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**Centre for Gender and Development Studies,
St. Augustine Campus,
The University of the West Indies,
St. Augustine**

In collaboration with

**The United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America
and the Caribbean**

Report

One-Day

Workshop on

Rethinking Economics: Does Gender Matter?

On December 5th, 2001

**Conference Room, Administration Building, U.W.I,
St. Augustine**

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Re-thinking Economics: Does Gender Matter?
Workshop on Gender and Economics
December 5th, 2001

Introduction and Background to the Workshop

Until recently, the view that economics as a discipline is value free and gender neutral has gone unchallenged. However, concern that decades of growth oriented development policies have failed to achieve the goals of poverty alleviation and a higher standard of living for all, has led to a re-examination of those premises. Research over the last two decades has revealed that development policies have differing impacts on women and men, in part due to gendered differences in resource allocation and work responsibilities. An understanding and integration of the role of gender in economic theory and analysis is likely to improve our ability to achieve the goals of development.

This theme of integrating a gender analysis into macroeconomic policies has also been an area of research and debate for the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), evidenced by its 'Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting on Gender and Macroeconomic Policies in the Caribbean' held in 2000, and by the commissioning of the report "Bringing Gender Equality out of the Annex and into the Main Building: Project Proposal for Mainstreaming Gender Analysis in Macroeconomic Policy in the Caribbean" prepared by consultant, Donna St. Hill. Arising out of this, ECLAC was interested in consulting with the wider community in developing Terms of Reference towards a research agenda.

Dr. Stephanie Seguino, Associate Professor of Economics, attached to the Centre for Gender and Development Studies as a visiting Fulbright scholar for Semester I (2001-2002) was the lead resource person for the workshop. Dr. Seguino, of the University of Vermont, has had many years experience teaching economics and has a specific interest in International Economics and Gender. Her research focuses on the relationship between income distribution and economic growth. In recent years, that interest has been pursued in the context of exploring how gender inequality has influenced Asian economic growth.

She has also done work with a number of grass roots and advocacy groups in the United States on living wages, single parent households and welfare reform. Prior to teaching at the University of Vermont,

Professor Seguino spent four years working as an economist in Haiti, and has consulted with a variety of organizations, including the World Bank, UNDP, and USAID.

One of the aims of Dr. Seguino's visit was to generate interest in issues of gender and economics and she was extremely willing to share her expertise, experience and to learn from the knowledge and experiences of her counterparts in the field of economics.

Therefore, it was within this context and that of ECLAC's agenda, that the Centre for Gender and Development Studies, St. Augustine Campus, the Faculty of Social Sciences, Economics Department, and the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) collaborated to organize this workshop on Gender and Economics.

Purpose of the Workshop

The purpose of the workshop was to provide a forum for economists, both within the University community and the wider population to discuss the ways in which gender analysis can influence the teaching and practice of economics.

The main objectives of the workshop were:

- To engender lively debate on the role and relevance of integrating gender into Economics
- To provide a platform for discussing the ECLAC paper on mainstreaming gender in Macro Economic Policy and
- To arrive at recommendations for a Research Agenda on Mainstreaming Gender into Economics
- To create an awareness of the importance of a gender perspective in the teaching and practice of Economics

Expected Outcomes:

- A greater awareness among practicing economists of the significance of gender to economic analysis
- Recommendations for a draft Research Agenda on Gender and Economics based upon the ECLAC document
- To stimulate the development of a network among Economists
- To provide resources for those interested in integrating gender in teaching Economics

Topics included

- the Role of Gender Analysis in Economics
- Gender and Health Economics
- The Relevance of Gender to International Economics

UWI Staff in Economics, Practicing Economists in the Public and Private sectors, Non-governmental organizations, students, teachers and researchers in economics were all invited to participate.

Opening Ceremony

In a short opening ceremony and welcome Professor Rhoda Reddock, Head, Centre for Gender and Development Studies, St. Augustine Campus welcomed the participants and gave a brief background of the rationale behind the workshop. She indicated that the Centre had a long felt interest in the area of gender and economics and explained that the opportunity to expand its work in this field presented itself with Dr. Seguino's affiliation to the Centre as a visiting Fulbright Scholar. She indicated that the intention to host this small workshop was mainly for, but not limited to, economists. A special group target was the Department of Economics at the University of the West Indies.

Ms. Roberta Clarke, Social Affairs Officer at the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), then delivered brief remarks on behalf of ECLAC.

Structure and Format of the Workshop

After the opening ceremony, the first session of the day's programme commenced. Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir, Lecturer in the Department of Economics, U.W.I, St. Augustine, chaired the morning session. He gave a brief but insightful overview of the session and then introduced the two presenters for the morning. He announced that there would be a slight change in the programme. Dr. Lester Henry, carded to present in the morning was unable to make it since he was attending funeral services for a child of a member of staff of the Faculty of Social Science, Ms. Linda Steele. Dr. Mahabir indicated that Dr. Henry would present in the afternoon session.

