The Commonwealth of Learning is an international organisation established by Commonwealth governments in September 1988, following the Heads of Government Meeting held in Vancouver in 1987. It is headquartered in Vancouver and is the only Commonwealth intergovernmental organisation located outside of Britain.

The purpose of The Commonwealth of Learning, as reflected in the Memorandum of Understanding, is to create and widen access to education and to improve its quality, utilising distance education techniques and associated communications technologies to meet the particular requirements of member countries. The agency's programmes and activities aim to strengthen member countries' capacities to develop the human resources required for their economic and social advancement and are carried out in collaboration with governments, relevant agencies, universities, colleges and other educational and training establishments among whom it also seeks to promote co-operative endeavours.

The Chairman of the Board of Governors is Dr. H. Ian Macdonald and COL's President and Chief Executive Officer is Dr. G. Dhanarajan.
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PREFACE

One of the approaches to overcoming obstacles to women's advancement is developing and exchanging materials, resources, and courses in the areas of Women's Studies and Women in Development. At their meeting in Ottawa, Canada in October 1990, Commonwealth Ministers responsible for Women's Affairs specifically mandated the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) to develop a programme that would 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 creating course modules on Women in Development. The meeting was attended by representatives of institutions of higher education from the South Pacific, the Caribbean, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Australia, India, and Canada as well as the UN Training and Research Institute (INSTRAW) and the International Women’s Tribune Centre (IWTC) in New York. Discussion focused on identifying existing resources, identifying materials that would need to be developed, and examining the capacities of different institutions to assume a coordinating responsibility in developing modules. All the participants expressed interest in contributing to the long-term project and a desire to utilise the modules in Women in Development and Women’s Studies courses at their own institutions.

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

This core module was collaboratively developed and written by the Centre for Gender and Development Studies, University of the West Indies, and SIGAD. This module focuses on the theoretical justification for examining the specific roles and contributions of women to development initiatives. It is concerned with women being integrated, recognised, and given decision-making roles in development planning, policy making, and activities and with celebrating women’s contributions to social, economic, and political development.

It is anticipated that the module will be made available to educational institutions, NGOs and women’s organisations throughout the Commonwealth for local adaptation and use in traditional educational settings and in non-formal situations.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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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 The Commonwealth of Learning or to members of its Board of Governors or the countries they represent.

HOW THIS MANUAL IS ORGANISED

Each chapter of this manual contains narrative, framed material or case studies to further illustrate the chapter’s main topics, and exercises or study questions so the user can enhance his or her knowledge through personal research. Related further readings are also provided to direct the reader to additional sources of information.
CHAPTER 1

WHY THEORY?

INTRODUCTION

In this section, we will examine the process of theorising and learn to appreciate that it is a dynamic and flexible process. Much of our understanding of the world, our societies, and ourselves that we accept today is based on theories and knowledge historically generated predominantly by men, and men of certain nationalities and economic classes. This male dominated and culturally specific theorising and knowledge generation have resulted in the exclusion of women and other groups from the process of formal theorising and knowledge building. The ways in which these theories and knowledge have been applied not only ignore women's contributions in all spheres of activity but also exclude issues of particular relevance to women.

Feminist scholars have argued that knowledge based mainly on these limited experiences is, therefore, only partial and thus represents a skewed perception of reality. This can be best corrected by taking women's daily experiences and their informal theorising into account and on this basis adopting feminist approaches to building theory and knowledge.

1. Rationale

Theorising and theory building have generally been seen as the business of academics enclosed 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 theorising are being challenged by different groups of women who have engaged in and adopted different approaches to this process of theorising. They are bringing their unique perspectives to bear on issues which affect their lives on a daily basis. These new perspectives have been used to deconstruct existing knowledge bases and to build new ones. This reconstruction of knowledge has influenced policy and action related to the lives of women.

2. Objectives

- To introduce the concept of theory.
- To understand that theorising is one way in which people use their assumptions to achieve/interpret/impose meaning.
- To understand how feminist theorising has challenged mainstream theorising.
- To understand that a variety of assumptions can be held about the same phenomenon which results in different explanations, different theories and different power positions.
- To understand how theory and knowledge are interrelated, and how feminist theorising and the resultant knowledge have influenced research, policy and action.
WHAT IS THEORY?

While a precise universally accepted definition of theory does not exist, certain recurring elements appear which allow rough boundaries of the concept to be drawn. The most common definition of theory is that of scientific theory which emphasises a logically unified framework, generalisation and explanation. Ornstein and Hunkins (1993) indicate 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. (p. 184) © 1993 by Allyn & Bacon. Reprinted/adapted by permission.

Common-sense understandings of theory often use the concept to describe the rules that guide actions, as well as opinions, ideals or a particular philosophy. Wise and Stanley (1983) suggest that the majority of persons, particularly women, have been brought up to think of theory as something mysterious and forbidding produced by clever people, who are mostly men. Nowadays people are questioning this divide, and adopting a more inclusive approach to theorising.

THE NATURE OF THEORISING

The process of theorising which has traditionally been employed — mainstream theorising — has been based on the scientific method which can be summarised in the model presented below.

The Process of Theorising: The Knowledge Spiral

1. Existing knowledge
2. Set of Assumptions
3. Statement of hypothesis
4. Testing by collection of empirical data
5. General principles
6. Develop theory or revise existing theory
7. Modified assumption
8. New knowledge
This male-centred approach to theorising has produced a particular view of many issues including those which affect women. These views are based on androcentric assumptions. An example of such an assumption has been that women's work is biologically determined and is or should be therefore home-based and restricted to nurturing and domestic chores. These assumptions provide the basis for hypotheses, such as, in this case, the waged workforce should be predominantly male and women will work at home. The information gathered during the testing of such an hypothesis traditionally has been limited to quantitative data which are used for the development of general principles which are posited as offering valid explanations about this issue. These explanations have, for a long time, been uncritically accepted as being factual and have resulted in theories about women's work based on questionable assumptions. In spite of their questionable nature, these theories have been used to inform policy and action.

Some of the problems associated with mainstream theorising are:

a) unrecognised and value-laden assumptions based on the (male) researcher's bias
b) overemphasis on empirical/quantitative data; denial of validity of qualitative data
c) lack of involvement of the researcher with the subject(s) of the research
d) a process which is impersonal and detached
e) the supposed "objectivity" of the researcher and knowledge produced.

This view of the traditional, scientific approach is also expressed by Sandra Harding (1987):

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 (p. 182)

When this approach to theorising is used, however, biases can enter the theorising process at every stage:

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

Nonetheless, the theories which result from this approach have been and continue to be a major force in shaping perceptions of reality.

An investigation of women's work by researchers with a feminist perspective would, in all likelihood, have been based on a variety of assumptions relating to their own
experiences, as well as those of women in other situations. These assumptions would differ based on factors such as race, class, ethnic group, age. The results of their investigation would therefore be more likely to include the following:

a) some women do unpaid work in the home  
b) some women do both unpaid work in the home as well as waged work and unpaid work in the wider society  
c) some women work only in the wider society and employ other women to work in their homes  
d) women are found in a variety of occupations  
e) women work at all levels of the work place  
f) women in paid and unpaid work contribute greatly to the national economy.

Based on this wider view, the general principle which would emerge is that women's work is not restricted to the home. The hypothesis of women's work which was generated from the male perspective would have been challenged by female perspectives and experiences and shown to be invalid. Theorising is therefore an important, flexible and dynamic process. We each have assumptions about people, events, issues, etc. in our everyday lives. These may be explicitly stated or may be implicit and only identifiable through our opinions, attitudes and behaviours. By bringing our assumptions to a situation we each interpret things differently. We test some of these assumptions in an informal way, and others in a formal manner. This is, in fact, a process of hypothesis testing and the result often causes us to change our assumptions. Sandra Harding's views, expressed in Box 1, are particularly interesting.

Box 1

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, Sandra. 1987. Conclusion: Epistemological Questions in Harding, Sandra (ed.) Feminism and Methodology. Indiana University Press (pp.183-184)

**Activity 1**

a) What are assumptions which you think have been held by various groups across cultures about the following issues?
   - parenting
   - abortion
   - violence against women
   - marriage

b) Identify and state assumptions which could be proposed by women and which would challenge those assumptions which you listed in (a).

c) What are the essential differences between the assumptions listed in (a) and (b)?
The differences identified in the activity reveal the differing perspectives of men and women. These differences also relate to the problems to which men and women seek answers. As Sandra Harding (1987) 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? (page 6)

If we concede that men and women often view issues differently and have different experiences, it follows that a phenomenon has to be looked at in relation to the individual(s) who experience(s) the phenomenon. Harding therefore further asks:

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. (page 6)

The view of women produced by theories developed from male theorising has been challenged by feminists. Hilary Rose (1994) explains 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"? (page 16)

**Feminist Approaches to Research and Theorising**

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?).

