civil rights. Although the movement’s energies were, for the most part, directed internally, some Western women used their position to pressure their government’s foreign-aid offices to ensure that grants to recipient countries supported women as well as men.

The central point of the original women-and-development approach was that both women and men must be lifted from poverty and both women and men must contribute to and benefit from development efforts. Margaret Snyder and Mary Tadesse, in their book, *African Women and Development: A History*, defined *women and development* as follows:

“Women and Development” is an inclusive term used throughout this book to signify a concept and a movement whose long-range goal is the well-being of society — the community of men, women and children. Its formulation is based on the following suppositions:

“Development,” in accordance with the International Development Strategy for the Second Development Decade, means “to bring about sustained improvement in the well-being of the individual and to bestow benefits on all.”

Because women comprise more than half of the human resources and are central to the economic as well as the social well-being of societies, development goals cannot be fully reached without their participation.

Women and development is thus a holistic concept wherein the goal of one cannot be achieved without the success of the other.

Women, therefore, must have “both the legal right and access to existing means for the improvement of oneself and of society.”

— Snyder and Tadesse (1995, p. 6)

International Women’s Year was declared by the United Nations in 1975, and the celebration of this at the First International Women’s Conference in Mexico City marked the globalization of the movement. This unique intergovernmental conference and the nongovernmental International Women’s Tribune Centre (IWTC), a networking and

communications institution, brought together women from nearly all countries of the world under the theme Equality, Development and Peace and extended its work during the United Nations Decade for Women, 1976–85. This sparked the creation of institutions and networks worldwide as “women and development” became an area of specialization in the development field.

The United Nations Voluntary Fund for Women (later called the United Nations Development Fund for Women) and the International Training and Research Centre for Women were soon established within the United Nations system. IWTC and the Women’s World Bank, a loan-guaranteeing organization, came into existence as NGOs. At the national level, “national machineries” — commissions on women, women’s desks, and women’s bureaus — were soon established in most countries. New women’s organizations and networks sprang up at the community and national levels. These contributed to the institutionalization of women and development as an internationally recognized set of concepts and did much to generalize knowledge and consciousness about women’s issues internationally.

Exercise 2

National machineries for women

Visit the national machinery for women’s affairs in your country. It may be a women’s desk, a women’s bureau, or a ministry of women’s affairs. Write a short history of its emergence and analyze its interpretation of the term *women and development*.

Why gender?

The concern with gender emerged as feminist theorists sought to understand the complexities of women’s subordination. The word *gender* came into mainly academic use some 15 years after the reemergence of late-20th-century feminism, which has, unlike its earlier manifestations, made a significant dent in male-dominated (**androcentric**) scholarship (at least, I like to think so).

Feminist scholars argued that the Western academic tradition, of which most universities and colleges in the world are part, has systematically ignored the experiences of women in its fields of learning, concepts, theories, and research methods. Additionally, although claiming to be scientific, it has really embodied mythical assumptions about women’s and men’s capabilities, the sexual division of labour in early human history, and, as a result, women’s place in today’s society. These assumptions were extended to non-Western societies, with the result that Western assumptions and values influenced relations between the sexes and between groups within each sex, relations that ranged from egalitarian to highly patriarchal and stratified.

The word *gender*, like *development*, had a specific usage before feminist theorists extended its meaning. One of the earliest uses of *gender* in feminist theory can be traced to the 1976 University of Sussex Workshop on the Subordination of Women and the school of thought that emerged from this workshop. Scholars such as Olivia Harris, Maureen Mackintosh,

Felicity Odlum, Ann Whitehead, and Kate Young argued that women, like men, are biological beings but that women's subordination was socially constructed and not biologically determined. They argued further that to conceptually differentiate between these two realities, it is necessary to identify "sex" as the biological differentiation between male and female, and "gender" as the differentiation between masculinity and femininity as constructed through socialization and education, among other factors. What is biological is fixed and unchangeable, but what is social is subject to change and should be the focus of attention for feminist theorists.

In its more recent use, as you will see in Chapter 3, *gender* has come to be used, like *class* and *ethnicity* or *race*, to designate an analytical social category, one that interacts with other social factors in influencing life experiences of groups and individuals (see Box 3).

Box 3

The social relations of gender

Firstly, what is gender? It is somewhat ironic that the term "gender," which was first coined by psychologists and then used by feminists to get away from the biologicistic referent of the word sex, is now virtually synonymous with the latter word. Yet by using gender we are using a shorthand term which encodes a very crucial point: that our basic social identities as men and women are socially constructed rather than based on fixed biological characteristics. In this sense we can talk about societies in which there are more than two genders (and in the anthropological record there are several such societies), as well as the historical differences in masculinity (femininity) in a given society.

— Young (1988, p. 98)

Since that time this concept has gained widespread acceptance in a range of groups and often for different reasons. Some of these reasons are as follows:

The need to include men in our analysis:

Those who worried that women's studies scholarship focused too narrowly and separately on women used the term ... to introduce a relational notion into our analytic vocabulary.

— Scott (1989, p. 16)

To gain academic acceptance:

In its simplest recent usage, "gender" is a synonym for "women." Any number of books and articles whose subject is women's history have in the past few years substituted "gender" for "women" in their titles. In some cases this usage ... is about political acceptability in the field. In these instances, the use of "gender" is meant to denote scholarly seriousness of a work, for "gender" has a more neutral and objective sound than does "women."

— Scott (1989, p. 16)

Recently, the phrase "women in development" (WID) is also being replaced in some circles by "gender and development" (GAD) or "gender concerns in development" (GCID) The details of these approaches will be dealt with in more explicitly in Chapter 3.

Today, however, two types of critiques have emerged in relation to the concept of gender. One of these comes from a movement perspective. As noted by Joan W. Scott, gender has become a useful and almost inescapable concept in women's studies and feminist theory (Scott 1989). Many people in the women's movement fear, however, that this is leading to a situation in which women are once more invisible. They note that the fields of WID, GAD, GCID, feminist theory, and women's studies all owe their origins to the women's movement and the struggles of women in the streets, towns, villages, and academies. Yet, today, with the growing acceptance of academic women's studies and gender specialists, the concern with the day-to-day problems and struggles of women and the movement is being marginalized and, indeed, no longer even acknowledged.

The other critique comes from a theoretical perspective. It is now being found that

The divisions between male and female are not as fixed and clear cut as once thought — the male–female dichotomy is seen as being just as problematic as other dichotomies in Western thought; and

It is not so simple to extricate what is “sex” from what is “gender,” as these two phenomena, as described, intertwine.

Although the concept of gender can never substitute for that of woman, it has added to our understanding of the complexities of human social relations in numerous ways. Clearly, it is a concept that is here to stay.

Gender and society before the development era

It is important that we recall the richness of the history of most developing countries before colonialism and the era of development. It is also important for us to understand the nature of social relations in the earlier periods of that history. As I noted earlier, the Third World, or the South, really comprises most of the world. It is a mistake to speak of this vast and varied area as if it were all the same.

Until recently, most of our history of this region was androcentric. It focused on the period after the encounter with Western Europe and emphasized male action or agency. In addition, it was often first written in Western languages by Western male scholars who, with few exceptions, were Eurocentric and intolerant of the people they studied. As a result, our historical records are laced with racism, sexism, and imperialist sentiments. The following 17th-century European male's description of matrilineality in West Africa is a clear example:

The Right of Inheritance is very oddly adjusted; as far as I could observe, the Brother's and Sister's Children are the right and lawful Heirs, in the manner following. They do not jointly inherit, but the eldest Son of his Mother is Heir to his Mother's Brother or her Son, as the eldest Daughter is Heiress of her Mother's Sister or her Daughter: neither the Father himself or his Relations as Brothers, Sisters etc. have any claim to the Goods of the Defunct, for what Reason they can't tell: But I am of the Opinion that this Custom was introduc'd on account of the Whoredom of the Women, herein following the custom of some East-Indian Kings who (as Authors Fay) educate their Sister's Son as their own, and appoint him to succeed in the Throne, because they are more sure that their Sister's Son is of their Blood than they can be of their own [*sic*].

— Bosman (1967, p. 203)

Although development theorists paid little attention to the complexities of these societies before the era of development, social anthropologists did. However, they also took with them androcentric and ethnocentric biases that clouded their view of these societies and of gender relations in these societies.

In the heyday of Third World nationalism, in the 1960s and 1970s, indigenous historians sought to correct this wrong. Most of these historians were male or trained in the androcentric worldview, so knowledge of women's experiences in precolonial society continued to be hidden. To counteract centuries of what Peter Worsley (1970) called "imperialist history," nationalist historians often distorted this history to highlight a great and glorious past, stressing the kings and queens, wealth and empire. In so doing, they often ignored the traditional **egalitarianism** of many precolonial societies, in which women had greater power and autonomy and life was more in tune with nature and the environment, not based on its destruction.

Today, as feminist activists and other concerned scholars reevaluate development and modernization, there is a renewed appreciation of the positive features of the ways of life in earlier societies, although we realize the limitations of those times. We also understand the need to preserve and protect the egalitarian and environmentally friendly practices that have survived in our societies and have been adapted to serve people's needs, often outside mainstream political and economic structures.

Exercise 3

Women's knowledge

Collect examples of women's knowledge of medicine and healing and the ways in which these have been passed on from one generation to another.

Gender relations and social change

Since the late 18th century, social scientists have sought to develop a schema to explain the variety and differences in human experience. Early evolutionists incorporated the notion of progress: human development moving from primitive, backward forms to advanced and developed ones. Functionalist anthropologists in the mid-20th century concentrated on seeing each society as an integrated whole. They could not help interpreting what they observed through their biased perspectives and basing conclusions on their customary assumptions.

Today, although critical scholars no longer attribute value to societies in terms of progress or backwardness, they do recognize that precolonial societies may have been at different stages of social development. These stages are usually described in relation to the production systems that predominated at the time. Like all schemas, however, these descriptions provide only a partial understanding. Most societies cannot be neatly classified in one category or another. Many show signs of being at more than one "stage." In addition, it must be stressed that all societies do not necessarily pass through all the recognized stages.

Some anthropologists totally reject any theory of stages of social development because of their links to the notions of modernization and progress. They argue, instead, for a nonstage approach that examines each society on its own terms and sees movement (social change) taking place in any direction. Transitions from one stage to another, if these are thought to occur at all, are therefore the result of many factors that anthropologists are still exploring, including a society's environment and its historical relationships with other groups. The stages are usually identified as follows:

Hunter-gatherer or foraging societies

Horticultural societies

Matrilineal descent

Patrilineal descent

Agricultural or agrarian societies

Pastoral or herding societies

Industrial societies

Various combinations of the above

Feminist anthropologists have also argued that the organization of social and **production relations** — such as social **stratification**, the monogamous family, ownership of property, and forms of work and production — has greatly influenced the differences in gender relations around the world.