The workshop was well attended with approximately twenty- one people participating, including representatives of NGOs, women's groups, the

public and private sector and members of the Economics department at the University.

SESSION I: GENDER AND ECONOMICS: THE ROLE OF GENDER ANALYSIS IN ECONOMICS.

Engendering Economics: Gender Matters; At Home, at Work and in Policy

Presenter: Dr. Stephanie Seguino

Dr. Seguino, Visiting Fulbright Scholar presented her paper on *Engendering Economics: Gender Matters, At Home; at Work and in Policy*. Her paper gave an depth gender analysis of macro and micro economic policies and the differential impacts these policies had on the livelihoods of women and men. (See appendix1).

Targeting Gender Issues in Addressing Health Concerns

Presenter: Dr. Althea La Foucade

Dr. La Foucade, lecturer, Health Economics Unit in the Department of Economics, St. Augustine presented her research paper on *Targeting Gender Issues in Addressing in addressing Health concerns*.

Dr. Ralph Henry, discussant, summed up their presentations.

SESSION II: DEFINING A RESEARCH AGENDA

The afternoon session was chaired by Dr. Keith Nurse, Lecturer, Institute of International Relations, The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine.

Brief Introduction of the ECLAC Document

Roberta Clarke, Social Affairs Officer at UNECLAC gave a brief overview of the ECLAC document *Bringing Gender Equality out of the Annex and in to the Main Building*, prepared by consultant Donna St. Hill, a project proposal for Mainstreaming Gender Analysis.

After her summary, Dr. Lester Henry presented his paper on the relevance of Gender and International Economics.

Plenary Session

The participants decided to forego the working groups as stated in the programme due to the reduction of participants staying on after lunch. Instead, the Chair led a general discussion on the ECLAC consultant's document with the aim of arriving at some recommendations for further research needs. The discussion focused on three major headings:

1. Economics at the level of the household/family: female headed and nuclear
2. Gender budgeting –issues of equity and an analysis of government expenditure and income; and
3. Unemployment and macro economic policy

The discussion was lively and fruitful, with participants highlighting a number of concerns, chief of which were the paucity of sex disaggregated data collection, the need for training in data collection techniques and the issue of the capacity of the current lead institutions in collecting the necessary data. Other ways of data collection were also discussed and the need for a policy mandate was raised. The need for correct and timely statistics was raised periodically, as this was needed in order to make accurate assessments of the impact of economic policy on women, employment and income earning.

Gender and Economics Workshop Evaluation **Participants' Responses**

Participants at the workshop were asked to complete an evaluation form which was used to gauge the impact of the workshop in relation to its stated objectives. Participants were asked whether the workshop created a greater awareness of the links between gender and economics, to identify areas for further research and to comment generally on various aspects of the workshop.

Overall, from the forms returned, participants felt that the goals and objectives of the workshop were met and that it was well organized, informative and participatory. Most participants expressed a desire to see further research done in areas of data collection and to develop a data base which would inform policy.

All the participants agreed that the workshop was extremely useful. Most agreed that their awareness of the importance of, and links between, gender issues and macroeconomic policies had increased. One participant indicated that the information had created awareness in terms of the household, the bargaining power and role of the female in the household.

Most participants felt that the session on Engendering Economics by Dr. Seguíno was most useful, while one person said the session on Addressing Health Issues - interpreting health statistics from a gender perspective, was the most useful.

Some issues/areas arising out of discussions that the participants would like to see developed further were:

- The development of a data base that will serve the needs for policy formulation
- The development of policies for specific countries or group of countries
- Data Collection Research
- Labour income Equality and Gender
- Actual effects of macroeconomic policy in Trinidad and Tobago on men, women and families –are they actually benefiting or are their lives becoming more stressful in the rush to earn more income to feed their families
- The socio-cultural influences as they affect the gendering of macro and sectoral policies

Participants expressed their satisfaction with the overall co-ordination and content of the workshop and indicated the desire to have further workshops and related activities in this area.

**The University of the West Indies
St. Augustine**

Workshop

Rethinking Economics: Does Gender Matter?

Participants' List

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APPENDIX 1

Workshop Administration

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APPENDIX 11

**Engendering Economics: Gender Matters
at Home, at Work, and in Policy**

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Engendering Economics: Gender Matters at Home, at Work, and in Policy

I. Introduction

During the past two decades, feminist scholarship has had a profound impact in a variety of disciplines. Feminists have raised some difficult questions—questions that are often perceived as troubling, discomforting, and even irritating by dominant thinkers. Pushing the boundaries of knowledge, feminist thought has explored areas heretofore ignored. In the process, it has challenged the way knowledge is created. While economics has been slower than other disciplines to incorporate feminist analysis, there too we have observed changes. I would like to talk today about what contributions feminist thought has made to economic thinking, and further, suggest to you the merits of gender analysis as part of any broader economic analysis, with particular reference to development economics.