(Sandra Harding, 1987, page 181)

The aim of feminist theorising is to deconstruct and redefine concepts which have been previously defined from a male perspective and generally accepted as factual. This deconstruction and redefinition as well as creation of new concepts have been done using strategies which emphasise:

- women's experiences/knowledge
- conduct of research FOR women
- problems, which when solved, will benefit both researcher and subject
- interaction between researcher and subject
- establishment of non-hierarchical relationships
- expression of feelings and concern for values
- use of non-sexist language.

The result is the generation of theories which have emerged from a viewing of the world through a feminist lens. The aim is to bring about change in conditions which adversely affect women's lives, through critical analysis of existing theories, and the development of policies and social action. Hilary Rose (1994) elaborates on this in the excerpt from her address entitled *Alternative Knowledge Systems in Science* set out in Box 2.

**Box 2**

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.

Feminist theorising seeks to uncover:

a) the pervasive nature of gendered thinking which uncritically assumes a necessary bond between being a woman and occupying certain social roles;

b) the ways in which women negotiate the world, and the wisdom inherent in such negotiation.

The social roles and the ways in which women negotiate the world differ among women in different contexts - cultural, social, political, racial/ethnic, religious; and of different personal characteristics - age, education, sexual orientation. The excerpt from Sandra Harding's *Is there a feminist method?* expands on this point.

Box 3

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.

In examining problems and carrying out analyses, feminists recognise that factors other than gender shape perceptions and understandings. Class, race, and culture are also powerful determinants and therefore create differences which must be taken into account. "Women" is a pluralistic category and if treated as a homogenous group, the results of the theorising process will be no better than that produced by the traditional, androcentric approach.

To further accommodate these differences, feminist enquiry highlights the importance of the enquirer being placed in the same "critical plane" as the subject of the enquiry to ensure less bias and distortion. It is no longer possible for researchers to hide behind the language of "objectivity"; they must situate themselves in their research. The information in Box 4 by Sandra Harding elaborates on this point.

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 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, Sandra. 1987. Conclusion: Epistemological Questions in Harding, Sandra (ed.) Feminism and Methodology. Indiana University Press (p. 9)

The differences in women's experiences based on differences of class, race, culture have resulted in various theories being proposed to explain their experiences. These different theories have been the subject of substantial discourse among feminists.

Rawwida Baksh-Soodeen (1993), discussing a paper by Amrita Chhachhi (1988) notes 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 (after Omvedt, 1986) 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.)

Chhachhi argues that at the first level of basic conceptual analytical tools, there is little disagreement among black and white feminists who share similar approaches. However, she notes that black/Third World feminists have brought an important sensitivity to the need for historically specific research at levels two and three. Baksh-Soodeen continues:

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 ahistorically, and hence become a substitute for an historically specific analysis which takes into account the complexities of social reality. (p. 31)

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

**Activity 2**

In this activity, we will consider the phenomenon of poverty: why are people poor?
WHY THEORY?

a) What assumptions do you think that the following women would have about this question?
   i) the wife of a successful professional who does not work outside the home
   ii) a retired civil servant on pension
   iii) a rural subsistence farmer
   iv) an executive from a donor lending agency.

b) Based on the assumptions you have identified, what is the likely explanation each woman would have of poverty?

c) Are there any commonalities/differences among these explanations?

d) How do you account for these commonalities/differences?

The differences in the explanations that you identify are due to that fact that each of the individuals considered in the above exercise has had different positions, different roles, different status that these individuals occupy in the society. These positions are usually not equivalent. Some of these women exercise greater authority and power than the others. This allows their assumptions and their interpretations to be accepted as being more valued than those of persons with less authority and power.

e) In your opinion, which of the four women in the activity 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

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 change 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.


**Activity 3: A Case Study of the Philippines**

Read the Case Study of Women's Work in the Philippines in Box 6 and then answer the questions which follow.

**Box 6**

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,
planning/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.


a) What factual information about women's work in the Philippines can you extract from this Case Study?
b) What principles about women's work in the Philippines emerge from these facts?
c) Do these principles coincide with those which obtain in your own society?
d) Have the facts in the case study caused you to change your assumptions about women's work? How?
e) Based on the data and your own experience, what explanation/theory would you develop on women's work?

RELATIONSHIP OF THEORY AND KNOWLEDGE

The theorising process both uses and produces knowledge. Androcentric theories developed have been used to generate knowledge which embodies the assumptions on which these theories were based, and which ignored the experiences and perspectives of women. It is one of the tenets of feminist theorising that knowledge should be based on experience. Thus, a new, broader, more comprehensive, more all encompassing knowledge is built up through feminist theorising. This seeks to provide a more complete representation of women's realities. As Sandra Harding (1987) expresses 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. (pages 184-185)

Sandra Harding's analysis represents a feminist standpoint theoretical approach. Like other theorists, feminist standpoint theorists have their own assumptions. They assume that there is an objective reality that could be made better by adding women's experiences and knowledges to mainstream or androcentric epistemologies.

Post-modernist feminist theorising supports the investigation of women's experiences and knowledges as a basis for creating new feminist informed knowledges. However, it differs from feminist standpoint theory in several ways. Post modernist feminist theory does not assume there is a complete, coherent reality to which women's experience can be added. It assumes there are multiple realities and/or experiences. These experiences and their influence over the generation of knowledge are seen as fluid, contingent, diverse and historically and culturally specific. Post modernist feminist theorising does not argue that feminist claims are scientifically preferable, because this perspective is sceptical about the faith placed in rationality, objectivity and science. However, post modernist feminist theorists support the position that knowledge claims should be based on experiences and they recognise that women's experiences will differ across race, class, culture and sexual orientation.

This discussion introduces the idea that there are many feminist theoretical approaches. They are complex and converge on the core issue that women are subordinated.
However, they differ in their assumptions as to the causes or sources of women's subordination. These differences reflect the richness of women's lives and the need to integrate the experiences and knowledges of women from the South as well as all women in the North if we are to move towards more inclusive, sensitive theorising about both women's subordination and power. The following box illustrates some of the new thinking being undertaken by feminists in the South and the North.

Box 7

*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 both 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. Where as 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.


This more comprehensive knowledge base means that policy and action are informed by a wide cross section of experiences and measures. Existing policies and those which are being developed will be examined in Chapter 4 to illustrate how they reflect and satisfy the needs of women.

**CONCLUSION**

This section discusses theorising as a process that is used to test assumptions about a number of phenomena and to generate principles and theories which offer explanations of these phenomena. This section 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 them. Until feminist theorists began critiquing existing knowledges, these theories were used to produce programmes and policies that adversely affected the lives of women.

The readings highlight how feminists challenge the traditional, androcentric approach to theorising and discuss the characteristics of these approaches. Feminist approaches not only take into account the differential experiences of women and men, but also recognise that women themselves are not a homogenous group.

Feminist approaches to theorising deconstruct androcentric theories and knowledge. They produce a comprehensive view of women's multiple realities. The knowledges they generate provide a basis for critiquing existing policy and determining alternative policies and activities in relation to problems that affect women.

Recognising 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 section you will examine a number of theories on "gender" and "development" which have evolved from a process of theorising carried out by women and men in different contexts and situations.

**KEY CONCEPTS**

*Androcentric:* Male centred, a masculine point of view.

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

*Assumption:* A supposition that is taken to be true which may or may not be based on factual evidence.
**Epistemology:** A theory of knowledge, a strategy for justifying beliefs.

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

**Hypothesis:** A supposition made as a starting point for further investigation.

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

**Power:** Personal, economical, political and/or social ascendancy and control of one individual or group over another.

**Theory:** A system of ideas based on principles, which seeks to explain a particular phenomenon.

**REFERENCES**


**SUGGESTED READING**


**BIOGRAPHIES**

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CHAPTER 2

WHY GENDER? WHY DEVELOPMENT?

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 pre-colonial 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 characterisations and generalisations of pre-colonial societies, pointing to the rich diversity and difference that existed. This chapter provides a framework for considering alternative ways of perceiving human social and cultural development and of organising social, economic, and political life.

This chapter also provides information that challenges the monolithic assumptions of tradition in relation to women and the sexual division of labour.

Objectives

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

- To recognise the diversity of human experience and the alternative measures of value and standards through which progress and human achievement can be assessed;

- To provide a general historical understanding of the lives of “third world” people prior to the institutionalisation of development.