In some instances, as discussed earlier, societies were extremely stratified **patriarchies** before the arrival of European colonizers. This was sometimes the result of domination by other patriarchal and highly stratified groups or an existing system of social stratification. In many other instances, however, this was not the case, especially in matrilineal societies, as shown in Fatima Mernissi's description of Morocco before its Islamization:

The panorama of female sexual rights in pre-Islamic culture reveals that women's sexuality was not bound by the concept of legitimacy. Children belonged to their mother's tribe. Women had sexual freedom to enter into and break off unions with more than one man, either simultaneously or successively. A woman could either reserve herself to one man at a time, on a more or less temporary basis, as in a *mut'a* marriage, or she could be visited by many husbands at different times whenever their nomadic tribe or trade caravan came through the woman's town or camping ground. The husband would come and go; the main unit was the mother and child with an entourage of kinfolk.

— Mernissi 1987, p. 78)

In all situations, women had been able to create spaces and possibilities for autonomy within the structures of subordination existing in their societies (see Case Studies 1–4). However, these strategies were complicated or removed by the imposition of assumptions about a woman's or man's place in the new systems of stratification that were based on notions of class and racial or ethnic superiority.

Case Study 1

The Bari of Columbia

Elisa Buenaventura-Posso and Susan E. Brown, in their study of the Bari, an indigenous people of Columbia, traced the Bari's historical background and described their society as "fully egalitarian," a society without stratification, differential access to resources, or accumulation of wealth; exhibiting full sexual symmetry and individual autonomy; and valuing each person's work as socially equal. Buenaventura-Posso and Brown (1976) made their assessment through analyses of the processes of leadership, stratification, decision-making, division of labour, ritual, interpersonal relationships, and general social atmosphere.

The ferocity with which the Bari resisted usurpation and extinction by powerful external forces for 400 years contrasts sharply with their harmonious, classless, internal social organization and very high regard for peace. In 1772, a colonial envoy noted that "they do not live subject to anyone's domination ... [but] in fraternal union, making decisions by unanimous agreement."

Two hundred years later, a visiting Capuchin monk made similar observations, adding that "there are no privileged classes ... everyone is equal and for everyone exist the same opportunities. The head of the group cannot be called a chief ... but ... *primus inter pares*. Everyone enjoys absolute freedom within ... required norms." Buenaventura-Posso and Brown concurred and explained that sanctions for inappropriate behaviour among the Bari come through social-control mechanisms such as group pressure and public opinion. There are special positions of responsibility, which may be changed, but they do not carry even temporary authority.

The Bari are forest horticulturists who live in autonomous groups of 40–80, occupying two or more dwellings several days' travel apart from one another. House members belong to three groups, named after the positions of their hearths — east, west, and centre — and the people in these groups cook and share food together. Each group has its own hearth, and each individual has his or her own space. Order is maintained, collective activities are performed, and each individual has a recognized place. No one has more access to strategic resources, authority, or knowledge than any other person.

The organization and division of labour between the sexes and among children are practical, flexible, and complementary, with little prohibition against interchange. Although a few tasks are restricted, many are communal or, like house-building, performed by both sexes. Interdependence is high, and consequently there are no resulting hierarchies, social divisions, or antagonisms between the sexes.

The Bari's few rituals and ceremonies display full sexual symmetry. These rituals and ceremonies help each group maintain alliances with other groups. Both men and women can invite guests of the same sex, exchange gifts, and sing songs about their respective activities over days or weeks. Sexual independence is maintained before and after marriage. Unions are generally stable but are dissolved without a fuss when they are not.

Interpersonal relations are shaped by complex, subtle connections, pacts, alliances, and kinships among the separate, autonomous groups. All Bari are either *ojibara* (ally) or *sadodi* (kin) to one another, and *sagdoji-okjibara* is the linking principle, promoting order and taking

the place of genealogical descent. Like earlier observers, Buenaventura-Posso and Brown noted the harmonious, egalitarian, and gentle relations between man and woman, as well as in the general social atmosphere.

Source: Buenaventura-Posso and Brown (1990)

Case Study 2

The Nayar of south India

Studies considering gender hegemonies from medieval times to the early postcolonial period in south India indicate that within the strictures of caste, class, and gender stratifications, Nayar matrilineal social structure vested leadership and power in the male and allowed various degrees of autonomy to women.

Kalpana Kannabiran, in her thesis, “Temple Women in South India: A Study in Political Economy and Social History”, suggested that the matrilinearity of the Hindu Nayar caste may hinge, in a sense, on the patrilineal structure of their close, but superior, caste Brahmin neighbours, the Nambudiri (Kannabiran 1992).

Paul Thomas’ (1964) observations on the Nayar of Kerala in south India in *Indian Women Through the Ages*, from his research during the early 1950s, are remarkably similar to those of Robin Jeffrey (1993) in her *Politics, Women and Well-Being*.

Kerala has a caste-based society and an agricultural economy with a per capita income well below the national average. Yet, other statistics indicate higher standards of living in most vital aspects than found in the rest of the country: birth rates and infant mortality rates are lower; life expectancy is longer; and education and literacy levels are higher. The figures are particularly striking for women (who live longer in Kerala), and explanations have been sought in the social history and development of the people of the region.

The Nayar constitute a numerous fourth-level martial Hindu caste in Kerala, south India. Until the middle of this century, their social system was matrilineal. Their’s was a humane system in which the eldest male managed the family affairs but descent was traced through the female line from a female ancestor. Properties were jointly owned by families in the name of the senior female. A woman was free to move about the locality and had a say in choosing her own husband.

The Nayar marriage ceremony, *Sambandam*, comprised a single reception and the presentation of a gift of cloth from the bridegroom to the bride. Although liaisons did not have to be permanent, there was considerable constancy. Divorce was easy, remarriage was common, and polyandry almost certainly occurred. Women and their children were the responsibility of the maternal family, whose surname they retained. Free from tyrannical husbands, child marriage, *sati*, and *purdah*, women were autonomous, self-reliant, independent, and able to manage men and affairs far better than other women in similar situations elsewhere in India. They never, however, had full equality with men.

Nayar men were soldiers and supervisors for the highest level Hindu Brahmin Nambudiri caste. Its men — like those of the second-level Kshatriya caste — had access to Nayar women through *Sambandam* marriage. Nayar women were responsible for family domestic affairs

and child-rearing. Nayar social organization allowed the women considerable sexual freedom and material and social security.

With British colonization, however, persistent pressure, including government legislation, changed much of the matrilineal system. Consequently, although Nayar women have enjoyed higher levels of autonomy and quality of life than other women in equivalent positions elsewhere in India, they have relatively less personal freedom and social security, today, than their female ancestors.

Source: Thomas (1964), Kannabiran (1992), and Jeffrey (1993)

Case Study 3

The Tiwi women of north Australia

In a case study of the contemporary social life of the Tiwi of Melville Island, north Australia, M. Kay Martin and Barbara Voorhies suggested that the social organization of these hunters and gatherers has a dual structure: whereas inheritance and clan membership are patrilineal, families frequently reside in their maternal camps, with a man often marrying several daughters of one mother, thus making matrilineal affiliation important to both men and women (Martin and Voorhies 1975).

To compare male and female anthropological perspectives on Aboriginal women, Ruby Rohrlich-Leavitt, Barbara Sykes, and Elizabeth Weatherford surveyed various studies, including some on the Tiwi of Australia, and concluded that Tiwi women enjoy partnership with men and the same rights, self-respect, and dignity (Rohrlich-Leavitt et al. 1975). Although men are the social and political leaders in Tiwi society, women play a crucial role in their community's economic survival. They forage and hunt small game to provide most, sometimes all, of the family food supply, and they carry much of the load when their nomadic bands travel. The community fully recognizes the importance of women's contribution and their commensurate participation in other institutions.

Tiwi society requires that all women past the age of puberty marry and that husband and wife enter into real economic cooperation. Both sexes go on joint hunting and fishing excursions. The tools the women make and use satisfy most of the essential needs of the group. Because of their economic contribution, women are respected and assured of just and good treatment. There is no simple division of labour by sex. Both men and women practice hunting and gathering. Land resources, both plant and animal, are associated with women, whereas air and sea resources are associated with men. However, men hunt larger animals, such as the wallaby, which requires particular strength, speed, and close-range dexterity with spears.

Women have the right to own property and to trade some of their handiwork. Among themselves, they also hold *corroborrees* — secret ritual festivals and symbolic dances — that help unify them and give them, as the men's rituals give them, opportunities for drama, recreation, and emotional security. Like the men, the women practice sorcery against un dependable partners.

Young people of both sexes have casual premarital affairs, but full sexual intercourse is not sanctioned before puberty. When a girl gets pregnant, her betrothed becomes the child's social

father. Usually, a betrothed begins to stay at the girl's parents' camp before puberty so that they will get to know each other by the time she goes to live in his territory.

The men (fathers, brothers, and prospective husband) make the marriage arrangements, but the girl's mother plays a part in the negotiations. A man remains indebted all his life to his mother-in-law, who alone may void the contract if she is dissatisfied with the gifts he provides her.

Polygamy is practiced, and men try to acquire as many wives as they can. Girls are usually much younger than their first husbands, but older widows often choose younger men. Sometimes they agree to exchange sons. Both men and women often have several spouses over a lifetime. Wives are economic assets to a man, as they can free him from subsistence activity, enabling him to pursue the public and ceremonial affairs that bring him power and prestige in the community.

Strong bonds of special affection and respect are recognized between women and their biological children, who have close ties with their mother's group. Women share in the gifts given when their sons are initiated. They visit and exchange gifts with their married daughters, and both sons and daughters care for their mother when she is old.

Both women and men have a deeply rooted belief in the totemic ancestors, and the egalitarian relationships between the sexes are reflected in the myths that depict both sexes as existing together from the first. In their creation myth, the creator deity is female, as are the deities of the sun and the Milky Way.

With increasing age, women become more assertive and wield more power and authority. They have tremendous influence through their mature sons. Older women teach the younger ones economic skills, preside over women's rites and secret *corroborrees*, and settle disputes. Like their male counterparts, they are the guardians of myths and are responsible for passing on tribal law and custom. As such, they support the stability and continuity of tribal life.

Source: Hart and Pilling (1960), Martin and Voorhies (1975), and Rohrllich-Leavitt et al. (1975)

Case Study 4

The Nile Valley civilization

The Civilization of Ancient Egypt, Paul Johnson's (1978) study of Nile Valley civilization from neolithic times, cites the fundamental characteristics of the world's first highly stratified nation-state as stability, permanence, and isolation; and the essence of its culture as majesty and self-confidence. State, religion, culture, and land formed a creative unity lasting three millennia, until the Christian era; it was a civilization circumscribed by the desert and dominated by the great river Nile.

As Egypt's only (and very dependable) source of water, the Nile provided the valley with reliable alluvial deposits, fertility, and a transportation route. It enabled the very early hunter nomads of the valley to transform themselves into farmers and herders, and their exploitation of the Nile allowed them to develop a sound agricultural economy.

Ancient Egypt's social organization was patriarchal and included a system of social stratification. Although inheritance came through the maternal line, men managed their families and occupied all positions of leadership. The sexual division of labour did not allow women to take part in trade or expeditions or become secular officials. Nevertheless, women were afforded high status in ancient Egyptian society, and a child's status was determined by that of its mother.