The field of economics has been dominated for the last several decades by neoclassical thought, and thus the feminist critique of economics has mainly been addressed at this body of knowledge. The focus of neoclassical analysis has largely been on the market nexus, evaluating behavior and outcomes that result from market exchanges. The central figure is rational economic man, a utility maximizing, self-interested economic agent who makes decisions in a vacuum from social relations, emotions, or cultural pressures.

Neoclassical economic theory has been a powerful tool to explain market outcomes and individual behavior in some circumstances. For example, it is useful for explaining exchange rate movements, and the effect of demand for oil as its price

changes. But, theory is like a flashlight. It illuminates brightly that area on which it is aimed, but it leaves in darkness the surrounding area. Often, that bright light distracts our attention from some very important problems and issues. One of these is the persistence of inequality—be it gender, class, or ethnic inequality.

Feminists have indicated their concern with gender inequality but they are not the first to challenge neoclassical analysis. Marxists much earlier criticized the lack of attention to the firm, and underscored the conflictual relations between workers and capitalists, exploring the nature of capitalist exploitation of workers. Scholars from the global south have challenged the eurocentric bias of neoclassical economics as representing the perspective of white northerners. For example, Andre Gunder Frank's Dependent Accumulation and Underdevelopment (1979) emphasizes that the north's wealth, far from being autonomously attained, depended on exploitation of the global south. This analysis underscores that one cannot examine economic outcomes in a vacuum, or in isolation from relations with others, in this case, other countries. Unequal power relations lay at the heart of this inequality just as unequal power between workers and capitalists are believed to lead to class exploitation.

Feminists thus are part of a broader group of scholars who have challenged the narrowness of mainstream concerns, biases, and methodologies. They have raised important questions that flow from a critique of mainstream analysis—for example, is gender inequality in economic outcomes “natural” or are gender outcomes structurally determined? If those outcomes are natural and the result of “choice,” perhaps there would be less need to be concerned about gender inequality in material outcomes—that is, in the

distribution of resources between men and women, and the distribution of labor responsibility between men and women.

But in fact, we observe persistent gender inequality in access to resources and in labor responsibilities. A basic stylized fact is that women have access to and control over fewer economic resources than men, and perform a disproportionate share of labor. They are, in a word, exploited. There is thus a material basis to gender inequality. The work of feminist economists, as compared to feminists in other disciplines, has been to explore the material basis of gender inequality and the processes that reproduce inequality over time. An understanding of the structural determinants of gender inequality and the solutions to overcome that inequality form the core of that project.

While neoclassicals have not worried much about gender inequality, assuming as they do that it is a “natural” outcome or the result of choices that women make (for example, to stay home and take care of children, rather than to work at a paid job), feminists argue that women do not choose to be poor. Further, poverty is not natural nor is it biologically determined. Rather, it is the result of a variety of structural constraints in a number of institutions—the political, legal, cultural, and economic—all of which combine to produce an unlevel playing field.

While gender inequality occurs along a number of trajectories, one of the most pivotal from my perspective is unequal access to and control over material resources that generate income. Women on average have significantly lower income than men. Of course, not only women are poor. Some men are poor as well. The problem is that the probability of a person being poor is much higher if she is a woman—even between women and men with the same educational attainment and the same mental abilities,

women have a higher probability of being poor, and, on average, earn less than similarly qualified men. Women's limited access to material resources gives them fewer possibilities to live in ways they have cause to value. Women have more limited opportunities to exercise their will, to express themselves through life choices—to develop their humanness, if you will. Indeed, women's choices can be so circumscribed by gender norms and stereotypes, as well as political, legal and economic institutions that constrain their behavior, as to make that word “choice” itself problematic.

Why do women live in economically precarious conditions to a much greater extent than men? What can we do to change this? And what are the social benefits—the spillover effects—of addressing gender inequality, for society as a whole? These questions form the core of the feminist economics research agenda, and I will try to sketch some of the knowledge that has been generated over the last two decades in this area.

We can think of systematic inequality as the result of gendered behavior and policies in three interacting arenas: 1) the family (or the household); 2) the workplace (or labor markets), 3) and at the level of the state, that is, in the policy arena. I will discuss each of these in turn, and then explore the ways in which these arenas interact.

II. Gender Relations in the Household

The household is an important site for the distribution of resources and income, and the place where a significant amount of labor is performed. In earlier economic thought, the household was seen as a black box—little was understood about how resources were distributed. Some years ago, Gary Becker's (1981) A Treatise on the

Family was published, and represents a neoclassical theoretical perspective on household labor and resource distribution. His work, along with that of subsequent neoclassical authors, viewed the household as a place of harmonious relations. Distribution of income and resources to family members was assumed to be equitably ensured by a benevolent dictator, modeled as the (usually male) altruistic head of household. Interestingly and contradictorily, the altruism of the male head was assumed to contrast to his self-interested behavior outside the household.