WHY DEVELOPMENT?

In ordinary usage the word “development,” a noun derived from the verb “to develop,” usually implies moving from one level to another, usually with some increase in size or number or quality of some sort.

In the Penguin English Dictionary, the word “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.;...” (2nd Edition, 1977).

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

**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 their rule imposed by force; and their financial and economic exploitation for the advantage of the colonial power.

Characteristic of this form is 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 leads to entrenched forms of racism. In the modern period, i.e., since 1492, examples of colonial powers included initially the Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, English and French. Later, other European states also became involved, such as the Germans and Belgians. In the 20th century, the United States of America also became a colonial power.

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

In these areas also, including the United States, the term “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 will concentrate on the specific form of European colonisation and colonial domination which took place since the 16th century.


**Which Were These Societies?**

These areas comprised most of Africa, the Middle East, Asia, the Pacific Region, South and Central America, and the Caribbean. Today, this grouping (including former colonial, largely but not totally tropical countries, peopled mainly by non-Europeans) is usually referred to as the “third world,” underdeveloped countries, developing countries, and more recently as the South or the Economic South.

Although it would be helpful to have one term to encompass all of these countries, none of the above is really adequate. Each is based on assumptions that we should be aware of
when we use these terms. 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 prior to European colonial domination, many societies had already felt the impact of other dominating forces. For example, in North Africa the spread of Islamic influence wrought great changes on the lifestyle of the native people. So much so that among some people, there is hardly a memory of a pre-Islamic past. In India, the spread of Hinduism over the continent had a similar although more varied impact. The colonisers, in some instances, entered countries already controlled by well-established, stratified, patriarchal structures and introduced yet another controlling force over women’s lives.

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

**Underdeveloped/Developing Countries**

This concept emerged as part of the work of early development economists in the 1950s who theorised very simplistically about the stages of development which societies had to pass through in order to become “developed” or “modern.”

These concepts sought to encompass all of the countries and areas to which we referred earlier, ignoring the vast differences which exist among them. In addition, the history of Western industrialised countries was used as a broad model from which to derive the process through which all societies were to pass.

These development economists coined the following triad:

\[ \text{Underdeveloped} \Rightarrow \text{Developing} \Rightarrow \text{Developed} \]

Around the 1960s, when nationalist sentiment was becoming vocalised, 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, also concerned with this process. They were eventually referred to as modernisation theorists because they described this process as one of becoming modern. They too developed a triad:

\[ \text{Traditional} \Rightarrow \text{Transitional} \Rightarrow \text{Modern} \]

Modernity may be understood as the common behavioural system historically associated with the urban, industrial, literate, and participant societies of

*Terms in boldface are explained further in the section “Key Concepts” near the end of the chapter.*
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)

One of the main features of these two approaches is that they both equate development or modernity with industrialisation. Industrialisation and its companion, urbanisation (the emergence of towns and cities), were considered the only ways through which “backward” societies could be modernised or developed, and progress and advancement were 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 the indigenous people, many of whom were decimated, robbed of their land, and/or confined to reservations or territories (e.g., in Canada, the United States, and Australia), or marginalised and forced to flee into the mountains (e.g., most of South and Central America and parts of Asia).

**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, 12)

**EXERCISE**

1. What does the author mean by “indigenous technologies”? 
2. Give examples of indigenous technologies used by 
   a) women  
   b) men  
   in your society today.

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 term “traditional” was so generalised, with little recourse to history or social anthropology, there was little realisation of the diversity in relations between women and men; in domestic and family organisation; or in social, economic, and political life.
The "Third World"

This term is the English translation of *le tiers-monde*, developed in France in the 1950s. It emerged with the heightened anti-colonial consciousness as new nations-states came into being in Africa and Asia. It was also a time when the Cold War between the United States of America (USA) and the Soviet Union (USSR) and Eastern Europe was dividing the world along ideological and geopolitical lines.

This was the context in which the newly independent states of Asia and Africa (including Ghana, India, Nigeria and Indonesia), as well as Yugoslavia, met in Bandung in Indonesia in April 1955. They adopted the position of non-alignment to 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 advanced market economies; and from the "second world": the centrally-planned economies of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. The "third world" included all other nations, usually in Africa, Asia, the Pacific, South and Central America, and the Caribbean, including the centrally-planned economies of these areas.

One of the main criticisms of this concept is that it suggests a hierarchy of nations. Some people argue that to accept third place is to accept a lower status for these countries in the world order. This was probably never considered by those who coined the phrase. They saw it as an alternative to the two main options which their countries were being forced toward; options to which, as history has shown, they would eventually succumb.

North-South

This term became popular around 1980 after the publication of the report of the Independent Commission on International Development Issues, led by the late Willy Brandt, former Chancellor of West Germany. As a result it is popularly known as the Brandt Commission. 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)

This division, like many associated with relations of power in the world, or among groups of people, is not geographically correct. Some countries in the South are not low-income and/or former colonial countries, while in the North there are some societies, for example in Southern Europe and Eastern Europe, whose economies and conditions of life have little in common with the leading industrialised capitalist economies of the North. For some, this terminology reflects global restructuring and the changes taking place in the global economy.
The term the “economic South” was coined to further delineate this grouping in economic and political terms rather than purely geographic ones.

**Development Today**

The heyday of developmentalism in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, fostered some strong beliefs, for example that:

- The state or government should play the central determinant role in introducing development policies and strategies which could lead to improved standards of living and conditions of life.
- Through the process of international investment, loans, and aid, the economies could be re-directed from their traditional bases, usually in agriculture, to industry and manufacture.

Today, while 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 non-governmental organisations. 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 “neo-liberal economics”) on international economic policy and development thinking.

All this has taken place within the context of a third world debt crisis where economic restructuring and structural adjustment policies (SAP) are advocated as mechanisms to generate income to repay the debt.

Such thinking has become reality through the conditions of the stabilisation and structural adjustment loans offered by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (the IBRD or 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 USA. At this meeting, the USA, Britain, and Canada set up a system to facilitate the reconstruction of Western Europe after World War II. The main purpose of the new organisations 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, i.e., when imports exceeded exports.

The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) was later added and, according to Dennis Pantin, “each of these was expected to play a complementary role in managing a world economy free of restriction on the movement of goods, services and money.” (Pantin, 1989)
Following the emergence of the new nation states in Africa, Asia, the Pacific, and the Caribbean in the 1950s and 1960s, the Bretton Woods Agreement has widened in scope. The present trend in monetarist or neo-liberal economics, has expanded its role. The IMF provides short-term stabilisation 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 host economies along fixed lines. Their policies can be summarised as follows:

1. Stabilisation or reduction of budget or balance of payments deficits, and reduction of budget deficits or freezes in public sector employment, cutbacks in public sector investment and removal of public sector subsidies (usually away from the agriculture and social sector to the private commercial sector), and tax reform.
2. Promotion of the private sector through contracting public services, sale of state enterprises, and deregulation.
3. Market liberalisation and price reforms in which the local market is opened to greater foreign and domestic competition, exchange rate liberalisation, usually devaluations or floatation of local currency to encourage exports, and removal of price controls and supports to local industry.
4. Rationalisation of public sector institutions including civil (public) service reform, privatisation of state enterprises, and reform of the social sector to make them cost-effective. (Adapted from Blackden, 1993)

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

In the third world, these programmes have been severely criticised for the following reasons:

- They are not tailored to suit the particular needs of individual economies.
- They contribute to major declines in standards of living including nutritional levels, educational standards, increased unemployment, and decreased access to social support systems.
- They intensify responsibilities 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 crimes, drug abuse, and violence against women.
- 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 the South, women's organisations and non-governmental organisations are involved in developing sustainable and economically viable alternatives to these neo-liberal policies of structural adjustment.

The term "sustainable development" came into popular usage after the 1987 Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), popularly known as the Brundtland Commission and Report. This report was largely a response to the growing international environmental and ecological lobby and 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, 1987:43). According to Donald Brooks, the paradigm or world view which emerged around this concept recognised 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
- provision of social self-determination and cultural diversity (Brooks, 1990)

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 (i.e., continuous increase in the quantity of economic production) cannot be sustained indefinitely on the resources of the planet, either renewable or non-renewable. A more equitable distribution of existing resources, however, could lead to improvements in the quality of life.

Feminist activists have been central to the movement against environmental degradation and for sustainability from the movement's inception. They also have often gone beyond the narrower definitions of the issues to include the struggle for peace and 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 for the most part see sustainable development as part of a larger alternative model of development or societal transformation.