Outside the domestic sphere, women could become temple dancers, singers, attendants, or high-ranking priestesses. Peasant women worked in the fields, drew water, and sometimes herded livestock. Pictorial evidence also shows that women occupied positions of authority — responsible positions, such as manageress of a dining hall, superintendent of a workshop of weavers, head of a wig workshop, or conductor of the singers of the royal harem.

Health care for women was important. Gynaecology was very advanced. Women from wealthy families enjoyed wide property rights and could own slaves, servants, houses, and land; they retained these rights when they married. Women could inherit their father's and husband's estates and could adopt children. Egyptians were particularly fond of children and displayed their affection quite openly. In this polygamous society, men were encouraged to be considerate and faithful to their wives. Unfaithful wives, however, were put to death with their lovers. Auspicious days for lovemaking between husband and wife were determined by the astrologer.

Among the royalty, rulership was a male prerogative but gained through a female line. Kingship passed to the husband of the former king's eldest daughter or to the husband of the former king's first daughter with his favourite senior wife. Although women were forbidden by law from becoming a ruling queen, some women, like Queen Hatshepsut, did in fact rule, and these women intrigued to have their daughters succeed them. The power of Egypt's theocratic monarchy was thus not entirely absolute, but there was little freedom to act against the law. Yet, the state's remarkable stability and order encouraged tremendous development in agriculture, the arts, and science. Eventually, when Egypt's retreat into the regulated collectivism of its past proved ineffective against persistent external invasion, the country was overtaken, and new people with new religions and languages replaced its ancient civilization.

Source: Johnson (1978) and Mokhtar (1990)

Conclusion

This chapter suggests that the sexual division of labour in our society, today, may not be as fixed as we think. It suggests that the subordination of women and the dominance of men are neither natural nor eternal. A change toward a more egalitarian society is possible, a change that could fulfill the potentials of all human beings — women and men.

This chapter also recommends that to change these difficult relations between women and men, we have to examine and challenge the systems of inequality and subordination in our own countries and throughout the world: these could be based on **race** or **ethnicity**, colour, **class**, age, sexual orientation, or nationality. In addition, we need to consider the organization of work and the effects of modern life and work on the environment.

The chapters that follow explore some of these issues in depth and introduce you to some of the theories and approaches developed to more fully understand the issues of gender and development.

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Chapter 4. Feminist Theory and Development: Implications for Policy, Research, and Action

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V. Eudine Barriteau

Introduction

This chapter integrates our understanding of feminist theories, gender issues, and development paradigms. It outlines the shift in the development discourse and documents and discusses alternative approaches to development. It attempts to reveal how these shape development policies, research agendas, and feminist activism.

The discussions of development, feminist theories, and feminist development frameworks in the preceding chapters are particularly useful for women in developing countries. This information serves many purposes:

It enables us to expose and “interrogate” the contradictions and complications in development theory and practice;

It provides analytical tools that reveal how development paradigms have influenced national policies;

It shows the impact of these policies on legislation, education, welfare reform, culture, and other economic and social issues affecting women's lives;

It enables us to analyze the policies of international development and financial institutions and agencies, such as the International

Bank for Reconstruction and Development (the World Bank), the International Monetary Fund, the United Nations Development Programme, and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM);

It indicates the factors that should be considered to create just, gender-sensitive development policies; and

It indicates alternative approaches and practices for destabilizing the traditional models of development, which are inimical to the well-being of women.

Feminist theorizing, the experiences of women in developing countries, and feminist critiques of development policies have had various effects on the creation of new policies, the shape of research agendas, and the nature of ongoing activism. These principal areas diverge substantially, even though conceptually and practically they continue to interact and influence each other.

Overview

The development policies of international institutions and national governments continue to reflect the influence of the liberal-feminist framework. These policies maintain an incremental, reformist approach to working within the modernization paradigm. They still focus on bringing women “into” development, the women-in-development (WID) approach. As these policies are explored the assumptions of liberal feminism and the modernization paradigm become easy to detect.

The influence of feminist theorizing on current research on women and development (WAD) is far more wide-ranging (Moser n.d.). There have been substantive changes in the nature and scope of this research. Many more feminists in the South are undertaking research. They are attempting to redefine the WID and gender-and-development (GAD) discourse. They are also committed to ensuring that the historical perspective of women’s movements and women’s organizations in the South become an integral part of the discourse. Their work documents the lives and struggles of women in the South. They seek to challenge and correct the assumptions with which women’s movements and organizations in the South began their work during the United Nations’ First Development Decade.

At the international level, the work of such groups as Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) has now mushroomed into a global analysis of key development issues. DAWN is a network of feminists, researchers, activists, and policymakers that was formed in Bangalore, India, in 1984 and formalized in workshops at the NGO forum in Nairobi in 1985. DAWN has questioned the impact of development on poor peoples, especially women, in light of current global economic and political crises. The group’s agenda focuses on the themes of environment, reproductive

rights, population, and alternative economic frameworks.

On the issue of human development and economic growth, DAWN has inverted the traditional question, What kind of human development can best promote economic competitiveness and growth? Gita Sen, on behalf of DAWN, has asked instead, What kind of economic development can best promote human development? Sen, who is DAWN's Research Co-ordinator on Alternative Economic Frameworks, argued that if this became the central question of development, different answers would be sought and different policies would be designed and implemented (Sen and Grown 1987).

Concerning the issues of nationalistic or economic wars, the emergence of competitive trading blocs, and the changing role of multilateral institutions, DAWN put three central questions on the research agenda of Southern feminists:

What role can and should we play in bringing about internal peace?

How will trading blocs affect our employment and responsibilities for livelihoods?

How can we improve consciousness about development in cooperation with Northern groups?

Women's nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and feminist researchers and activists in the North are synthesizing their research concerns with those of feminists in the South. Alternative Women in Development (AltWID), a network of Northern feminists, based in Washington, DC, published a study of the impacts of Reaganomics on women in the United States, *Reagonomics and Women: Structural Adjustment U.S. Style — 1980–1992* (AltWID 1992). The study showed that Reaganomics had the same impacts on women in the United States as structural-adjustment policies have in the South. Establishing this link was an important analytical contribution. Both the structural-adjustment policies and Reaganomics are nurtured by, and have the same ideological roots in, neoclassical economics.

In another publication, *Breaking Boundaries: Women, Free Trade and Economic Integration* (AltWID n.d.), AltWID explained why free trade is a women's issue. It noted that market policies are not gender blind and pointed out that "the impact of supply side policies has altered family life; relations between women, men and children; women's and men's roles; and women's relative economic status." AltWID has also collaborated with feminist networks in the North and South on projects, conferences, and political strategies.

Other feminist researchers in the North recognized the need to contextualize the discourse on development to show its effect on women and development. This is an application of the analytical strategies

they used in critiquing the metanarratives of social theory to show its gendered and exclusionary nature. This work complements the research and activism of indigenous feminisms. Current feminist research on development issues is now more engaged and covers all development issues. It also incorporates insights gained from gender analysis to investigate the environmental debate and sustainable-development issues.

The women's movement and women's activism have exploded with vibrant programs and scholarship in both the North and the South. In the last two decades, women's NGOs have grown and diversified, and the nature of their activism has changed in many cases. Many NGOs that were set up in the 19th century or early 20th century often attempted to supplement the welfare activities of the state, or they experimented with reformist policies. More recently, women-centred NGOs in the South have frequently been at the frontiers of the movement to promote alternative development practices. An example of this is a coalition of women's NGOs in the Philippines, which in 1986 formulated the National Women's Development Plan. This became a crucial part of the country's national lobby on the debt crisis in the same year (women's organizations and networks are discussed in more detail in Chapter 5).

Several countries have introduced new women-related research institutes and institutionalized women's-studies programs. China, India, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe have all started women-centred research institutions. At the University of the West Indies, the Women and Development Studies Program was institutionalized as the Centre for Gender and Development Studies. What distinguishes these networks, institutes, and centres from earlier women-related organizations is that they seek to give women, children, and men priority in discussions of development. They actively pursue alternative approaches to WAD, and their very existence serves as a reminder of the failures of earlier, modernization-oriented development policy for women.

Exercise 1

Exploring feminist research

Identify and discuss the kinds of feminist research on WAD undertaken in your country or region.

Who is doing this research? Women's bureaus, universities, women-centred NGOs?

Is this research helping to change the information on WAD? How will it influence development policy and

planning?

The shift in the discourse on development

Feminist development critiques and feminist activism have radically altered the discourse on development. It is no longer possible to deal with development issues by focusing simply on ways to improve savings and investment functions or on the most efficient industrialization strategies to increase exports. Feminists have exposed the fallacy of using sterile measures of economic growth to assess the attainment of goals.

The initial WID policy statement (Percy Amendment to the US *Foreign Assistance Act* of 1973 [GOUS 1978]) assumed a consensus on the relationship between states (represented by national governments) and market economies. This consensus is ideological in origin. Its roots lie in neoclassical economics and liberal political ideology. Combined as the doctrine of liberalism or neoliberalism, they pose particular problems for women.

The main problem is the public–private dichotomy, which devalues women’s reproductive work while maintaining that women can gain equality by participating more in the public sphere of the state and formal economic production (see “Framework C: liberal feminism” in Chapter 3). WID maintained a consensus on accepting the rationale of markets as expounded in the modernization paradigm. You will recall that this centres on the efficiency of resource allocation, the restructuring of production and distribution, and the liberalization of trade and investment but remains oblivious to the concerns of gender relations. WID’s main thrust was to make the ideology of market economics more humane, that is, inclusive of the needs of women as defined by WID.

Several changes and crises in the political economy and culture of North–South relations contributed to reshaping development discourse. Most of the South experienced severe economic crises in the 1970s and 1980s, although a small group (notably the Asian newly industrialized countries) forged ahead. In the 1990s, Eastern Europe, Russia, and Southeast Asia experienced economic crises as the effects of globalization began to be felt around the world. Women, children, and men lived (and still live) the contradictions of development policies promoting mass consumption even as it leads to increased poverty and marginalization. In their daily lives, people in the South experience development policies as modernization,

which can produce the following effects:

Increases in economic growth but weak employment generation (India);

Increases in economic growth but environmental and human degradation (Brazil); and

No increase or, in some cases, declines in economic growth, accompanied by declines in human and physical infrastructure (the Caribbean).

Gita Sen of DAWN observed that for the first time in two decades feminist development critiques brought together people and their needs in the dialogue on development. In the 1970s, the dialogue was dominated by the dependency critique. The debate was about the creation of dependency and the requirements of basic-needs programs. It involved neither gender analysis nor the WID framework (Sen and Grown 1987).

The 1980s introduced a reversal of trends in the South. As in other periods of crisis, it became an excellent time to consider previously ignored issues and put them on the agenda. The 1980s also marked the beginning of the GAD critique, which solidified in the 1990s. The activism and research of the international women's movement revealed the potential for "engendering" the concept of human development. It made unequal gender relations a central concern of development. Southern, and some Northern, feminists insist that development policies cannot succeed if they are not "engendered." In 1986, DAWN defined *development* as "socially responsible management and use of resources, the elimination of gender subordination and social inequality and the organizational restructuring that can bring these about" (Sen and Grown 1987, p. 2). The indigenous-feminist theorizing informing this definition stresses the need for economic and social change, empowerment of women, and progressive changes in public-private relations to benefit women.