Early models of household production assumed that adult members agree to engage in this specialization in order to maximize household resources, and then equitably divide up the rewards of their labors between themselves and their children.¹ Women were posited as choosing to “specialize” in household and caring labor (the combination of which is commonly called reproductive labor, because this work reproduces the labor force), while the male “specializes” in paid work. Because income was assumed to be pooled, women’s lack of access to paid work was not considered problematic or the source of inequality. Further women’s performance of caring labor was considered to be a result of her “natural” endowments of empathy.

Recent work by a number of researchers, a great deal of which has been done on African and Asian households, suggests that the home is not always a happy place, and that neither work nor resources are equitably shared. As Nancy Folbre (1986) has noted, the problem in previous models has been the assumption of self-interested actors in the market, and conversely, a household which is a miniature socialist haven, untroubled by internal conflict. More recent evidence suggests that there are conflicting interests between household members.

¹ For an interesting and feisty feminist critique of this model, see Bergmann (1995).

One indication of this was found in research by Amartya Sen (1990) and others on sex ratios in Asia and elsewhere.² Sen and others have found that sex ratios (the ratio of females to males) are lower than would be biologically expected. He estimated that there are 100 million missing women—that is, the proportion of females in the population is 100 million less than would be expected, if biological proportions held. The cause of this is that females have unequal access to household resources, receiving less in the way of health care services and nutrition than male members of the household, leading to higher than normal mortality rates among females. Educational gaps are also obvious.³ This finding provides evidence that the distribution of household resources favors males, undermining the notion of a harmonious socialist household.

More realistic models of household behavior are those that are based on bargaining between adults over the distribution of resources and work. Bargaining power depends on a person's fallback position—their next best alternative, should the bargaining fail to lead to an agreement (in this case, divorce or dissolution of the 2-adult household).⁴ Because women are likely to become custodial parents, their needs post-divorce differ from those of men—and in general, are greater, given the labor and monetary cost of supporting children. Women's bargaining power is helped by a variety of factors—access to outside income, divorce laws that protect the party's access to marital resources, child support legislation that obligates the non-custodial parent to support children, and social norms that do not stigmatize divorce.

² For references to other work on this topic, see Drèze and Sen (1995).

³ For international comparisons of gender-disaggregated data on educational attainment, see Barro and Lee (1996). These authors also have a data set available from the World Bank website that provides updated and downloadable data for over 120 countries.

⁴ The theoretical work in this area is extensive. See, for example, Manser and Brown (1980), McElroy and Horney (1981), Bolin (1997) Lundberg and Pollak (1993, 1997), Basu and Bechtold (1998).

Where women have more bargaining power, their preferences are likely to receive greater weight in negotiations over how to use family resources and labor. This is because their access to outside resources, should the outcome of negotiation be divorce, provides a more credible “threat,” making it more difficult for the male adult to impose his own preferences. Simply put, she has less to lose from divorce and he knows it, so he is more likely to cooperate and take her preferences into account. In the case where women’s bargaining power improves, the distribution of household resources tends to become more equitable. Indeed, the data indicate that when women’s income rises, which raises their bargaining power, household expenditures on children for health care, schooling, and food rise. This contrasts to male spending patterns with men spending a larger share of their income on luxury goods for themselves—e.g., cigarettes, tobacco, alcohol, and gambling. Improvement in women’s fallback position (such as higher income) also results in higher female to male sex ratios. This is because women are better able to direct family resources to children and, in particular, it seems, to protect their girl children.

One case study in the Ivory Coast found that to achieve the benefits on children’s health and nutrition of a \$10 per month increase in women’s income, men’s income would have to rise by \$110 (Hoddinott and Haddad 1995). This is because men spend a much smaller share of income on family. Likewise, in Mexico, a study found that men spend only 50% of their income on the family, while women’s share was close to 100% (Chant 1985). These findings are robust across countries.⁵ The policy implications of this are important. Efforts to improve family well-being are likely to be more successful if

⁵ For a sample of studies that find similar results, see Agarwal (1997), Bruce and Dwyer (1988), Haddad, Hoddinott, and Alderman (1997), and Kabeer (1994).

they are targeted at increasing women's access to paid labor and therefore income. Who earns the income in the household matters.