Kamla Bhasin in a 1993 article identified the following components of sustainable development:

1. It must be in harmony with nature. In order for nature to sustain us, we must sustain nature.
2. It must be people-centred and people-oriented. People have to be seen as the subjects not the objects of their development.
3. It must be women-centred. Recognising the responsibility women have always assumed of catering to the basic needs of society.
4. It must cater to the needs of the majority. The consumption levels of the rich and the industrialised world must be reduced.
5. There must be the decentralisation of decision making and control over resources within countries and internationally.
6. Democracy must be more participatory and direct, unleashing the latent energies of the people.
7. The politics of peace, non-violence and respect for life must be promoted at every level.

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

**The Women’s Challenge to Modernisation and Development**

The seeds of the Women and Development concept were planted during the 1950s and 1960s. During this time, 50 countries were freed from colonialism and, having participated in independence movements, women 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 of the North had not yet found a distinct voice and *The Feminine Mystique*, the book which some credit with signalling the revival of feminism and the launching of the Women’s Liberation Movement in northern countries, had not yet been written.

Prior to that, in 1947, just two years after the formation of the United Nations, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) was established to monitor UN 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 joining their countries’ delegations to the United Nations (although in small numbers) and were able to challenge the legalistic agenda of the Commission 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 which eventually converged to foster the Women and Development concept and movement became evident:

1. It was found that the industrialised strategies of the 1960s had been ineffective and had, in fact, worsened the lives of the poor and of women in third world countries. The Second Development Decade was therefore designed to address this and “bring

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*This section benefitted greatly from the contributions of Margaret Snyder and Mary Tadesse.*
about sustainable” improvement in the well-being of the individual and to bestow benefits on all.

2. Evidence was brought forward in Ester Boserup’s now classic text, *Women’s Role in Economic Development*, first published in 1970. Boserup, an agricultural economist, used research data from Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean to highlight women’s central positions in the economic life of these societies and 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 family production, 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 on efforts to more fully integrate women into the development process.

3. The feminist movement re-emerged in western countries around 1968, alongside other social movements for civil rights. Although its energies for the most part were directed internally, some western women used their position to pressure their governments’ 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 concept was that both women and men must be lifted from poverty and both contribute to and benefit from development efforts. Mary Tadesse and Margaret Snyder in their book, *African Women and Development: A History* (1995) define 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.”

International Women’s Year (IWY) 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 globalisation of the movement. This unique inter-governmental conference and the non-governmental IWY Tribune 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, 1976-1985. This sparked the creation of institutions and networks worldwide as “women and development” became an area of specialisation in the “development” field.

The United Nations Voluntary Fund for Women (later called United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)) and the International Training and Research Centre for Women (INSTRAW) were soon established within the United Nations system. The International Women’s Tribune Centre (IWTC), a networking and communications institution and Women’s World Bank (WWB), a loan-guaranteeing organisation, came into existence as non-governmental organisations (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 organisations and networks sprang up in communities and nationally. These contributed to the institutionalising of women and development as an internationally recognised concept and did much to generalise knowledge and consciousness about women’s issues internationally.

**EXERCISE**

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 analyse 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 came into mainly academic usage some 15 years or so after the re-emergence of late twentieth century feminism which, unlike its earlier manifestations, has made (at least we like to think so) a significant dent in male-dominated (androcentric) scholarship.

It was argued by feminist scholars that the western academic tradition of which most of our universities and colleges the world over are part, has systematically ignored the experiences of women in the development of their fields of learning, concepts, theories, and research methods. Additionally, although claiming to be scientific, they have embodied what have really been mythical assumptions about women’s and men’s capabilities, the sexual division of labour in early human history, and, as a result, of women’s place in today’s society.

These assumptions were extended to non-western societies with the result that existing forms of relations between the sexes and within sex-groups, which ranged from egalitarian to highly patriarchal and stratified, were “infected” with western assumptions and values.
The word "gender," like the word "development," has assumed a specific meaning prior to the extension of its meaning by feminist theorists.

One of the earliest usages in feminist theory can be traced to the 1976 University of Sussex "Workshop on the Subordination of Women" and the school of thought which emerged from it. Scholars such as Kate Young, Ann Whitehead, Maureen Mackintosh, Olivia Harris, and Felicity Odum argued that whereas women, like men, were biological beings, women's subordination was socially constructed and not biologically determined.

They argued further that in order to conceptually differentiate between these two realities, it was necessary to identify "sex" as the biological differentiation between male and female, and "gender" as the differentiation between the socially constructed masculinity and femininity brought about through socialisation 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 a more recent usage, as we shall see in chapter 3, "gender" has come to be used like "class" and "ethnicity" or "race" as an analytical social category. One which interacts with other social factors in influencing life experiences of groups and individuals.

**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 biologistic 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: 98)

Since that time this concept has gained widespread acceptance by a range of groups and often for different reasons. Some of these 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, 1991)
• To gain academic acceptability.

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, 1991:16)

Recently, the phrase "women in development" 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 "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. Many in the women's movement fear, however, that this is leading to making women invisible once more. They note that the fields of women in development, gender and development, gender concerns in development, feminist theory, and women's studies all owe their origins to the women's movement and the struggles of women on the streets, in towns and villages, and in the academy. Yet today with the generalisation of academic women's studies and "gender specialists," the concern with the day-to-day problems and struggles of women and the movement are being marginalised and, indeed, not 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 clearcut as once thought. The dichotomy male/female is seen as just as problematic as other dichotomies in western thought.

• It is not so simple to extricate what is "sex" from what is "gender" since these two phenomena, as described, are intertwined.

Although the concept "gender" can never substitute for the word "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 "Development"**

It is important that we recall the richness of the history in most countries prior to colonialism and development. It is also important for us to understand the social relations which characterised the earlier periods of that history.

As we 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 was androcentric. It focused on the period after the encounter with Western Europe and emphasised 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. This seventeenth century European male's description of matrilinearity 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 introduce'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: 203. Reprinted by permission of Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., London)

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

In the heyday of third world nationalism, in the 1960s and 1970s, indigenous historians sought to correct this wrong. Most of them were male or trained in the androcentric world view, so knowledge of women's experiences in pre-colonial society continued to be hidden. In order to make up or counteract centuries of what Peter Worsley calls "imperialist history," nationalist historians often distorted this history to highlight a great and glorious past, stressing the kings and queens and wealth and empires. In so doing, they often ignored the egalitarian traditions which existed in many pre-colonial societies, where women had greater power and autonomy and where life was more in tune with nature and the environment, not based on its destruction.

Today, as feminist activists and other concerned scholars re-evaluate development and modernisation, there is also a renewed appreciation of the positive features of the ways of life of earlier societies, although we realise the limitations of those times. It has also led to a renewed appreciation of the continuation of those egalitarian and environment-friendly practices which have survived in our societies and been adapted to serve people's needs, often outside of the mainstream political and economic structures.

**EXERCISE**
Collect examples of women’s knowledge of medicine and healing and the ways in which these have been passed on from one generation to the other.
WHY GENDER? WHY DEVELOPMENT?

Gender Relations and Social Change

Since the late eighteenth century, social scientists have sought to develop a schema to explain the variety and differences in human experience. Early evolutionists incorporated a notion of progress; human development moving from primitive, backward forms to advanced and developed ones.

Functionalist anthropologists in the mid-twentieth century concentrated on seeing each society as an integrated whole. They could not help interpreting what they observed through their biased perspective and basing conclusions on assumptions to which they were accustomed.

Today, while critical scholars no longer attribute value to societies in terms of progress or backwardness, they do recognise that pre-colonial societies may have been at different stages of social development. These stages are usually described in relation to the production systems which predominated at that time. Like all schemes, however, they provide only partial understanding. Most societies cannot be neatly classified into one category. Many are influenced by more than one “stage.” In addition, it must be stressed that all societies do not necessarily pass through all of these stages.

Some anthropologists reject totally any understanding of stages because of their link with notions of modernisation and progress. They argue instead for a non-stage approach which examines each society on its own terms and sees movement (social change) as taking place in any direction. Transition from one stage to the other or not, therefore, is the result of many factors which anthropologists are still exploring. This includes the environment which the societies inhabit and their historical relationships with other groups. The stages usually are 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 organisation of social and production relations, for example patterns of social stratification, existence of the monogamous family, patterns of property ownership, and forms of work and production had a great influence on the differences in gender relations which were, and still are, found throughout the world today.