This is conceptually quite opposite to the definition of *development* held by other development theorists: "Economic development consists of the introduction of new combinations of production factors which increase labour productivity" (Hunt 1989, p. 49). This definition locates development in the sphere of production and focuses only on changes in economic relations. To such theorists, economic development consists in introducing new combinations of factors of production to increase labour productivity. It is easy to recognize the bias against women in this definition. By emphasizing production factors, it focuses on formal economic activities, such as waged labour and large-scale production. In all these areas, women are underrepresented and their contributions are devalued. More significantly, this definition ignores the critical connection between the reproductive work women do and how this underpins the formal, productive economy. It is a good example of how women are marginalized at the core of development

theory.

Whereas political economists and structuralists stress the impact of the international economic system as a constraint to economic growth in the South, the neoclassical school identifies the dominant constraint as internal, rather than external, factors. Walter Rostow and Arthur Lewis captured the range of arguments of neoclassical development theory (see “Framework A: modernization theory,” in Chapter 3). They argued that constraints on development lie partly in indigenous institutions and attitudes and partly in the low rate of savings characteristic of poor countries. Built into the basic assumptions of this theorizing is the rejection of indigenous attitudes and institutions. Women in the South are largely responsible for maintaining cultural traditions. As theorizing by black, postmodernist, and indigenous, or Third World, feminists shows, women in the South also use indigenous institutions and practices as part of their survival strategies. By assuming that these indigenous attitudes and institutions represent barriers to development, neoclassical theorists place women’s ways of knowing outside their concept of development.

Socialist-feminist theories have contributed to the extensive examination of the ways women’s labour is exploited in factories and export-processing zones. They have also documented how women receive lower wages for comparable work. They revealed the feminization of certain occupations that occurred as women entered the labour force in increasing numbers. As the men moved out of certain occupations, these became “ghettoized” as women’s work, with an accompanying decrease in status and wages. In the South, the occupation of teaching at primary or secondary schools is a good example.

Liberal-feminist analysis makes distinct the public-private dichotomy at the heart of modernization theorizing and policy development. It is easy to ignore women’s contribution in the public domain because it is assumed that women work, and should work, within households.

Feminist development critiques insist that a gender perspective be built into all development issues. It is another way of posing the question raised by Gita Sen. Using a gender perspective we ask, What kinds of development policies can best promote the interests of women in the South? Implicit in that reframing of the question is the recognition that women straddle the crossroads of reproduction and production. They are the link between human and economic development, the primary workers in both the private and the public spheres.

Gender analysis must reorganize the private sphere if women are to be freed from having to carry all the responsibilities of sustaining households and family structures. Although many women and men still see these as women’s responsibilities, this perspective is increasingly challenged. This continues to be an era of the most difficult and intractable aspects of gender relationships and change. Gender ideologies that sustain the exploitation of women in the private sphere of the household contribute

to producing development policies that integrate women into economic production in specific, exploitative, or marginal ways. Women suffer most when policymakers fail to comprehend this pattern of exploitation. But children, men, households, and families also suffer because women in the South have to carry such multiple burdens and responsibilities.

Feminist theories and critiques of development are instrumental in revealing that the countries of the South are not culturally, politically, or economically homogeneous. Nor are gender relations experienced in the same manner by all Third World women. Black feminist Audre Lorde has warned of the danger of implying that all women suffer the same oppression because they are women. As explained in Chapter 3, black feminists have argued that this ignores the varieties and degrees of women's subordination. It also ignores how these experiences change with a woman's race, class, and cultural setting. There is more variation among countries in the South than among industrialized societies of the North.

The tendency to homogenize the concept of the Third World woman and assume the universal applicability of these approaches to development creates specific problems for women in the South. Programs and policies that are designed to integrate women into development and those that are critical of the relations between women and development are a reaction to the modernization paradigm. Theorizing by black, socialist, postmodernist, and indigenous, or Third World, feminists isolates and exposes the intellectual and ideological climate that prevailed when the modernization paradigm emerged. The dominance of the United States in the postwar era included intellectual hegemony, which was played out in scholarship, research, and policy-making related to the South. Just as the United States devised the Marshall Plan and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization for the economic and military support and security of Western Europe, it began to devote attention to producing similar plans and institutions for the South. As mentioned in Chapter 2, this set of assumptions about the world became core elements of the modernization paradigm.

It is not accidental that the United States was the first industrialized country to establish a policy initiative to reorganize women's roles in the development process. The Percy Amendment to the *Foreign Assistance Act* of 1973 required that US foreign assistance focus on programs, projects, and activities that tended to integrate women into the national economies of foreign countries. This helped integrate the WID policy approach into policy-making. It also meant that early WID policy implicitly inherited the problems of giving priority to capitalist production and Western values and institutions.

Feminists analyzing the WID approach showed that WID specialists relied on neoclassical economic-growth models to achieve the goals of development. They assumed that development planning ignored women and argued that the allocation of financial and natural resources should be extended to benefit women. However, they failed to investigate whether the concept of economic efficiency may be premised on excluding

the specific gendered constraints women face as producers. Nor did they consider how responsibilities that are generally regarded as being women's are viewed as creating conditions of economic inefficiency.

The WID policies of international development institutions

The World Bank

The WID approach has heavily influenced the policies of the World Bank, one of the major Bretton Woods financial institutions discussed in Chapter 2. In a 1990 publication, *Women in Development: A Progress Report on the World Bank Initiative*, the institution set out its policy for women:

In general, the Bank is focusing on increasing women's economic productivity, investing in human capital and improving women's access to productive resources and the labor market. ... Because social and cultural forces influence women's economic productivity, deliberate and thoughtful effort is required to involve women more effectively in the development process.
— World Bank (1990)

The World Bank then called for government policy that realized women's economic potential while being sensitive to the role of culture. It recommended that governments consult with women's groups and NGOs in setting priorities and designing programs. It identified four priority areas for helping women to realize their economic potential: education, health and family planning, agricultural extension, and credit. The publication noted that women in the South spend several hours each day in reproductive work. It therefore recommended measures to free more of women's time for other activities.

These recommendations called for alternative fuels and local woodlots, more efficient stoves, and child care. This policy did not include changing gender ideologies that construct all reproductive work as women's work. These measures were merely intended to help women complete reproductive work more efficiently so that they could increase their participation in labour-force activities. The World Bank concluded its policy review with a list of six areas of emphasis, under the heading "Future directions":

Expansion of policy work and research, with priority on developing guidelines for cost-effective interventions in specific fields, reflective of the best available operational experience;

An agenda for research to support policy formulation, including efforts to collect data disaggregated by gender and to strengthen the analytical foundation for efforts to improve women's opportunities;

More explicit attention to women's issues in the policy dialogue with governments;

Implementation of the WID assessments and action plans, with more attention to assessing government actions to address women's issues and actual results;

Inclusion of specific efforts in the World Bank's operations to test, monitor, and evaluate promising programs for women, especially in high-priority areas; and

Increased training of staff on the role of women in development.

Exercise 2

Theory and policy

Look back at Chapter 3. Applying WID and GAD analysis, especially the eight tools of GAD analysis, discuss the policy and future directions of the World Bank.

1. Is there an overlap? Are the World Bank's policies strictly WID, strictly GAD?

Select a policy statement on women and development from your country (see, for example, those released by women's bureaus or the National Platform Country Statements prepared for the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, 1995). Again, apply the WID or GAD framework.

(a) Which framework does this policy statement satisfy?

(b) What is the role for men assumed

in this policy?

(c) What would you add to this policy to satisfy the needs of women in your country?

(d) What are the core assumptions of World Bank policy? Refer to Chapters 2 and 3.

International Labour Office

The International Labour Office (ILO) has stated its commitment to equal opportunity and treatment of women and men in all its activities, as part of its mandate. It translated this commitment into policy in its *ILO Plan of Action on Equality of Opportunity and Treatment of Men and Women in Employment*.

In order to contribute to the improvement of the status of women and the achievement of overall development goals, the ILO technical co-operation programme will continue to be an important practical means of promoting equality of opportunity and treatment for men and women in employment. Particular attention will be paid not only to strengthening and further developing specific projects for women, but also to promoting the full integration of women in projects of a general nature, in accordance with recent recommendations made in the Governing Body when it discussed ILO operational activities concerning women. Consideration would be given to such requirements as guidelines on identification, design, planning and implementation of projects for use by ILO staff, governments and employers' and workers' organizations; staff training programmes; and expansion of the network of officials dealing with technical cooperation at headquarters and in the field.
ILO (1994, p. 147)

In *The Window of Opportunity: Strategies for Enhancing Women's Participation in Technical Cooperation Projects*, the ILO (1991) provided ideas and guidelines for enhancing women's visibility and active role in planning and monitoring development projects and programs. This publication examined some of the factors to consider when planning, monitoring, and evaluating various types of projects. It presented advantages and possible disadvantages of launching so-called women-specific projects, as opposed to general projects that, in principle, are open to women and men on an equal basis. Finally, it recommended a change of attitudes and assumptions

about women's participation in the labour force. Like the World Bank, the ILO has emphasized the concern for equality and full integration of women into development. There is no suggestion, however, that women are already too fully integrated into development in policies and experiences gendered or premised on their subordination and exploitation.

United Nations Development Fund for Women

UNIFEM has been a major advocate for women within the United Nations system and throughout the South. UNIFEM provides direct support for women's projects and promotes women in the decision-making processes of mainstream development programs. UNIFEM's mission is to support Southern women's efforts to achieve equality and their own economic- and social-development objectives, and it believes that by doing so, it improves the quality of life for all.

The activities UNIFEM supports fall into four key areas: agriculture and food security, trade and industry, human resource development, and emerging issues. In all aspects of its programming, UNIFEM's intention is to link grass-roots activities to national planning and policy decision-making.

"Women, environment, and development," the new addition to WAD discourse, hints at the kinds of development policy on women UNIFEM endorses. In

Agenda 21: An Easy Reference to the Specific Recommendations of Women, UNIFEM (1993) stated that when interpreting the recommendations in the text of Agenda 21, the reader should note that all collective terminology was intended to apply equally to women and men, including references to communities, urban and rural dwellers, indigenous people, trade unions, professionals in business and industry, and NGOs. Indeed, in both rural and urban settings, women as heads of households, government officers, farmers, entrepreneurs, and professionals (including scientists and technicians) were thought to form a critical and substantial part of all major groups.

Like the ILO and the World Bank, UNIFEM has been firmly committed to the liberal-feminist WID approach, emphasizing the integration of women into development. UNIFEM has, however, some unique characteristics. It was set up specifically to fund innovative and catalytic projects, and from its beginnings it has had a mandate to support the work of women's nongovernmental activities, in addition to the activities of government institutions and departments.

Summary

These international institutions and agencies are committed to assisting women in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Pacific, and their programs and funding have helped women. However, they have operated squarely within the development-as-modernization paradigm

and have been unwilling to pursue a critique of the contradictions in this model and their implications for women. Women-centred NGOs and other development organizations, in contrast, have operated on the fundamental principle that existing models of development are detrimental to women, and they have therefore explored and implemented alternative development strategies.