III. Gender Inequality at Work

Women's ability to earn income in the paid labor market is hampered, however, by gender norms that designate women as responsible for caring labor. While estimates vary across countries, a consistent finding is that universally women perform the bulk of reproductive labor.⁶ In Dominica, for example, it was found that women in the agricultural sector perform 6 to 7 hours a day of household or reproductive labor with another 6 to 7 hours spent in agricultural farm work. This compares to men's 30 minutes a day of reproductive labor, with the remainder spent in paid labor or leisure. The result is that men work fewer hours than women and have significantly more leisure time (Momsen 1993).⁷

In many countries, men resist women's efforts to do paid labor, such as in Bangladesh, where cultural and religious norms of purdah restrict women's movements. Even in non-Islamic countries, males may pressure women to stay at home to perform unpaid labor. One reason is that women who stay at home are seen to enhance the males' prestige (Drèze and Sen 1995). Men also recognize that when women work in paid jobs, they are forced to reduce the amount of reproductive labor they perform at home. There is little evidence that men take up the slack. Consequently, less caring labor is performed,

⁶ Further, women's total labor time (unpaid plus paid labor) exceeds that of men, on average.

⁷ See also an interesting book on the economic costs of parenting by Ann Crittendon (2000). While she refers primarily to the U.S. case, the insights of the time costs of parenting as well as the loss in income from paid work are instructive.

but women's workdays are longer as a result of the double burden of paid and unpaid work.

When they do participate in the paid labor market, women often do so intermittently or part-time due to responsibilities at home, and this inhibits their earnings—again limiting their bargaining power in the family. If women earned enough in the paid labor market, they might be able to buy some services to reduce their responsibility for unpaid labor—they might have their house cleaned or hire childcare workers for example. For many women, however, this is impossible since their wages are too low to be able to afford these expenses. Women's wages universally are lower than men's on average, and lower than men's with the same educational attainment.

Why is this so? A major contributing factor to gender wage inequality is job segregation, with stereotypically female jobs paid less than male jobs. Job segregation arises for a variety of reasons, and in part, this phenomenon is related to gender norms and stereotypes that lead to a sex stereotyping of jobs.⁸ For example, women are argued to have “nimble” fingers, making them better at detail work in electronics and garment factories (Pearson 1998). Of course, job segregation on its own should not necessarily lead to wage inequality. For example, in the case of women's so-called “nimble fingers,” since women are presumed to have a special characteristic that men purportedly do not possess, we might expect that they would earn higher, not lower, wages than men.

But there are a number of factors that hold down women's wages relative to men's. Women tend to be “crowded” into a more limited set of occupations than men, which lowers their wages. This is because the process of crowding creates an artificial oversupply of women workers competing for a limited number of job slots, thereby

⁸ For a broad survey of trends in job segregation, see Anker (1998).

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but women's workdays are longer as a result of the double burden of paid and unpaid work.

When they do participate in the paid labor market, women often do so intermittently or part-time due to responsibilities at home, and this inhibits their earnings—again limiting their bargaining power in the family. If women earned enough in the paid labor market, they might be able to buy some services to reduce their responsibility for unpaid labor—they might have their house cleaned or hire childcare workers for example. For many women, however, this is impossible since their wages are too low to be able to afford these expenses. Women's wages universally are lower than men's on average, and lower than men's with the same educational attainment.

Why is this so? A major contributing factor to gender wage inequality is job segregation, with stereotypically female jobs paid less than male jobs. Job segregation arises for a variety of reasons, and in part, this phenomenon is related to gender norms and stereotypes that lead to a sex stereotyping of jobs.⁸ For example, women are argued to have “nimble” fingers, making them better at detail work in electronics and garment factories (Pearson 1998). Of course, job segregation on its own should not necessarily lead to wage inequality. For example, in the case of women's so-called “nimble fingers,” since women are presumed to have a special characteristic that men purportedly do not possess, we might expect that they would earn higher, not lower, wages than men.

But there are a number of factors that hold down women's wages relative to men's. Women tend to be “crowded” into a more limited set of occupations than men, which lowers their wages. This is because the process of crowding creates an artificial oversupply of women workers competing for a limited number of job slots, thereby

⁸ For a broad survey of trends in job segregation, see Anker (1998).

bidding down their wages. Men, on the other hand, compete for a wider array of jobs, which makes them effectively a “scarcer” supply of labor, thus causing their wages to be relatively higher.

Further, women’s responsibility for childcare makes employers reluctant to hire them or to invest in their on-the-job training, since women’s departure from the labor force to care for children makes it difficult for employers to recoup on their investment in the female worker. Further, gender norms cause employers to be reluctant to place women in supervisory positions. Even if the employer is not opposed to placing women in positions of authority, male workers may see this as undermining their male privilege to dominate. The result may be disruptions in work and lower productivity, causing profits to fall, thus making employers unwilling to violate commonly held gender norms.

In some cases, women are fired when they get married, which lowers their earnings since their job tenure is artificially shortened. This practice has been widely documented in some East Asian economies, for example. After marriage, women, especially those from poor families, may then engage in home work so they can combine reproductive care responsibilities with paid work. But women in home work earn substantially less than woman in formal sector, due to their lack of bargaining power vis-à-vis employers (Carr, Chen, and Tate 2000).