In some instances, as we have discussed earlier, societies were extremely stratified and patriarchal prior to the arrival of the European colonisers. This was sometimes the result of domination by other patriarchal and highly stratified groups, or an existing system of social stratification. In many others, however, this was not the case, especially where
matrilineal societies existed, as shown in this quotation by Fatima Mernissi of Morocco prior to that country’s Islamisation.

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. Excerpted from Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society by Fatima Mernissi. Copyright © 1975 by Fatima Mernissi. By permission of Edite Kroll Literary Agency.

In all situations, however, women had been able to create spaces and possibilities of autonomy within the structures of subordination existing in their societies (see the case studies below). However, these were complicated or removed by the imposition of European assumptions of a woman’s or man’s place at the same time that new stratification systems based on class and notions of racial/ethnic superiority were being established.

CASE STUDY

THE BARI OF COLUMBIA

Elisa Buenaventura-Posso and Susan E. Brown, in their 1976 study of this indigenous people of Columbia, trace their historical background and describe 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. Assessment was made through analyses of the processes of leadership, stratification, decision making, division of labour, ritual, interpersonal relationships, and general social atmosphere.

The fierce belligerence with which the Bari resisted usurpation and extinction by powerful external forces for 400 years contrast sharply with their harmonious, classless, internal social organization and very high regard for peace. A colonial envoy noted in 1772 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 concur and explain that sanction of inappropriate behaviour comes through social control mechanisms such as group pressure and public opinion. There were special positions of responsibility, which may be changed, but they did not carry even temporary authority.
The Bari are forest horticulturalists who lived in autonomous groups of 40 to 80 persons, occupying two or more dwellings several days travel apart from one another. House members belonged to three groups named after the positions of their hearths, east, west, and centre which cook and share food together. Each group has its own hearth and each individual their space. Through these, order was maintained, collective activities performed, and each individual accorded a recognized place. No one had more access to strategic resources, authority, or knowledge than any other.

The organization and division of labour between the sexes and among children was practical, flexible and complementary with little prohibition against interchange. Whilst few tasks were restricted, many were communal, or, like house-building, performed by both sexes. Interdependence is high and consequently there were no resulting hierarchies, social divisions, or antagonisms between the sexes. Full sexual symmetry existed in their few rituals and ceremonies. These helped to maintain alliances with other groups. Both men and women could invite guests of the same sex, exchange gifts and sing songs about their respective activities over days or weeks. Sexual independence existed before and after marriage. Unions were generally stable but were dissolved without fuss when they are not. Interpersonal relations are shaped by complex, subtle connections, pacts, alliances and kinships among the different 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. The researchers, like the earlier observers noted the harmonious, egalitarian and gentle relations between man and woman as well as in the general social atmosphere.

Derived from:

THE NAVAR OF SOUTH INDIA

Studies considering gender hegemonies from medieval times to the early post-colonial period in South India indicate that, within the strictures of caste, class, and gender stratifications, Nayar matrilineal social structure vests leadership and power in the male whilst allowing varying degrees of autonomy to women.

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

In Indian Women Through the Ages, Paul Thomas’ observations on the Nayar of Kerala in South India from his research during the early 1960s are remarkably similar to those of Robin Jeffrey in her study Politics, Women and Well-Being.
Kerala has a caste-based society and an agricultural economy in which the per capita income is well below the national average. Yet other statistics indicate higher standards of living in most vital aspects than are found in the rest of the country. The birth rate and infant mortality rate are lower. Life expectancy is longer, the percentages of education and literacy are higher. The figures are particularly striking among women (who live longer in Kerala) and explanations have been sought in the social history and development of the people of the region.

Among the Nayar, a numerous fourth level martial Hindu caste in Kerala, South India, the social system was matriliney until the middle of this century. Theirs' 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. Women were free to move about their localities and to have a say about whom they married.

Nayar marriage, Sambandam, was 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 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 have never, however, had fully equality with men.

Nayar men were soldiers and supervisors for the highest level Hindu Brahmin Nambudiri caste, whose 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 childrearing. Nayar social organization allowed the women considerable sexual freedom, material and social security.

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

Derived from:

CASE STUDY

THE TIWI WOMEN OF NORTHERN AUSTRALIA

A 1974 case study of the contemporary social life of the Tiwi of
Melville Island, North Australia presented by M. Kay Martin and Barbara Voorhies suggests that the social organization of the hunters and gatherers exhibits a dual structure. Whilst inheritance and clan membership are patrilineal, families frequently reside in their maternal camps with a man often marrying several daughters of one mother-in-law, thus making matrilineal affiliations important to both men and women.

In comparing male and female anthropological perspectives on Aboriginal women, Ruby Rohrlech-Leavitt, Barbara Sykes, and Elizabeth Weatherford survey 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.

Although men have social and political leadership in Tiwi society, women have a crucial position in their community's economic survival. They forage and hunt small game for most, sometimes all, of the family food and 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 over puberty be married and between husband and wife there is real economic co-operation. Both sexes go on joint hunting and fishing excursions. The tools women make and use satisfy most of the essential needs of the group and it is through their economic contribution that they are respected and assured of just and good treatment. There is no simple division of labour by sex. Hunting and gathering are practised by both men and women. Land resources, plant and animal, are associated with women, air and sea resources are associated with men. However, men hunt larger animals such as the wallaby, which require particular strength, speed, and close range dexterity with spears.

Women have the right to own property and to trade some of their handwork. Amongst themselves they also hold corroborrees—secret ritual festivals and symbolic dances—that help unify them and from which they gain, as the men do with theirs, opportunities for drama, recreation, and emotional security. Like the men, they practice sorcery against undependable partners.

Young people of both sexes have casual pre-marital affairs but full sexual intercourse is not sanctioned before puberty. If a girl gets pregnant her betrothed becomes the child's social father. The betrothed begins to stay at the girl's parent's camp before puberty so that they get to know each other by the time she goes to live in his territory. It is the men (fathers, brothers, and prospective husband) who conduct 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 practised and men try to acquire as many wives as they can. Girls are usually much younger than their first husbands whilst older widows often choose younger men. Sometimes they agree to exchange sons. Both men and women often have several spouses in a lifetime. To
a man, wives are economic assets who 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 recognised between women and their biological children who have close ties with their mother’s group. Women share in the gifts when their sons are initiated. They visit and exchange gifts with 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 reflected in the myths that depict both sexes as existing together from the first. In their creation myth the creator deity is female as is the deity of both 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 corroborees, and settle disputes. Like their male counterparts, they are the repositories of myths and are responsible for passing on tribal law and customs. As such, they are one of the forces which support the stability and continuity of tribal life.

Derived from:

**CASE STUDY**

**THE NILE VALLEY CIVILISATION**

*The Civilization of Ancient Egypt*, Paul Johnson’s 1978 study of Nile Valley civilisation from neolithic times, describes the fundamental characteristics of the world’s first and 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 civilisation circumscribed by the desert and dominated by the great river Nile.

Egypt’s only (and very dependable) source of water, the Nile supplies the valley with reliable alluvial deposits, fertilization and route of transportation. It allowed the transformation of the very early hunter nomads of the valley into farmers and herdsmen, and its exploitation resulted in the development of a sound agricultural economy. The social organization was patriarchal and included a system of social stratification.

Although inheritance was through the maternal line, men managed their families and occupied all positions of leadership. The sexual division of labour meant that women were not allowed to take part in trade or
Why Gender? Why Development?

expeditions, nor could they become secular officials. Notwithstanding all this, 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, and high ranking priestesses. Peasant women worked in the fields, drew water, and sometimes herded livestock. There is also pictorial evidence of women having responsible positions such as manageress of a dining hall, superintendent of a workshop of weavers, head of wig workshop, and conductress of the singers of the royal harem. Health care for women was important. Gyneacology was a very advanced specialization in the field of medicine. Women from wealthy families enjoyed wide property rights and could own slaves, servants, houses, and land; these rights were not abrogated on marriage. Women could inherit their father's or 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 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 great wife. Although women were not supposed to become ruling queen by law, some, like Queen Hatshepsut did in fact do so, even intriguing to be succeeded on the throne by their daughters. The power of Egypt's theocratic monarchy was absolute. There was no freedom against the law. Yet the state's remarkable stability and order encouraged tremendous development in agriculture, the arts, and sciences. Eventually, persistent external invasions proved irresistible, Egypt's retreat into the regulated collectivism of its past proved ineffective, the country was overtaken, and new people, religions and languages replaced the ancient civilisations.

Derived from:

CONCLUSION

These case studies and discussions suggest that the sexual division of labour which exists in our society/country today may not be as fixed in time as we think. It also suggests that women's subordination and male dominance is neither natural nor eternal. The possibility of a change toward a more egalitarian society exists; one that can fulfill the potentials of all human beings—women and men.