Exercise 3

Case studies

National development policies and international development institutions share the same approaches to women in development. They also use liberal-feminist assumptions as the basis for their attempts to “integrate” women into development. National policies frequently reproduce gender ideologies. The following quotes are taken from two five-year development plans for the Barbados (1973–77 and 1979–83):

Quotation 1 — One

other supply factor worthy of mention is that unemployment is highest among young females. Indeed many of those persons who would have been content to remain unpaid household workers until marriage are now active job seekers. Thus rising participation among females in the younger age groups is a major contributor to the continued unemployment of human resources in the economy.

— GOB (1983a, p. 388)

Quotation 2 — Development

planning is a tool for ensuring maximum efficiency in the implementation of a development strategy or policy. It is an organized, conscious and continual attempt to select the best available alternatives to achieve specific goals. It involves an attempt to allocate scarce human, financial and natural resources in a rational manner and with optimum production results.

— GOB (1983b, p. ix)

These quotations expose several issues in development policy and its implications for women in the South. They introduce key features for delineating the interconnections between feminist and development theories and between development policies and their outcomes.

In quotation 1, the government of a developing Caribbean country presents some of its views on women’s

desire to work. This policy statement considers women's search for employment as problematic because it is seen as placing constraints on the state's resources. Women as active job seekers are discussed here as contributing to the country's unemployment problem. The statements disclose various assumptions about women's labour-force participation in the South. They also indicate how female labour-force participation may be incorporated into development policy. The plan suggests that

- Barbadian women do not seek work before marriage;
- Marriages occur in large enough percentages to make a difference to women's employment or economic well-being; and
- Married women do not work.

The statistics do not support any of these gendered, ideological positions on the influence of marriage on women's desire to work. In 1970, 54% of the women who headed households in Barbados had never been married, 2% were divorced or separated, 19% had been widowed, and 19% were married (Massiah 1982). The illegitimacy ratio — calculated as total illegitimate births as a percentage of total live births — climbed steadily from 62% in 1961 to 74% in 1974. The percentage increase appears marginal, but of primary importance is the fact that nearly 75% of all children born in 1974 were born out of wedlock. The marriage ratio — calculated as total marriages per 1 000 population as a percentage of total population — declined from 4.2% to 3.8% for the same period (GOB n.d.). Between 1945 and 1974, the marriage ratio never exceeded 8% (GOB n.d.). There is hardly any statistical or historical evidence to suggest that marriage has ever represented a feasible option allowing the majority of women to postpone employment.

Why have development planners depicted women's desire for paid productive work as problematic?

How is that view likely to influence employment policies?

What is the particular development paradigm informing the planners' view of women's work?

What are its underlying assumptions?

How is a development process perceived

if it considers women's desire for work burdensome to development planning?

Quotation 2 underscores the significance most governments in the South attach to rationality and optimum production results: if they plan rationally, then goals are achieved and development is attained. What is rational planning? What do governments exclude so that rational planning is achieved? *Optimum production results* are code words for efficiency. Together, rationality and efficiency are cardinal elements of a particular paradigm of development. These concepts are associated with the neoclassical- modernization paradigm.

What is development (review previous chapters)?

How does the definition change according to the major paradigm used?

Write your own definition of development, informed by any of the feminist theories introduced in Chapter 3.

What assumptions have you given priority to?

Given your definition, how would policymakers have to change their development approach to health in your country?

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Chapter 5. Alternative Approaches to Women and Development

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Maxine McClean

Women's NGOs

Internationally, the women's movement has given birth to a number of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and groups that continue to challenge many of the implied and stated assumptions of the traditional feminist movement. These NGOs and groups offer indigenous approaches to solving women's problems in their particular environments. The focus of many NGOs is action, developing programs and institutions to improve the daily lives of women in their communities.

As we have seen, the general belief among women's NGOs and other development institutions is that the concepts of modernization and development have often led the primary international agencies to effectively ignore the plight of women in the societies they target and, in many instances, make the women worse off. The failure of their programs has forced indigenous NGOs and other entities to develop their own solutions.

Initiatives to improve women's economic situations demonstrate the need for indigenous solutions to women's problems. Nancy Barry, President of Women's World Banking, remarked, "What has become very clear is that what women need is access, not subsidies.

They need opportunities, not paternalism” (Howells 1993, p. 22).

Research and action

Research should inform both theorizing and policy-making, to make these credible. The women’s movement and the various national and international institutions involved in development have recognized the importance of research and data, as illustrated in the foreword to the United Nations document *The World’s Women 1970–1990*:

For many years, women’s advocates have challenged stereotypes depicting women as passive, dependent and inferior to men. But efforts to reinforce their challenges with hard evidence have been undercut by serious limitations in available statistics and analysis, including a male bias in the definition and collection of many statistics and indicators. ... Putting this kind of numerical and analytical spotlight on the needs, the efforts and the contributions of women is one of the best ways to speed the process of moving from agenda to policy to practice to a world of peace, equality and sustained development.

— United Nations (1991)

The creation of Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) and DAWN’s stated objectives are evidence that NGOs emphasize research. Discussed below are some currently active women’s NGOs. Research is a critical activity of each of them. The exercises in each section use the following abbreviations for development approaches: WID, women in development; WAD, women and development; and GAD, gender and development (see Chapter 3).

Women’s World Banking

Women’s World Banking (WWB) is a nonprofit financial institution created in 1979 to give poor female entrepreneurs access to financing, market information, and training. It grew out of the 1975 United Nations World Conference on Women, held in Mexico City, to address the need for global structures to fund women in microenterprises. WWB currently operates in more than 50 countries and has provided assistance to more than 1 million clients internationally. WWB’s goal is to help poor women create wealth.

Four basic principles inform WWB’s policy formulation and operations:

“Local–global” should replace “North–South” as the prevailing paradigm, to reflect the belief in local initiative and local institutions;

Women have the power to transform the Earth through their local institutions (Nancy Barry, cited in Howells 1993);

Women are dynamic economic agents, not passive beneficiaries of social services; and

“Lateral learning,” a training methodology through which women share their business knowledge with each other and thus learn from their peers, is important.

Exercise 1

Women's World Banking program

Identify the extent to which WWB's program can be categorized as falling under the WID, WAD, or GAD framework.

Self-employed Women's Association

The Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) is a union of 40 000 of India's poorest women. It is an example of a new development model relevant to low-income earners. The membership covers the range of self-employed women typically working in the informal sector and effectively marginalized by mainstream development strategies:

SEWA successfully integrates a complex myriad of lives, occupations and issues into one union. Under SEWA, women have forged a new model of what a trade union can be — a Third world model, which defies conventional conceptions about who unions organize and what they do for their members. Most unions in the world organize workers in one kind of industry, who share one fixed workplace, and concern themselves with problems which revolve only around the work issues of their members. Some unions do take up issues related to women workers, or include a women's wing in the larger body of the union, but there are very few unions in the world which are devoted entirely to a female membership, as SEWA is. SEWA organizes women who work in their homes, in the streets of cities, in the fields and villages of rural India, with no fixed employer, carving their small niches in the economy, day by day, with only their wits to guide them against incredible odds of vulnerability, invisibility, and poverty. These then are the common denominators around which SEWA has gathered 30,000 members into its fold since its inception in 1972: they are women, they are "self-employed," and they are poor. From these common bases, diverse individuality in trades, religious and ethnic backgrounds, and living environments are brought together. Where these women are individually extremely vulnerable to the forces of their day-to-day poverty which are compounded by financial exploitation, physical abuse, and general social harassment, they have found that collectively they are able to struggle against these forces and odds to effect change in their lives and work. SEWA's choice of the term "self-employed" to define this large sector of workers was consciously made to give positive status to people who are often described negatively as informal, unorganised, marginal, or peripheral.

— Rose (1992, pp. 16–17)

Exercise 2

Self-employed Women's Association

To what extent might the criticisms of the WAD perspective (discussed in Chapter 3) apply to SEWA?

The WAD approach has been criticized for failing to challenge male-dominated power structures and for failing, as a result, to transform existing social structures. SEWA appears to fall into this category. However, further examination of SEWA's approach to organizing women demonstrates that the institution recognizes the importance of confronting existing power structures:

There is not just one goal which is fought for. Women understand that change is a process of struggles. Their experience has equipped them for this — they have struggled all their lives. ...

Whether small or large in nature, the changes this convergence has generated continue to influence increasingly broader spheres. The day-to-day, grassroots changes centre around trying to improve women's working situations. The tactics vary with each individual trade, but usually begin with confronting the direct exploiter and presenting him with demands for change. For women engaged in piece-rate work, this means asking the contractor for higher wages. For vendors, it means confronting the police officers who beat the women and extract bribes from them on charges of "encroachment." For women providing services, it means ensuring fair wages and steady work.

From the beginning of SEWA's work, however, it has been apparent that this direct confrontation could never accomplish all the long-term, structural and social changes needed to seriously change women's lives. Women who earn just enough each day to keep their families going are vulnerable. Missing one day's work can mean a crisis in the family. ...

Yet SEWA has found that the only way to bring change is to "organise, organise, and organise some more." In numbers they have found voice and strength. When they stand in sufficient numbers, their voices do shake the balance and change things in their favour — from the tactics of their neighbourhood trader or local landowner, up to the national and international policies. Once they have policy backing, the ground is firmer from which to organise more women and push their demands into broader spheres.

— Rose (1992, pp. 22–23)

Exercise 3

Development organizations

Track the development of organizations in your country whose activities coincide with the WID, WAD, and GAD approaches.

Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action

The Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA) was launched in April 1985 as a vehicle to encourage a gender perspective in action research and establish a network of women's organizations in the Caribbean. Its primary objectives include developing the feminist movement in the Caribbean, developing an approach to analyzing

relations between men and women, and promoting the integration of research and action. In the words of the organization,

We are a network of individual researchers and activists and women's organisations who define feminist politics as a matter of both consciousness and action. We are committed to understanding the relationship between the oppression in the society, and are working actively for change.

— CAFRA (1993)

Membership spans the Dutch-, English-, French-, and Spanish-speaking countries of the Caribbean and includes Caribbean women living outside the region. Decision-making occurs at four levels:

The general meeting (association members);

Regional Committee (elected national representatives and members);

Continuation Committee (a subcommittee of the Regional Committee); and

The Secretariat (program and administrative staff headed by the Coordinator).

CAFRA has identified several priority research–action areas:

Population-control policies in the Caribbean;

History of women's labour and struggle in the region;

Women's culture and expression as an instrument for building power;

Sexual violence;

Women and trade;

Social and economic conditions of women; and

Caribbean family structures (history, present trends, and future directions).

Exercise 4

CAFRA and development theory

Examine CAFRA's mission and activities (above) and identify the theoretical framework(s), as discussed in Chapter 3, that inform these. In discussing this assignment, highlight the following:

The mission indicates a commitment to feminist politics.

The activities undertaken are not merely about “helping” women. This NGO's activities are grounded in a feminist consciousness.