In semi-industrialized economies, gender norms and stereotypes have led to women being segregated into export jobs that are labor-intensive and low-wage. There tends to be little skill acquisition or job security in these jobs.⁹ “Flexible” jobs such as these promote exports because female wages are lower than men’s and thus so are costs,

⁹ On the feminization of employment as a result of globalization, see Standing (1989, 1999). For the case of Trinidad, see Yelvington (1995).

but it does little to promote gender equity since higher wages for women cause demand for exports to decline, leading to a slowdown in economic growth and therefore job loss. Men, on the other hand, are more concentrated in non-import competing industries, such as electricity and gas, construction, and, in general, more capital-intensive industries. The pressure on firms to keep prices, and therefore, wages low is less intense here than in female-dominated export industries. Consequently, women find themselves sequestered in export industries where capital is more mobile—that is, where firms can easily relocate to other lower wages sites as a way to avoid paying higher wages. They can afford to do this, because they have not invested significantly in worker training, and the low skilled nature of the work makes it easy to replace higher cost workers with cheaper workers with little loss in productivity. Because of women are concentrated in this type of industry as compared to men, their bargaining power is less than men's vis-à-vis capitalists, and their wages are relatively lower.¹⁰

Gender differences in unemployment rates can also lead to wage inequality. In the case of the Caribbean, women's unemployment rates (almost twice as high as men's) may be a cause of their relatively lower wages, since they lack bargaining power vis-à-vis employers to a greater extent than men.

Women may also of course be more likely to be concentrated in low wage jobs because of lack of access to education. Women's lower educational attainment can become a vicious cycle—parents who rely on children to support them in old age are unlikely to invest in daughters' education if there is job and wage discrimination. Rather,

¹⁰On the issue of capital mobility and worker bargaining power, see, for example, Seguino (2000b) which compares gender wage differentials in South Korea and Taiwan.

they will invest in their sons' education, reproducing gender inequality in education and therefore wages.¹¹

Even so, most studies find that over 30 percent of the wage gap is due to gender discrimination (Birdsall and Sabot 1991, Psacharopoulos and Tzannatos 1992). Thus while education may be part of the solution, it is not the only solution. Rectifying gender wage inequality also requires altering the conditions that cause women's bargaining power in the workplace to be lower relative to that of their employers and relative to working men's.

Labor market outcomes in which women's jobs are more insecure and lower paid, and where there are fewer opportunities for advancement than men's jobs, systematically limit women's power in the household. As noted, women's low relatively lower income is the result of both lower female wages and the fact that women do fewer hours of paid work, due to the social norm that gives them responsibility for childcare.¹² These problems are particularly acute where a woman is the single head of household, since she works two jobs—one unpaid and the other low paid—in order to meet the family's needs. As a result of women's low earnings, in many cases, women are inhibited from leaving unhealthy and abusive relationships, with detrimental effects not only for themselves but also for their children. Thus gender matters at work and at home, with the two spheres interacting to reproduce and sustain low bargaining power for women.

¹¹ Greenhalgh (1985) provides an interesting case study of this phenomenon for East Asia.

¹²In Trinidad and Tobago, for example, in 1995, women earned only 27% of total wage income, compared to men's 73%. This is less than the 39% earned by women in Barbados, as compared to 61% for men, and is largely due to women's lower labor force participation rates in Trinidad and Tobago (UNDP 1998). Note that the female share of earned income is measured:

$$\{[\text{female wage}/\text{male wage}]/\text{national wage}\} \times \text{female share of labor force.}$$

IV. Gender at the Macro Level

Further, it appears that macro-level economic policy affects gender relations and equity, and that gender affects macroeconomic outcomes. For the case of macro effects on gender relations, I use the example of a particular type of macro-level policy that has been widely used in developing economies in the 1980s and 1990s—structural adjustment policies. The gender effects of these programs have been extensively documented.

1. Gender Effects of Macro-Level Policy: The Case of Structural Adjustment

Structural adjustment programs, adopted by a diverse set of countries in the 1980s, have nevertheless had a number of similar features. These include: devaluation frequently leading to inflation), wage controls (and thus declines in real wages), as well as privatization and cuts in government budgets, both leading to declines in public sector employment, with the latter also causing reductions in expenditures on health care, education, and food subsidies. The effects of these policies have weighed more heavily on women, and as result, children, than men (Beneria and Feldman 1992).

The negative effect on women stems in part from their responsibility for the care of the household. Because of the gendered division of labor where women are primarily responsible for the well-being of the children, elderly, and ill, structural adjustment programs that lead to a cut in public expenditures prompt an intensification of women's work. Women must work longer hours to compensate for cuts in services by, for example, cooking food to bring to hospitalized family members, or working additional hours to generate income to cover the cost of food whose prices have risen due to

inflation or cuts in food subsidies.¹³ The data indicate that the time intensity of women's labor increases, as well, with women increasing the degree to which they multi-task. There is also evidence of girl children being withdrawn from school to provide caring labor for the family, especially where mothers must spend more time in paid labor to make up for rising costs.