This chapter also suggests that in order to change these difficult relations between women and men, we also have to examine and challenge other systems of inegalitarianism 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 ways work is organised and the ways modern life and work affect the environment.

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

**KEY CONCEPTS**

**Androcentrism:** A term developed by feminist theorists to describe the dominant world view which until recently, for the most part excluded the experiences of women from its analysis. It also refers to the approach taken to knowledge and the production of knowledge.

**Biological determinism:** An approach which argues that human social behaviour is the result of factors inherent in the biological make-up of human beings. This is often contrasted with explanations of human behaviour which are based on social or social-psychological factors.

**Class:** Denotes different social or economic divisions in society. Theorists sometimes differentiate between economic class divisions based on access to economic resources/material goods, and social class which includes status, prestige, family background, and other factors.

**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 (Etienne and Leacock, 1980).

**Ethnicity:** Refers to group associations based on any combination of common characteristics including culture, language, religion, phenotype, geographic region, or ancestry. This term recognises the historical and social factors which shape the formation of ethnic groups and bestow on them a distinct identity.

**Patriarchy:** Originally used to describe societies characterised by "the rule of the father"; i.e., the power of the husband/father over his wives, children, and property. It has now come to refer to the overall systemic character of the oppressive and exploitative relations which affect women.
Production Relations: A Marxist-derived concept which refers to the organisation of work and production among sexes/genders, classes, and other social groupings in a specific social and physical environment.

Race: Differentiating 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 recognise 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.”

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

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

REFERENCES


**SUGGESTED READING**


**BIOGRAPHY**

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CHAPTER 3
THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON FEMINISM AND DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

This section explores the evolution of theorising on gender and development. It introduces a number of feminist theoretical frameworks and development frameworks and explains how these perspectives intersected to become two main competing feminist development frameworks:

- women in development (WID)
- gender and development (GAD)

This chapter also examines how new and exciting debates and critiques on globalisation, development, and feminist theorising are changing existing frameworks and creating new ones.

These discussions highlight the importance of theory in how we understand and act within our social world. They explain how the theoretical perspectives define problems differently and how they suggest different solutions. Here are the objectives for this chapter:

1. To explain the definition and use of theoretical frameworks and the importance of systematically thinking about the social world to create social change.
2. To explain the historical context for the emergence and evolution of development frameworks and feminist frameworks.
3. To concisely explain the emergence and main ideas; questions raised for research; implications for policy and action; key concepts; and relevant sources for each of the development and feminist frameworks.
4. To explain how development and feminist frameworks intersect to become competing feminist development frameworks.
5. To explain how debates and critiques contribute to frameworks shifting and developing over time and to new frameworks emerging.

To accomplish these objectives, this chapter is made up of the following components:

- narrative discussion of the historical context of theorising gender and development;
• outlines of the development of various theoretical frameworks;
• research questions and implications for policy and action based on the outline of each framework—these are the kinds of questions researchers, policy makers and practitioners working within that framework would consider;
• excerpts from research done by a proponent of each framework;
• discussion questions about issues raised in the excerpt to get you thinking critically by assessing the framework's adequacy and its relevance to your own national context.

Note: These outlines are not meant to be objective or even critical observations; each framework is presented as if it were written by someone who subscribes to its major tenets.

WHAT IS A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK?

Feminist theoretical frameworks and development frameworks have influenced thinking and policy. An historical context is important to understanding development and feminist thinking and to explain when and why these frameworks emerge, how they influence one another, and how they change.

A framework is a system of ideas or conceptual structures that help us to “see” the social world in order to understand it, explain it, and change it. A framework guides our thinking, our research, and our action. A framework provides us with a systematic way of examining social issues and providing recommendations for change.

A framework consists of basic assumptions about the nature of the social world and how it works and about the nature of people and how they act. For example, some people assume that society is basically harmonious and that harmony results from a set of shared values. Others assume that society is in conflict and that conflict is rooted in class, race, and gender struggles over power and access and control of resources.

A framework also indicates how problems are defined and the kinds of questions to be asked. For example, inequality can be defined as resulting from the need for unequal incentives to motivate the most talented people to do the most important jobs efficiently in society. Or it can be seen as resulting from the differential rewards needed to keep a less powerful working class fragmented by gender and race.

Different frameworks also suggest different solutions to problems. For example, inefficiencies in society can be taken care of through reforming or adjusting the status quo in a gradual and rational manner. Or inequalities can be abolished through transforming a society to redistribute power and resources fairly.

Each framework provides a set of categories or concepts which are used to clarify a problem or issue. Concepts specify important aspects of the social world; they direct our attention. For example, the concept of efficiency in the modernisation framework, class in
a Marxist framework, *sexuality* in a radical feminist framework, and *reproduction* in a socialist feminist framework directs attention to that key issue.

Why are there so many frameworks? Each framework represents an alternative way of looking at the social world. It is possible to have different assumptions about the same aspects of social reality. Different assumptions lead people to view issues and problems differently. For example, the development frameworks are based on different assumptions about what development is and how and why it does or does not occur; they raise different questions and provide different concepts for examining the process of development; and they suggest different strategies for change.

The feminist frameworks are based on different assumptions about the basis for women's subordination; they raise different questions and provide different concepts for examining women's inequality; and they suggest quite different strategies for change. Frameworks do compete with each other and some become dominant over time.

Theoretical frameworks are dynamic and continually evolve and change. This happens for a variety of reasons:

- Those using the framework may find a new way of perceiving a problem as a result of research findings.
- The framework may be revised as a result of critiques made by those using the framework.
- The framework might change as researchers respond to critiques made by those using other frameworks. This may be done by redefining what the critics are "really" saying and incorporating it into their own framework on their own terms.

In general, it is difficult to convince the adherents of a framework of the validity of competing frameworks. This is somewhat less true of feminist theorists because they generally feel that frameworks are designed to aid understanding of women's subordination in order to end it. So they may be more open to views put forward in many theoretical frameworks.

In this chapter, we examine two competing development frameworks: modernisation and dependency. We also look at seven feminist frameworks: liberal feminist, Marxist feminist, radical feminist, black feminist, socialist feminist, post-modern feminist, and third world feminist. We discuss how development and feminist frameworks intersected to become two main competing feminist development frameworks: women in development (WID) and gender and development (GAD).

We also explore the exciting current debates and critiques that are influencing all of the frameworks and could result in new frameworks. The important point to remember is that
frameworks should be measured by their usefulness in building a better society. We can all contribute to ensuring that theoretical frameworks reflect our interests and concerns.

SECTION 1
Historical Context Of Theorising For Gender And Development

Research into gender and development issues requires a thorough understanding of both development and feminist theoretical frameworks. Theoretical frameworks fundamentally shape research approaches and therefore are an essential underpinning for feminist research. Theory is not wisdom; it is a set of tools. Theory should be criticized and redefined in specific social contexts. Most feminist and development theories have their roots in the West, and need to be tested and redefined in other contexts. Basic theoretical knowledge is necessary before the important process of critique and debate can occur.

Chapter 2 noted that the history of gender and development theoretical thinking is interwoven with the history of policy interventions in developing countries, and with the history of the women's movement around the globe. Some of this activity was explicitly informed by theoretical frameworks, while other activity was more implicitly grounded in a world view. The experiences of policy makers and activists gave rise to revised theoretical formulations of development and feminist concerns. The thinking on these issues, and the operationalisation of policies over time, have drawn on feminist and development theories and have contributed to the further development and, sometimes, integration of these theories.

Many individuals and organisations have worked to improve conditions for women for a very long time. Local and international women's organisations, such as the YWCA, have had a lengthy presence in developing countries as they have in the North. Their presence predates the concern with development per se which has characterised the post-war period, and predates the wave of international feminism of the past quarter-century.

These groups have been concerned at various times with meeting women's practical gender needs and their strategic gender interests (Maxine Molyneux, 1985; Caroline Moser, 1989). Practical gender needs relate to women's daily needs in caring for themselves and their children, while strategic gender interests relate to changing existing gender relations and challenging women's subordinate position.