The nature and focus of research

Implications for action

The types of research undertaken and the methodology used are functions of the context of research and the ideological orientation of the researcher. Two broad ideological perspectives can be used to illustrate this point: family- and woman-centred approaches. A family-centred approach, according to Buvinic (1984), sees motherhood as a woman's most important role in society and thus the most effective role for her in economic development. Women's reproductive and home production roles are, therefore, the focus of research and, consequently, the target of interventions to assist women. In any study, the unit analyzed is the family, rather than the woman.

In contrast, a woman-centred, or feminist, approach recognizes women's productive and reproductive roles:

Its unit analysis is the woman and, while she can be conceptualized in the context of the family, she is seen in her economic roles in the household and the marketplace. The main arguments of the woman-centred approach are that inequality between women and men has increased with economic development and that interventions that are designed to achieve equality will lead to economic efficiency and growth.

— Tinker and Bramsen (1976) (cited in Buvinic 1984, p. 7)

With this approach, two variants guide research and action:

The "equity" variant focuses on inequality between men and women in all spheres, public and private. Qualitative research techniques, including participatory methods, are typically used, along with more standard analytical tools. Sociological, anthropological, and economic theoretical frameworks are used.

The "poverty" variant focuses on women's roles as economic actors in low-income groups and links the issue of women's economic equality to poverty in the Third World. Research seeks to quantify the nature and extent of women's poverty. Action centres around eliminating this poverty through, for example, income-generating projects.

Institutional responses to the limitations of traditional approaches

Recognizing the limitations of the traditional approaches has sometimes also come, and should come, from the various development institutions and national agencies charged with developing programs to address the subordination, marginalization, and oppression of women. Lycklama à Nijeholt (1992) posited that there have been some shifts in development thinking, as illustrated by the following policy documents and other related publications:

The United Nations Development Programme's *Human Development Report, 1990* (UNDP 1990);

The World Bank's *World Development Report, 1990* (World Bank 1990);

The United Nations' *The World's Women 1970–1990: Trends and Statistics* (United

Nations 1991); and

The Netherlands Minister for Development Cooperation's *A World Difference: A New Framework For Development Cooperation in the 1990s* (NMDC n.d.).

Lycklama à Nijeholt (1992) analyzed these policy documents. Each presents views on development as it affects women; however, the perceptions of women differ.

Exercise 5

“Engendering” reports

Read the documents listed above (one per small group of students) and answer the following questions:

How does the report perceive women?

Is power within gender relations a problem?

Which development approach is best exemplified by this document (welfare approach, equity approach, antipoverty approach, efficiency approach)?

The United Nations, through its various agencies, has also exhibited obvious shifts in its focus and its development thinking as it continues to address women's issues. Pietilä and Vickers (1990) documented these shifts and contributing factors:

1950s to 1960s — Women's issues were seen mainly within the context of human rights.

1970s — The key role of women was better recognized, particularly in relation to efforts to relieve or solve problems in the fields of population and food. In the United Nations' earlier decades, women had been seen as objects: the organization made recommendations and enacted conventions for their protection and rights. In the 1970s, the formula was to “integrate women into development.” Women were characteristically seen as resources, and their contributions were sought to enhance the development process and make it more efficient. For this purpose, the United Nations sought to improve the status, nutrition, health, and education of women. It was often claimed that a failure to fully integrate women into development efforts would be a “waste of human resources.” Women's dignity and rights were not yet seen as a cause in themselves. The perennial nature of women's contribution to the well-being of their country's population was still unrecognized.

1980s — The United Nations' Third Development Decade gave rise to a “trend towards seeing women as equals, as agents and beneficiaries in all sectors and at all levels of the development process. ... and the year 1985 became a turning point in the history of women's issues in the UN system” (Pietila and Vickers 1990, p. viii).

These shifts in thinking within the United Nations system can perhaps be best illustrated by the creation of agencies within the system that formally address women's issues (Braidotti et al. 1994). Some organizations in the United Nations system have played a role in the

debate on sustainable development, as well as in bringing the perspective of women into the analysis of the crisis and making proposals for sustainable solutions. The International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women is one of these agencies. The Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations is also credited with long involvement in women's issues and, more recently, the issue of women and the environment.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), established in 1972 and with headquarters in Nairobi, has been instrumental in putting the issue of women and the environment on the international agenda. Braidotti et al. (1994) identified a number of activities undertaken by UNEP:

In 1984, UNEP undertook an extensive program for the enhancement of women's participation in environmental management;

UNEP established the Senior Women's Advisory Group on Sustainable Development; and

UNEP maintains a women's network, listing participants, location, and areas of special interest as they relate to conservation and management of the environment.

Exercise 6

Human settlements

Read Caroline Moser's article, "Women, Human Settlements, and Housing: A Conceptual Framework for Analysis and Policy-making" (Moser 1987) in the book *Women, Human Settlements, and Housing* (Moser and Peake 1987). Then critically assess Linda Peake's case study, "Government Housing Policy and Its Implications for Women in Guyana" (Peake 1987), in the same book.

Exercise 7

Women and work

In a group discussion session, focus on highlighting the pitfalls of projects based on the stereotypes about women's "proper" work, using Jasleen Dhamija's article, "Women and Handicrafts: Myth and Reality" as a base (Dhamija 1989).

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Chapter 6. The Women's Movement and Its Role in Development

◀Document(s) 6 of 11 ▶

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Introduction

This chapter focuses on the women's movement and its role in development. It describes the development activities of women at the international, regional, national, and local levels, outlining why the overall development scenario should include women's activism and organizing skills.

The women's movement

The global formation of the women's movement is unlike the human rights and ecological movements. There are not single large organizations with a global membership base clearly associated with the goals of the movement in the public arena. The women's movement resembles, much more, the constantly growing and shifting cobweb characteristics of new politics in the global age. In many ways, the amorphous character of the movement may reflect an earlier stage in organizing, a more effective utilization of the institutions of the United Nations, or a unique characteristic of the type of organizing that is unique to

women's issues. Whether more formal linkages would be useful is an open question.

— Dorsey (1994)

The women's movement does indeed resemble a constantly growing and shifting cobweb, one made up of thousands of large and small local, national, regional, and international women's groups and organizations, connected and unconnected to each other and involved in traditional and nontraditional activities. What all of these women's groups and organizations have in common is that for the most part they have been left out of the history of development as currently written.

The reasons for this are many. Perhaps the biggest one is that the women themselves, especially women's groups in the South, have recorded very little about their activism and their efforts to organize for their rights within their communities.

International women's organizations and networks

Women historians have made recent efforts to record the history of women's international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and much of these efforts have focused on the work of affiliated groups in the South.

As part of its centennial celebrations in 1994–95, the World Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) undertook to record the history of 100 years of women's organizing and activism on women's issues and concerns. I selected this organization as an example because it holds a unique position in the history of the women's movement. Very early in this organization's history, women set up autonomous national YWCA groups in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and later in the Pacific. Then, with assistance and support from a world office, these groups planned and built permanent headquarters for their programs. This has given women a kind of bastion or stronghold, which they themselves control, in more than 80 countries. Each national YWCA is engaged in activities — with, for, and by women — in training, health, nonformal education, human rights, public affairs, energy and the environment, and other community and social work.

The YWCA trains women for jobs in the community and positions of leadership in all facets of the organization. This creates a core of women leaders who often go on to become leaders in other parts of community life. Each national YWCA has complete control over management, programs, and future directions. The world office provides a set of guiding principles and, when requested, support for fund-raising and leadership-training opportunities.

Having a central building and a staff of trained leaders gives the YWCA a head start in influencing the development of a community and providing a place for other forms of activism and organizing. Women are given the opportunity to be managers, trainers, decision-makers, and planners in an atmosphere that is women centred, nonthreatening, and safe. And remarkable achievements have come out of this safe atmosphere:

The beginnings of political movements for more democratic societies;

The introduction of appropriate technologies for women in rural and semiurban areas;

New and innovative training methods for women with little or no educational

background;

Participatory forms of group organizing; and

A host of other activities that have moved women into the forefront of development, both within their countries and around the world.

For example, many women on national delegations to the United Nations gained their leadership training and experience as committee or board members of the YWCA in their respective countries.

Not much work has yet been done to record the history of international women's networks. Networks are a more recent phenomenon. More flexible than an organization and much more reliant on each individual or group to keep the web of contacts alive, a network arises to fill a need and then often disappears when the need is gone. A true network has no headquarters, main offices, or staff. However, variations on this theme are more common, usually with a group taking on the responsibility of keeping the contacts alive, using some full- or part-time staff.

During and since the United Nations International Women's Year (1975) and the subsequent Decade for Women (1976–85), international women's networks emerged to fill a need that women's groups had for better contact with others and for access to information and resources. Best known among these networks are Isis International (Manila and Santiago), Isis Women's International Cross Cultural Exchange, the Women's Features Service (India), and the International Women's Tribune Centre (IWTC). Neither the Isis groups nor IWTC have affiliated members such as belong to the World YWCA and other more established international NGOs (for example, the World Association of Girl Guides and Scouts, the International Federation of Business and Professional Women, and the Associated Country Women of the World [ACWW]). The Women's Features Service came out of the Inter Press Service and functions as a news wire service, providing news stories by and about women for the world's media.

The Isis groups and IWTC have "constituencies" of women's groups in every world region, most of which are not formally affiliated with any other group and have previously functioned in relative isolation. The main channel of communication is a journal or newsletter used to inform member groups of issues and available resources on women- or gender-and-development activities and plans and preparations for upcoming events and conferences, etc.

In the case of IWTC, the mailing list also includes government women's bureaus and ministries, United Nations departments and specialized agencies, donors, and other support groups for women- or gender-and-development activities worldwide. Both IWTC and the two Isis groups undertake training and technical-assistance activities on request, and both collaborate with national and regional groups to develop manuals, guidebooks, bibliographies, and other women- or gender-and-development resource materials. In recent years, their emphasis has been on training women to use computers for desktop publishing, for electronic networking, and for developing resource centres and databases for women involved in development activities.

Regional women's organizations and networks

As in the case of the international women's organizations and networks, very little has been written about the history of their regional counterparts. Perhaps an exception is the Women and Development Unit (WAND) of the University of the West Indies in Barbados. Several booklets and articles have been written about WAND's history, and newspaper features on various aspects of WAND's development and work are disseminated regularly.

WAND grew out of a regional conference held in Jamaica in 1977, where women's groups from across the English-speaking Caribbean gathered to draw up a plan of action for women in their region. One of the needs expressed at this conference was for a central agency to provide resources, technical assistance, and training for the women's groups and projects. This would keep isolated women's groups a little more in touch with the women's movement.

WAND has forged a path that intersects with the development of women's bureaus in the Caribbean, the regionalization of resources, and the burgeoning of women's human rights as a major focus among women activists and groups in the Caribbean. WAND epitomizes the work and dedication of regional women's organizations by providing women- or gender-and-development information from a central resource centre and database, helping to develop project proposals and search for funds for projects, and leading the way in lobbying regional governments for legislation that moves ahead on women's human-rights issues and concerns.