Further, men lose jobs and real wages decline in periods of structural adjustment after devaluation and inflation, causing some women to engage in distress sales of their labor, further exacerbating their work burden. Men's loss of self-esteem, usually derived primarily from paid work, has been documented to lead to increases in domestic violence during periods of economic crisis.

A gender perspective does not imply that men have not been affected. There is both a gender and class dimension to the adjustment process. The lack of attention to the unpaid labor performed by women, however, had obscured until recently the gendered effects of this process in the sphere of reproduction. Women have been seen as the adjusting variable and with seemingly infinitely elastic endurance to deal with whatever problems are generated. The long-term negative effects of overburdening women, and making it more difficult for them to perform caring labor, is likely to have long-term economic effects on the economy, since at some point, the woman can no longer completely shield the family from the effects of economic crisis. The result is that children's well-being is harmed, and their future productivity is compromised.

¹³ For the Caribbean, see, for example, French (1994).

2. Gender Effects on Macroeconomic Outcomes

Whether gender inequality helps or hinders, it is clear that gender relations do affect macroeconomic outcomes and economic growth. Research of my own, for example, indicates that gender inequality in export-oriented economies promotes growth (Seguino 2000a, 2000c). This is attributable to the effect of segregating women in export industries. “Crowding” women into export industries artificially depresses their wages (which are half of men’s in the case of South Korea, for instance). These low wages translate into low prices on exports. Export demand is stimulated as a result, generating foreign exchange for countries to purchase imported technology and capital goods, thereby raising the economy’s productivity and thus promoting economic growth.

But other work shows that gender inequality in education hinders growth (Hill and King 1995, Klasen 1999). Education of women raises their productivity, reduces fertility, and raises children’s well-being. While at first glance, these results may appear to be incompatible with my own, on closer examination, they are not. Education does raise productivity. If there were no discrimination and women had greater bargaining power, they might be able to appropriate the benefits of higher education in the form of higher wages. But their lack of bargaining power holds their wages down. As a result, the increase in education benefits capitalists—in the form of lower unit labor cost, and thus higher profits, which may stimulate investment and therefore growth (see Erturk and Cagatay 1995). Further, productivity growth may also result in lower product prices, stimulating export demand and thus growth in an export-oriented open economy.

The question we might ask and that is of great interest to me, is under what conditions can we have equity with growth—gender equity and class equity? What

macro-level policies will promote improved living standards for the broad majority of the population, not just a few. This question is part of a broader research agenda that relates the distribution of income to macroeconomic performance.¹⁴ Feminist economists are beginning to develop answers to the question of how we create an economic environment in which higher wages promote rather than hinder growth, and those findings are sketched in the next section.

Up to this point, we have learned from the research outlined here that gender matters—at home and at work, and in the macro economy. An important insight of feminist economics is that power also matters. Women have less power than men, at home and at work. This contributes to their exploitation, and provides the filter by which macroeconomic policy effects are felt. In turn, gender relations affect the performance of the macroeconomy.

V. The Role of the State

The state can play an important role in influencing gender relations at the micro level, both in the household and at work. The possibilities for state action are in three areas: 1) redistributive policies, 2) rules of the game, and 3) industrial policy.

1. Redistributive policies

The state's ability to tax and spend, which is essentially a mechanism for pooling resources and utilizing them to attain socially desirable goals, is an important mechanism for redistributing income in a way that can alter inequalities in other institutions. One

¹⁴ The research on income inequality and growth is diverse, with neo-Kaleckians (e.g., Bhadhuri and Marglin 1990, Taylor 1990, Seguino 1999-2000) and neoclassicals (e.g., Larraín and Vergara 1998, Persson and Tabellini 1994) contributing to this work.

area for gender-sensitive policy is in social safety net legislation. Social safety nets can be a means to rectify inequalities in the household and at work, and to thus increase women's bargaining power as well as their well-being and that of the children they care for. Many countries, however, have weak social safety nets, and even those are increasingly porous as pressure on states to reduce spending mounts. In Asia, most states have very limited social safety nets, under the argument that economic growth is the social safety net, and the family is the best provider of social services. But this assumes households have an equitable distribution of resources, and as we have seen, they do not. Women thus are disadvantaged in this approach.

An alternative is to structure social safety nets to take into account the gender division of labor in paid and unpaid work. Support for social services might help alleviate women's unpaid work at home. Thus health care spending, food subsidies, housing subsidies, child care subsidies, and child allowances can reduce women's burden for reproductive labor, and can also make it easier for women to engage in paid work.

Unemployment insurance is often geared towards year-round full-time workers, which favors men. Reform of unemployment insurance so as to support informal sector workers and part-time workers, rather than only full-time workers, would reach more women. Under legislation currently in place in many countries, women are largely excluded because of the insecure forms of work they perform, in part due to their responsibility for caring labor. Targeted educational investments might also rectify gender imbalances. For example, public expenditures on training and education, targeting non-traditional job training for women, can improve their chances for well-paid jobs in the paid economy.