Women's organisations have worked for social welfare causes, reform, and empowerment over the last century in the South, just as they have in the North. At times, they have espoused feminist causes but clothed them in welfare language. In the last 25 years the intertwining of feminist and development concerns has given rise to a specific planning field (Moser, 1993). As we shall see, alternative ways have emerged of conceptualising and operationalising development approaches to women.
An historical approach to development is important to understand the evolution of both developmental thinking and policies. Early developmental initiatives, which had begun to preoccupy economists and colonial officials in the 1930s, largely ignored women. Development was identified with modernisation, which assumed the wholesale adoption of western technology, institutions, and beliefs. Buttressed by their technical superiority, western development specialists defined westernisation and modernisation as the same thing. In this modernisation paradigm, development was posited as a linear process whereby "backward" tradition-bound peoples sloughed off their historic impediments and embraced the institutions, technology, and values of the modern (i.e., western) world (see Framework A). The problem of development was not whether to follow this route, but rather how to achieve this transition as quickly and thoroughly as possible.

During the 1940s and 1950s, development planners designed projects that aimed to modernise colonies all over the globe. Many of these projects failed, but this did little to undermine most development experts' faith in modernisation. When colonial rule was swept away by decolonisation, beginning with India in the late 1940s, the newly independent governments hired many of these former colonial development experts to help them fulfill electoral promises, particularly the promise that independence would bring economic development and prosperity for all. The formulation of the modernisation paradigm coincided with the emergence of the United States as the hegemonic power in the post-war era. The U.S. became the model to which countries pursuing modernisation aspired. U.S. dominance also included intellectual hegemony which was played out in scholarship, research, and policy making on developing countries.

The 1970s

Both third world leaders and western development specialists assumed western development policies would position fragile third world economies to "take off." Few questioned whether this prosperity would extend equally to all class, race, and gender groups. As noted earlier, Ester Boserup's 1970 study Woman's Role in Economic Development, investigated the impact of development projects on third world women. Boserup discovered that most projects ignored women and that many, particularly technologically sophisticated, projects had undermined women's economic opportunities and autonomy. Training in new technologies was usually offered to men, which meant that most "modern" projects improved male opportunities and technological knowledge but reduced women's access to both technology and employment. Boserup's study seriously challenged the argument that benefits from development projects would automatically trickle down to women and other disadvantaged groups in third world nations.

Women involved with development issues in the U.S. lobbied to bring this evidence to the attention of U.S. policy makers. They challenged the assumption that modernisation would automatically increase gender equality. They began to use the term "Women in Development" (WID) (see section 4 in this chapter) in their efforts to influence the United States Agency for International Development policy. Their efforts resulted in the
Percy Amendment in 1973 which required gender-sensitive social impact studies on all development projects, with the aim of helping to “integrate women into the national economies” of their countries. The emphasis on equality of opportunity for women comes out of liberal feminism (see Framework C). WID represents a merging of modernisation theory and liberal feminist theory.

Key players in some donor agencies tried to initiate changes, encouraging development planners to rethink development policy and planning with women in mind. The Nordic, Netherlands, and Canadian donor agencies made early advances in this field, as feminist staff were able to organise for the first time to identify issues and agendas. Some agencies created WID offices whose staff worked to develop policies and undertake training for agency staff. Gains were made, but resistance was widespread, limiting the impact of new agency policies on project design and implementation.

WID staff, and the donor agencies in general, continued to work within the modernisation paradigm. That is, they assumed that development was measured by the adoption of western technologies, institutions, and values. Their innovation was to begin to ask how women could be included in the process. To enhance women's access to development, these planners called for more accurate measurements of women's lived experiences (i.e., women-oriented statistics) and for improved access for women to education and training, to property and credit, and to more and better employment. To achieve this goal, they maintained that women must be integrated into development projects and plans, and that women should have a say in policy design and implementation. They argued further that until this happened, development policies would continue to undermine women's status in the third world. As an inducement to modernising technocrats, these experts promised that women-oriented policies would enhance women's efficiency and consequently economic development.

The WID approach, with its determination to integrate women into development, slowly became a concern for many governments and donor agencies. The UN Decade for Women was launched in 1975 with the Mexico City conference on the theme “Equality, Development and Peace.” The World Plan of Action which emerged from the conference, and which set the agenda for the Decade of Women, established the goal of integrating women into the development process (Moser, 1993). In consequence, many governments set up offices on Women's Affairs, and international aid agencies increasingly hired WID experts in order to prove their commitment to women's advancement. This was a significant first step.

It is important to acknowledge that the WID perspective has enhanced our understanding of women's development needs, particularly the need to improve statistical measures of women's work and the need to provide more opportunities for education and employment (Overholt et al. 1984). It has provided a checklist of women's status in societies that is both helpful and accessible to development technocrats.
However, the WID approach has important limitations that have tended to restrict its transformative capacity on many levels. Because it is grounded in modernisation theory it generally assumes that western institutions hold most of the answers for development and often ignores the possible contributions of indigenous knowledge. The WID approach also tends to see development as a government-to-government activity, and consequently generally refrains from criticising third world governments. The state is seen as a solution to, rather than a potential problem for, the advancement of women.

During the course of the decade, disappointments arose when national women's bureaux, initiated with much enthusiasm and often quite radical agendas, were co-opted or found their role and capacity diminished through inadequate funding and limited political leverage. Throughout the period, third world feminists tended to work outside of government-sanctioned WID efforts, organising at the grassroots level on many issues of concern to women, and improving communication among women. Their issues and tactics varied, but the goal was to support and strengthen women, sometimes focusing on practical needs, but often mindful of strategic interests to alter the mechanisms of women's subordination.

A variety of types of NGO activity increased during this period, including outside-initiated, small grassroots, worker-based, service-oriented, research-based, and specific-issue coalitions. Much of the work was either consciously shaped by a critique of the liberal feminist and WID frameworks, or generated by increasing dissatisfaction with mainstream analysis. Feminist debate on these issues intensified among activists, policy makers, and academics.

The WID approach, wedded to notions of modernisation and efficiency, tends to be preoccupied with women's role as producers and to ignore their domestic labour. Fundamental questions about women’s subordination are rarely addressed. The WID approach has generally ignored the impact of global inequities on women in the third world and the importance of race and class in women's lives. To address some of these fundamental questions, different theoretical perspectives were required.

Some scholars sought answers to women's development in Marxism, which had developed the most thorough critique of liberal modernisation theory (see Framework B). However, this approach has little to say about women, nor does it question the importance of modernisation. Marxist scholars have generally accepted Frederick Engel’s argument that women's subordination is a consequence of the development of private property and capitalism, and as a result, successful class struggle and the demise of the capitalist system are required before gender inequities can be changed. Marxist thinkers have put their energies into the struggle against capitalism rather than trying to attack patriarchy, which they argue is merely an outgrowth of the capitalist system.

While most Marxists were happy to ignore gender, a number of influential feminists working within a Marxist paradigm expanded the debate around women and work to include a more nuanced appreciation of reproductive labour and the role of class in
women's lives (Sargent 1981) (see Framework D). This provided important analytical tools for the development of a socialist feminist perspective (see Framework F).

A related strand of development thinking drew on the Marxist critique of western capitalism for its explanations of third world poverty. Based largely in Latin America and the Caribbean, but influencing thinkers in other regions, the dependency theorists turned modernisation thinking upside down, arguing that it was the cause of third world underdevelopment rather than the solution to third world problems. Dependency theorists, most notably Andre Gunder Frank (1969; 1979) and Samir Amin (1974), argued that the capitalist metropole benefited from a dependent peripheral third world, and that the capitalist system was designed to perpetuate this dependency. They called for separation from the metropole, a critical attitude towards western technology and commitment to third world self-reliance.

There were some parallels between dependency theory and radical feminist thinking in the West, in that both emerged during a period of serious challenge to existing power structures, and both advocated a degree of separation from the sources of power and domination. The radical feminist critique of liberal and Marxist feminism argued that patriarchy exists in all societies and is the fundamental inequality. Politically, this suggests the need to create alternative social institutions, separate from men, within which women can fulfill their needs (see Framework E). This approach influenced the thinking and practice of some academics and activists (primarily in NGOs) during the 1970s, who called for women’s projects that were completely separate from men’s. They argued for a development approach to women that recognized the dangers of integrating women into a patriarchal world and sought instead to create “women only” projects which were carefully constructed to protect women’s interests from patriarchal domination. This approach is sometimes referred to as women and development or WAD (Parpart, 1989; Rathgeber, 1990).

The WAD paradigm stresses the distinctiveness of women’s knowledge, women’s work, and women’s goals and responsibilities. It argues for recognition of this distinctiveness, and acknowledgment of the special roles that women play, and have always played, in the development process. For example, there has been a persistent call to recognize that women are the mainstay of agricultural production in many areas of Africa, although their contribution has been systematically overlooked and marginalized by national and donor development plans. The concern was captured in the slogan “Give Credit Where Credit is Due.” Campaigns designed to change policies and place women’s issues and concerns on national and international agendas have been a key area of activity for people working within this paradigm, and dissemination of information has been an important strategy. Organising efforts have been oriented both to changing mainstream bureaucracies to be more responsive to women's needs, and to the strengthening of bonds between women through active autonomous local groups and networks.