Regional women's networks, especially those concerned with the flow of information within regions, have grown in importance during and since the United Nations Decade for Women. Women's regional media networks can now be found in every world region (Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East, and North America). They usually operate within the framework of alternative media, sending their information directly to women's groups. But increasingly these networks are crossing over into the world of mass media and mainstream media channels.

Fempres (a women's alternative media network for Latin America) began in 1981 as a clipping service. Working out of offices at the Institute for Studies of Transnationals in Latin America, two women began collecting clippings about women's activities in Latin American countries and pasting them together in a magazine format for distribution to every country in the region. Having expanded into a regular monthly magazine of original articles and clippings, Fempres is now acknowledged as one of the leading networks, linking women activists across Latin America and putting forward the cause of women's human rights and women's equality of opportunity in every country in the region.

Fempres operates on a simple but extremely effective logic — it has a correspondent in each country, who notes what is happening in that country, clips relevant articles, and writes an article on a major issue concerning women each month. These are published at the Fempres headquarters in Santiago, Chile, in its monthly magazine. Fempres also prepares and distributes radio broadcasts of interviews and talks by various women in each country of the region. Fempres puts out a quarterly compilation of clippings and writings on specific subjects; this quarterly is known as *Mujer Especial* (Women's Space).

National women's organizations and networks

The National Councils of Women (NCWs) have been foremost among national women's organizations and networks. NCWs comprise national women's organizations (such as Maendeleo ya Wanawake of Kenya, a network of women's groups in Kenya that are affiliated with ACWW; national YWCAs, which are affiliated with the World YWCA; and national women's groups that have member groups within the country but are not affiliated with any international organization).

NCWs are usually set up to unite the efforts of national women's groups to lobby government or to improve facilities and programs for women in their country. Over the years, NCWs have had mixed reviews. Combining the efforts of national women's groups that have sometimes had long histories in a country before the inception of an NCW is not easy. But most of the member groups of an NCW come together when there is a common cause, such as the need to develop a national plan of action for women or to promote legislation on issues related to women's human rights.

Maendeleo ya Wanawake is the major national women's organization of Kenya. Maendeleo has member groups in every town and village, an impressive headquarters in Nairobi, and a full-time staff of administrators and trainers. It undertakes projects in a wide variety of areas and has been responsible for village water-pump projects, schemes for craft production and marketing, workshops for leadership training, and a multitude of other rural and urban development activities — with, for, and by the women of Kenya. Increasingly, Maendeleo ya Wanawake has become involved in political and government activities, in addition to its programs for training and project implementation, and this has provoked much discussion of the roles and responsibilities of women in Kenya. Maendeleo is a member group of the Kenyan NCW.

The Friends of Women (FOW) project was set up in Thailand by women concerned about the rising numbers of young girls and women lured from villages to work as prostitutes in Bangkok. The women of FOW set themselves up in a couple of rooms in the centre of Bangkok and began to make contacts with groups and individuals across the country and region and eventually with groups in other countries around the world. Their efforts and continuing concern for the welfare of young women in Bangkok have now become a national network of people fighting against violations of women's human rights and specifically against luring girls from poor families into a life of sexual slavery.

FOW is not just a lobbying group, however. It provides counseling to young girls and their families, both in the village and in town; workshops for young leaders and helpers; resource materials, including flash cards and posters for group sessions; and a newsletter, which is published in both Thai and English. It is a network, rather than an organization, because it does not require membership, and its activities focus on needs as they arise, rather than on any set program. Anyone interested can take part in FOW activities.

Local women's organizations and networks

Because women's groups function in so many different ways and the definitions of an organization and a network become blurred, it is better to discuss examples of women's local activities than to discuss specific women's groups.

In Santiago, Chile, during the long years of dictatorship (1972–89), women’s groups organized for the right to democratic elections and women’s equality in decision-making positions in government. Beginning with a few established women’s groups, protest marches were organized for each 8 March (International Women’s Day). Momentum grew each year, with many thousands of women from every walk of life marching through the streets of Santiago or gathering in the sports stadium, demanding democratic rule and equality of opportunity for women. Individual women courageously approached soldiers and police in the streets and shouted “Give us back our country!”

When democratic rule returned to Chile, credit was given in large part to the relentless activism of women’s groups, and the new government appointed women to positions of power and authority.

In Ahmedabad, India, women’s work in the informal sector received little recognition and, therefore, little was done to make these women’s livelihoods more economically sustainable. Within the trade-union movement, Ela Bhatt tried to push forward the cause of these women but had little success. She decided to form a breakaway union for self-employed women, those who work at home or within women’s groups — rather than in factories or other businesses — and have a hard time making ends meet. The Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) was the result. It now has many thousands of members and maintains a type of revolving bank: all the members donate a small amount each month, and money is available when they need it to purchase equipment or set up a small business. Women around the world often cite, and try to emulate, SEWA’s example.

From a small village at the foot of Mount Meru, Kenya, generations of women traveled each day down a large hill to collect water and carry it back up the hill for use in the village. Some days, a woman would make several trips to the river below, carrying heavy pots full of water on her head as she strained up the slippery path to the village. One day, at a meeting of the village women’s group, the women decided that enough was enough. They did not want their daughters to suffer as they were, with bent backs and endless pain in their old age. Offering their savings from work in nearby tea plantations, they asked the men to buy water pipes when they went to town — one at a time over a period of years.

An expert from the Food and Agriculture Organization was approached to assist in setting up a simple pump at the foot of a waterfall in the river. Slowly, the women laid the pipes. Up the hill the pipes went, branching off at each woman’s hut. Then large plugs were made of corklike materials and inserted into the pipes, and finally the pump was started. Now every woman in that village has her own water supply, which has not only improved the health and well-being of the village but also ensures that future generations of girls and women will not have to damage their backs and live in pain from carrying heavy pots on their heads up the mountain each day.

In Suva, Fiji, the newly established YWCA decided to open multiracial kindergartens. At that time, all education in the country was segregated by language, with Fijian children attending Fijian-language schools, Indian children attending Hindi-language schools, and children of expatriates (from Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom) attending English-language schools. The facilities and standard of education were vastly different in each type of school, with the English-language schools having the most advanced facilities and teaching. Although much could be said for maintaining the cultures and traditions of each linguistic group, in reality, children in the non-English schools were receiving a poorer

education, diminishing their future career prospects.

In keeping with its long-time principle of ensuring equal opportunity, the YWCA began multiracial kindergartens, open to everyone. The effect was dramatic. Educationalists came from all over the country to observe the experiment. There was considerable doubt about the wisdom and propriety of the project. The time came when several Fijian and Indian parents wanted their children to attend the better equipped and better staffed “European” primary school. The YWCA asked the Education Department whether this was possible. A top-level meeting was called. Clearly, this had been a racial and not a linguistic matter before, but now the authorities were faced with making a precedent-setting decision. Amid much consternation, the decision came down that any child could attend the European school if they passed an English-language test. All of the children passed and were accepted. All schools in Fiji are now multiracial. It is the official policy of the country. English, Fijian, and Hindi are Fiji’s official languages, and all official documents and materials are printed in each one of these languages.

Women’s activism and its role in development

As discussed earlier, anthropologists have often identified the stages of modernization and “progress” as hunter–gatherer or foraging, horticultural, agricultural or agrarian, and so on (see list on p. 41). Feminist anthropologists have argued for giving greater weight to the organization of social and production relations, patterns of social stratification, family structure (monogamous or other), patterns of property ownership, and forms of work and production. To this list should be added patterns of women’s organizing and activism.

Perhaps “organization of social and production relations,” as suggested by feminist anthropologists, would encompass some of the activities outlined here. But the activities and efforts of women worldwide are much more likely to be totally left out of the development matrix. By adding “patterns of women’s organizing and activism,” we could write a whole new chapter in development theory.

It should be obvious by now that the activism and continuing efforts of women’s groups have been responsible for a great deal of what has happened in the history of the world, and more specifically in the area of development and “modernization.” Each women’s organization and network discussed, whether international, regional, national, or local, illustrates the extent to which women have been actively involved in the major changes taking place in their country and in the world. And yet, it is impossible to conclude this chapter without giving the following examples of how the activism and organizing skills of women have changed the course of history.

Women activists at the international level — the early years

Seventeen women were among the delegates at the founding meetings of the United Nations in San Francisco in 1946. Initial discussions revolved around setting up a commission on human rights. The women met and decided that the rights of women were not being given the priority they deserved. So a Sub-commission on the Status of Women was agreed on. Still, the women were dissatisfied. At an introductory meeting of the

subcommission, they decided a full Commission on the Status of Women was required.

The United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) had its first meeting in January 1947. The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW) had its first meeting in February 1947. Insufficiently funded and having no secretariat or centre of its own, the UNCSW nevertheless placed women's rights firmly on the agenda of the United Nations.

Women activists at the international level: the 1990s

In the two years before the historic United Nations World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993, women held worldwide hearings on violations of women's human rights and collected more than 500 000 signatures on a petition demanding that women's human-rights issues (particularly violence against women) be placed on the conference agenda of the UNCHR and not merely discussed by a small group during sessions of the UNCSW. UNCSW was hampered by a lack of resources and the lack of an official protocol to deal with violations of women's human rights. In addition, women requested the appointment of a Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and asked for a tribunal on crimes against women.

The final documents to come out of the World Conference on Human Rights are a testament to the organizing and activism of women worldwide. The Vienna declaration put violations of women's human rights on the world's agenda, and the Plan of Action called for a Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women.

Women activists at the regional level

Deciding that progress on women's-rights issues was too slow in Latin America and the Caribbean and mindful of the fact that a large number of countries in the region were military dictatorships with little or no regard for the equal right of women to be decision-makers in their own countries, a small group of activists organized a feminist *Encuentro* (encounter) in Colombia in 1981. About 200 women participated over a 4-day period. Reveling in the freedom of the occasion, the women made plans of action for the region and decided to hold an *Encuentro* every two years in a different Latin American country.

By 1983, word had spread. Feminists from across the region made plans to travel to Lima, Peru. Seven thousand eventually turned up, to the consternation of organizers, who were unprepared to receive this many delegates. But creativity and goodwill prevailed, and the women crafted major plans and decisions to strengthen the feminist movement in the region. Two years later, emergency plans had to be made to cope with the crowds in São Paulo, Brazil. Almost 10 000 women participated, with more clamouring to get in from the *favelas* (urban slums) and urban areas of São Paulo.

And so the feminist movement in Latin America has continued to grow and develop from those small beginnings in Colombia. Feminist *Encuentros* in Taxco, Mexico (1987), Mar del Plata, Argentina (1990), and El Salvador (1993) consolidated the feminist cause, with more and more women taking part in the political campaigns, assuming positions of responsibility in local and national councils, and becoming informed about women's human rights and equality under the law. Perhaps it was no coincidence that in 1995 the region was

rid of military dictatorships.

Women activists at the national level

In Tanzania, as in most countries worldwide, the issue of violence against women was becoming a national disgrace in the 1980s. A group of women met to discuss and map out plans to face this growing problem.