2. Setting the Rules of the Game

Further, the state has a role to play in setting the rules of the game—that is, in shaping the boundaries of behavior and interaction in the household and at work—to ensure greater equity. For example, state enforcement of legislation against wage and job discrimination can raise women’s wages and give them greater access to jobs that lead to greater responsibility and more security. States can also promote affirmative action programs in order to eliminate job segregation by gender.

To improve gender relations at the household level, states can enact and enforce child support legislation, requiring the non-custodial parent to assist in provisioning for children. Divorce and family law can be revised so that the economic burden of children is more fairly shared, and women’s unpaid labor is rewarded by giving them access to marital assets in the case of marriage dissolution. Efforts to pursue domestic violence offenders make it easier for women to leave abusive relationships. Revision of the terms of borrowing can increase women’s access to credit. Further, government policies might be aimed at making it easier for men to fulfill their share of unpaid labor. Paternity leave, for example, might be instituted so that men can share in caring of children.

3. Gender-enabling Industrial Policies¹⁵

With regard to industrial policies, the question is how the state can shape and direct investment to make equity and growth compatible. Promotion of trade and market liberalization on their own (i.e., without government intervention) have resulted in less,

¹⁵ Industrial policies include policies on trade in addition to more traditional policies on investment. The topic of gender enabling trade policies is an important one, but is not covered here. On this, see Seguino and Grown (2001), and Cagatay (2001).

not greater equity. Thus the role of the state is increasingly acknowledged as important (Rodrik 2000). Ralph Henry has noted that industrial policies might be directed at solving this problem—for example, in the Caribbean, by focusing on high-skilled knowledge-based industries. This might lead to export jobs that are less reliant on low wages, rather than export factory jobs, which depend on low-wage female labor for competitiveness.

The state's role then is to act as visionary, and to encourage or direct resources to desired activities that will make growth compatible with equity. Such activities might include: 1) the promotion of industries, especially exports, whose products are price inelastic (that is, where higher wages do not result in a large decline in export demand); 2) education targeted to knowledge-based industries; 3) state-subsidized research and development (R&D) or direct R&D by the state in desired industries; and 4) support for firms to invest in targeted industries and to assist them to acquire the managerial or technical expertise required to be competitive.¹⁶

Thus there is a role for the state to direct the economy to those activities that result in higher wages and employment, and to take those measures to ensure that women have access to those jobs—by responding to their educational needs, and to support them

¹⁶ By the notion of government acting as visionary, I mean that government should chart an economic course that will create dynamic comparative advantage in selected industries for which there are social benefits, in terms of high wages and secure employment. Because firms may not have the expertise or conditions may not currently exist to be competitive in those industries, the role of the state is to assist or prod firms to move into the production of these goods or services, and in particular, export goods that are price inelastic. For more on the conditions under which gender equity is compatible with growth, see Blecker and Seguino (2002). State-level policies or guidance might be needed to promote such types of production and assist firms to achieve those goals. The government might promote these efforts with such policies as used in East Asia—subsidies, marketing assistance, preferential tax treatment—in essence, boosting firm profits to entice them into the production of goods, which produce social benefits in terms of permitting women's incomes to rise. A further goal would be to raise labor productivity so that higher wages do not lead to higher unit labor costs.

in their household responsibilities. While the ability of small states to take these actions may be circumscribed, there is nevertheless margin for maneuver.¹⁷

VI. Conclusion

I come at this issue of gender and economic analysis as one who believes that gender does matter. The probability of being poor, of doing the bulk of unpaid labor, of having limited job opportunities, and of being unemployed is greater for women than for men, particularly in the Caribbean region. There would appear to be an unequal distribution of labor, and rewards to labor, and as a result, women have fewer choices and opportunities to live the lives they desire to live. There are efficiency costs to society of continued inequality, evidenced by the effect of women's relatively lower economic status on children's well-being. But in its own right, gender equity deserves our attention and support.

I have outlined some possible avenues to investigate to achieve that goal. But the specific policies depend on household structure, the particular form the gender division of labor at home and at work takes, the structure of the economy, and cultural factors. There is no one size fits all policy. Rather, each country and region must determine the complex set of policies required to attain the goal of gender equity. In this sense, policy is an art, not a science, because gender relations are so interwoven into the social fabric. The degree to which change is resisted or embraced will in part be determined by a broader human calculation about how we collectively and individually negotiate our sense of self, given that gender norms and stereotypes deeply permeate our psyches. A movement

¹⁷ See Seguino and Grown (2001) and Chang (1998) or more discussion of this topic.

towards gender equity necessarily entails a shift in the distribution of resources and work and this too makes progress a challenging goal.

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