They decided they needed a multifaceted plan of action. Information had to be placed in front of the country at large to give everyone a clearer picture of the situation and just how it was violating the rights of women and damaging the very fabric of the nation. Men as well as women needed to be educated about the rights of women and to see more clearly that violence was never an answer to a problem within the home, or anywhere else. At the same time, the government had to be lobbied to pass legislation that would give women some protection against the violence they were experiencing. Women also needed safe houses and refuges where they could go, with or without children, to escape beatings.

From this meeting of women in Tanzania, the Tanzania Media Women's Association (TAMWA) was formed, with a special mission to face head-on the question of violence against women. TAMWA now has a regular newsletter, a resource centre, a crisis centre, and a refuge for women. Laws have been passed strengthening the rights of women, and women lawyers have joined the effort to put an end to violence against women.

Women activists at the local level

Stories of women activists in their own small villages, towns, and settlements are numerous, and it seems almost impossible to choose one over another.

The Suva Crisis Centre in Fiji is the result of a group of local women activists who saw the need to set up a place for women to go when they have been violated in some way, whether by beating, rape, or any other form of violation.

Local women activists in Croatia, Bosnia–Herzegovina, and Serbia regularly held peace vigils and marched across front lines to face soldiers and take home sons and fathers involved in the battles. Women in Serbia ran rape-crisis centres for women of Bosnia–Herzegovina and organized protest marches against the leaders of their country who perpetuated war.

Local women activists protest against the custom of burning brides and widows in India and protect women who have been threatened or hurt by domestic violence.

Local women activists in refugee camps in Croatia, Guantanamo Bay, India, Liberia, Somalia, Thailand, and many more parts of the world are the ones who lobby for justice, run the soup kitchens, educate the children, and look after the health of the family.

Conclusion

Although most regions of the world have been influenced by the activism of women, almost

no mention is made of these efforts when history or progress in any area of development is recorded. But there can be no serious discussion of gender and development without the recognition of the vital part the women's movement has played.

Reference

Dorsey, E. 1994. The transnationalization of women's movements: towards a global culture of women's human rights. Paper presented at the American Political Science Association Conference, New York, NY, USA.

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Appendix 1. Key Concepts

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Agents

Ordinary people who create historical change through the activities and struggles of their everyday lives. Compare this with "change agent," an especially knowledgeable person or organization that brings change to others.

Androcentric

Male centred, a masculine point of view.

Androcentrism

A term developed by feminist theorists to describe the dominant worldview that, until recently, mostly excluded the experiences of women from its analyses. This term also refers to an approach taken to knowledge and the production of knowledge.

Assumption

A supposition that is taken to be true but might not be based on factual evidence.

Biological determinism

A view on which it is argued that human social behaviour is the result of factors inherent to the biological makeup of human beings. This is often contrasted with explanations of human behaviour based on social or sociopsychological factors.

Class

A social or economic division in society. Theorists sometimes differentiate between economic class (based on access to economic resources or material goods) and social class (based on status, prestige, family background, and other factors). One's class is defined largely by one's relationship to the means of production; the capitalist class owns the means of production.

Comprador class

Elites in the South who collaborate with the dominant capitalist class in the North and ensure the continued subordination of the South to the North.

Deconstruct

To examine the underlying assumptions attached to certain concepts.

Deconstruction

An analysis of the derivations, contexts, and uses of language or discourse, conducted to unpack their implicit power relations and hidden agendas.

Discourse

An historically, socially, and institutionally specific structure of statements, terms, categories, and beliefs.

Economic growth

The assumption that increased economic productivity and exchange constitute the basic requirement for development. It is measured by market output, GNP, per capita income, etc.

Efficiency

Usually focuses on technological and economic efficiency as measured by standard economic output–input (ignoring nonmarket inputs and outputs).

Egalitarianism

Relations based on the more or less equal participation of all adults in the production of basic necessities, as well as in their distribution or exchange and in their consumption.¹

Epistemology

A theory of knowledge, a strategy for justifying beliefs.

Equal opportunity

Conditions that must be created so that women have the same options as men and the same life chances.

Essentialism

Lumping a variety of categories into one, ignoring differences, and emphasizing similarities, despite little evidence for such a generalization.

Ethnicity

Group associations based on any combination of common characteristics, including culture, language, religion, phenotype, geographic region, and ancestry. It is recognized that historical and social factors shape the formation of ethnic groups and bestow on them a distinct identity.

Ethnocentric

Believing that one's own race, nation, or culture is superior to all others.

Export-processing zones

Areas set up by countries for TNCs to manufacture products for export, free of normal tariff and tax regulations and often also free of labour and environmental regulations.

Feminist

An individual who is aware of the oppression, exploitation, or subordination of women within society and who consciously acts to change and transform this situation.

Flexibility

The ability of companies to quickly adapt to changes in markets, technology, and competition. Flexibility strategies include tying wages to productivity or profits, eliminating long-term commitments to workers by subcontracting and or offering part-time work, and finding cheaper sources of labour.

Fordism–post-Fordism

“Fordism” describes the post-World War II regime of accumulation based on mass production of standardized products, coupled with growth of mass consumption. High aggregate demand was maintained by institutional arrangements promoting high wages and

a Keynesian state. “Post-Fordism” refers to the breakdown of these arrangements since the mid-1970s, as a result of changes in technology and international competition. In post-Fordism, production is more decentralized, specialized, and flexible and requires new institutional arrangements to respond to the pressures of globalization.

Gender barriers

Obstacles to equality that may exist in the laws, norms, and practices of a society and can be identified and removed.

Gender relations

A society’s socially constructed relations between women and men.

Global feminism

The celebration of different feminisms, grounded in the specificities of women’s multifarious experiences. This will not occur until women from all racial groups believe that feminism recognizes their lived realities and incorporates those realities into feminist theories.

Globalization

The idea that the world economy has reached a new level of integration. Heightened capital mobility with globalization means that companies operate worldwide, creating a “global assembly line”; goods, capital, and, to a lesser extent, people move around the globe.

Grand theories, or metanarratives

Grand theories, such as liberal and Marxist frameworks, claim universal validity and thus the capacity to explain global realities, particularly modernity.

Hypothesis

A supposition made as a starting point for further investigation.

Identity

A cluster of ideas and language or discourse that defines the way most people behave and think about a subject and that increasingly forms the bases of major cleavages among people.

Ideology

Any body of discourse that has the effect of masking and sustaining power relations and inequality.

Labeling

Reducing the complex experiences of an individual or group to one dimension, thereby

controlling them more effectively and making it more difficult for them to gain credibility for their own struggles.

Metatheories, or metanarratives

See grand theories, or metanarratives.

Metropole

The capitalist countries that dominate the world economy, mostly found in Europe and North America in the 1960s and 1970s. *See also* periphery.

Mode of production

The organization of wealth creation in a society, including the technical “means of production” and the “relations of production,” which determine who controls production and owns the wealth produced.

Model

A graphic representation of the links between various phenomena and concepts on which a theory is based.

Multiple jeopardies

Racism, sexism, and classism simultaneously experienced by women from marginalized groups, especially visible minorities. This simultaneous experience not only compounds these oppressions but reconstitutes them in specific ways.

Obstacles to growth

Barriers that distort the “natural” process of economic growth. If this growth does not occur, then the obstacles or barriers must be identified and removed.

Patriarchal ideology

A set of ideas defining women’s roles as different from, and subordinate to, those of men.

Patriarchy

A system of male domination that is widespread but historically specific and can vary over time and context. Originally, this term was used to describe societies characterized by “the rule of the father,” that is, the power of the husband or father over his wives, children, and property. The term has now come to refer to the overall systemic character of oppressive and exploitative relations affecting women.

Periphery

The Third World countries, characterized by underdeveloped economies and dependent

relations with the metropole. *See also* metropole.

Personal is political, the

The view that male domination and women's resistance to male domination occur in both of the so-called public and private spheres. The concept is often associated with radical feminism.

Positivism

A philosophical doctrine contending that sense perception is the only admissible basis of human knowledge and precise thought. This doctrine became the basis of a hierarchy of knowledge emphasizing the sciences over theological or metaphysical inquiry.

Power

Personal, economical, political, or social ascendancy and control exercised by one individual or group over another. Often this is most clearly seen in relationships between people. Liberal and Marxist thinkers associate power with control over resources and institutions. Postmodernists see power not as something held only by the ruling class but as something diffused throughout society, exercised in many diverse ways by many diverse people, and closely tied to control over knowledge and discourse through attitudes, perceptions, and behaviour.

Production

Producing commodities for the capitalist system and producing the commodity "labour power" on a generational basis.

Production relations

A Marxist-derived concept that refers to the organization of work and production among genders, classes, or other social groupings in a specific social and physical environment.

Public and private spheres

A distinction defining the limits of governmental authority with a view to preserving individual liberty. Women have often been associated with the private sphere; men, with the public one.

Race

Differentiation of human beings into various subspecies. This is usually based on outward physical (or phenotypical) features, such as skin colour, facial features, and hair type. Many social scientists today recognize that *race* is defined differently in different societies and at different times and so is largely socially determined. They prefer, therefore, to use the term *ethnicity*. Race is socially constructed and plays a crucial role in women's experiences and opportunities.

Representation

A term commonly used to refer to an aspect of democratic processes that permits individuals or groups to select those who will carry forward their ideas and agendas to higher authorities. The term is used in a different sense in current theoretical writings to question the power relations implied by having one group convey information about another group in authoritative ways that may deny the people being “represented” the opportunity to present their identity on their own terms.

Reproduction

The biological reproduction of children, that is, childbirth and lactation; the physical reproduction of the wage labour force on a daily basis through domestic work; and the social reproduction of the patriarchal capitalist system through maintaining the ideological conditions that reproduce class and gender relations and the political and economic status quo.

Reserve army of labour

Labour that is cheap and available for capitalist expansion; acts to keep downward pressure on wages; and includes unemployed workers and potential wage workers now doing domestic and agricultural work.

Resistance

Action or inaction, talk or silence, often hidden or covert, through which members of oppressed groups indicate to themselves, each other, and, more rarely, outsiders that they reject the conditions of their oppression and the legitimations proffered by dominant groups.

Restructuring

The changes occurring in companies and economies as a result of the rapidly changing world economy and heightened global competition. Both economic forces and policy choices shape restructuring.

Sexual division of labour

The allocation of tasks and responsibilities in society to women and men. In most inegalitarian societies, the tasks allocated to women have a consistently lower value than those assigned to men.

Social capital

Anything, other than capital, that enhances economic performance.

Social construction of gender

The social definition and determination of ideas and practices. People socially define and determine and can therefore change the ideas and practices related to feminine and

masculine characteristics, activities, and ways of relating to one another.

Stratification

Structured inequalities between groups in society, based on gender, class, ethnicity, or other distinguishing characteristics. Although systems of stratification have existed in virtually all societies, significant differences in wealth and power emerge within state-based systems.

Take-off

Period when the barriers to development are finally overcome and self-sustaining economic growth can be achieved.

Theory

A system of ideas and principles for explaining a particular phenomenon.

Transnational corporations

Corporations that operate in many countries and plan production, investment, and distribution strategies across the borders of nation-states.

¹ Etienne, M.; Leacock, E., ed. 1980. Women and colonization. Praeger Publishers, New York, NY, USA. Return

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