A debate among theorists and activists working within this paradigm has been the issue of integration (in mainstream agencies and programs) versus separate woman-focused
organising. The risk of domination by patriarchal interests in mainstream agencies is recognized, while autonomy poses the risk of further marginalization, and the limitations imposed by inadequate funding and the small scale of many women-only projects and initiatives. Much of the theorising of those working within the WAD perspective is undocumented, since active engagement at the policy and community levels has been the major, always pressing, priority.

While the WAD perspective offers an important corrective to WID's too-ready assumption that male-dominated states can be used to alter gender inequities, this approach also has its weaknesses. The problems of marginalisation and smallness of scale, noted above, have limited the transformative potential of women-only organizations, although gains have been made in raising consciousness, publicising women's concerns, and bringing them into policy arena. The WAD approach is also inclined to see women as a class, downplaying differentiation among women, particularly along racial and ethnic lines, and at times assuming that solutions for the world's women can be found in the experiences and agendas of one particular group.

During the 1970s, in the context of the ongoing social movements challenging authority, liberal development thinking was influenced by the arguments of the dependency school and the growing concern with third world poverty. International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank officials committed their institutions to a war against poverty and the provision of basic human needs for all. WID specialists adopted this approach, targeting poor women and their basic human needs as the primary goal of WID policies. As Moser (1989) points out, this anti-poverty approach recognized and tried to serve women's practical gender needs by focusing on improving women's access to income through such efforts as small-scale, income-generating projects. Thus in the 1970s, radical and orthodox development thinkers and planners agreed on the centrality of poverty alleviation, although differing on the solution to that problem (Jaquette, 1982).

The 1980s

In the mid-1980s, political conservatism predominated in western governments and donor agencies. The preoccupation with basic human needs began to be replaced by a growing concern with economic mismanagement and under-development in third world economies. Compounded by two oil crises and huge international debts, global recession hit many third world countries hard, revealing structural flaws and weak economies.

Where dependency theorists saw debt as a component of the long term capital flows which drained wealth from poorer to richer countries, the international development agencies, particularly the IMF and World Bank, drew conclusions consistent with the modernisation approach: third world economies required structural adjustment if they were to revive and flourish.

Structural adjustment packages (SAP) are designed to reduce government expenditure and to increase the power of market forces in third world economies, thereby increasing
productivity and efficiency. Once again the assumptions of liberal development thinking dominated, including the assumption that economic prosperity (which is an assumed outcome of structural adjustment policies) will benefit women as well as men. In this context, it is emphasised that increasing women’s economic contributions will increase overall economic efficiency, as well as leading to equity for women (Moser, 1989; Elson, 1992). Few development specialists working on women’s issues in the official agencies have begun to question the underlying assumption that structural adjustment will, in the long run, benefit everyone. There has been some recognition that women and children have suffered from the short-run dislocations caused by structural adjustment packages, resulting in special programmes to alleviate the short-term effects of SAP programmes on vulnerable groups (women, children, the aged, and the handicapped).

Some feminists and development theorists have remained unconvinced by both WID and WAD approaches, arguing that neither approach addresses the fundamental factors that structure and maintain gender inequalities. These scholars and activists have turned to the gender and development perspective (GAD) (see section in this chapter), which emerged in the 1980s as an alternative to WID and WAD. This framework is also referred to as the empowerment approach, or gender aware planning.

This approach emerged from the grassroots organisational experiences and writings of third world feminists and has been most clearly articulated by the DAWN (Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era) group. The process of developing a new paradigm began in the early 1980s. DAWN was launched publicly at the 1985 Nairobi international NGO forum (an event attended by 15,000 women activists, and held parallel to the official World Conference on Women). DAWN called for an approach to women’s development that recognises the importance of global and gender inequities (Sen and Grown, 1985).

The GAD approach also emerged from the experiences and analysis of western socialist feminists (see Framework F) interested in development issues (Young; Moser; Elson). The GAD perspective calls for a synthesis of materialist political economy with the radical feminist issues of patriarchy and ideology. Drawing on the socialist feminist perspective, the GAD approach argues that women’s status in society is deeply affected by their material conditions of life and by their position in the national, regional, and global economies. At the same time, GAD recognizes that women are also deeply affected by the nature of patriarchal power in their societies at the national, community, and household level. Moreover, both women’s material conditions and patriarchal authority are defined and maintained by the accepted norms and values that define women’s and men’s roles and duties in a particular society (Sen and Grown, 1985).

GAD adopts a two-pronged approach to the study of women and development, investigating women’s material conditions and class position as well as the patriarchal structures and ideas that maintain and define women’s subordination. The focus is on relationships between women and men, not on women alone. Gender relations are seen as the key determinant of women’s position in society, not as immutable reflections of the
natural order, but rather as socially constructed patterns of behaviour that can be changed if desired. The GAD approach focuses on the way in which gender, class, and race are interconnected and how their defining characteristics are socially constructed. Women experience oppression differently according to their race, class, colonial history, culture, and position in the international economic order (Moser, 1993). These points are key in the approaches of black feminism and third world feminism (see Framework G and Section 2 of this chapter). GAD recognizes the differential impact of development policies and practices on women and men and sees women as agents, not simply recipients, of development. This perspective thus calls into question both gender relations and the development process.

Within the GAD perspective a distinction is made between women's interests (a biological category that assumes homogeneity) and gender interests (a socially constructed set of relations and material practices). As discussed above, gender interests can be either practical or strategic (Molyneux, 1985).

Practical gender needs arise out of concrete conditions and are a response to an immediate perceived need, such as the need to provide food, shelter, education, and health care. Strategic gender interests arise out of an analysis of women’s subordination and address the need to change the gender, class, and race structures that define women’s position in any given culture. Strategic interests include the strategic goal of gender equality.

The politicising of practical needs and their transformation into strategic interests constitutes a central aspect of the gender and development approach, as does the empowerment of women (and sympathetic men) to achieve this goal (see Section 4). The GAD approach provides a way to analyse which policies and organisational efforts will both meet short-term practical needs and also have a transformative influence on the structures of subordination. While the donor agencies and the state machineries consolidated their WID activities in the 1980s, the GAD perspective increasingly shaped the interests and activity of feminist NGOs in the 1980s, and was in turn shaped by those experiences.

The 1990s

Within the NGO sector there continues to be a rich diversity of paradigms and practices. The WAD approach remains particularly strong, as women continue to organise at the grass-roots level and through broader networks to increase the recognition of, and support for, women's special contributions to national development. The continuous pressure of organised women's groups remains significant, forcing governments and other agencies to take women seriously and address their concerns. At the same time, activists challenge feminist scholars and academics to strengthen the links between theory and practice, and to revise theories where new forms of analysis arising from experience have emerged.
While WID remains the dominant approach of governments, relief and development agencies (both UN and non-government), and bilateral donor agencies, there have been some shifts in rhetoric and in practice.

In some cases, policies and programs which continue to fit clearly within the WID paradigm as defined in this chapter have adopted GAD as their newer, perhaps more fashionable label. Ironically, although the GAD framework actually goes further than WID in challenging patriarchal structures, some agencies have adopted the term gender or GAD, rather than WID, in order to reassure men that their interests and concerns are not being overlooked or undermined by an “excessive” focus on women. At the same time, some agencies still working within the language of WID have moved (usually through the pressure of feminist staff members) towards engaging in more far-reaching critiques of the structure of gender relations, and promoting policies and programs that challenge fundamental inequalities. Labels, therefore, no longer provide a clear guide to identifying the theoretical paradigm underlying policies and programs; it is necessary to examine their content more closely.

This chapter outlines a number of theoretical paradigms and key concepts which permit analysis and criticism (if appropriate) of the complex and often contradictory assumptions behind policies and programs. Section 4 of this chapter provides a practical introduction to applying WID and GAD frameworks. Chapter 4 analyses in more detail the implications of various theoretical frameworks for policy, research, and action.

The 1990s have also brought a new round of critique and debate to challenge how we think about both development and feminism. The next part of this chapter, “Current Debates and Critiques”, explores the cutting edge of thinking on globalisation, development, and feminism.

SECTION 2
Current Debates and Critiques

GLOBALISATION
Changing World Economic Reality

The 1990s are considerably different from the post-war era that spawned modernisation and dependency theory, policy, and practice. These theories were grounded in the economic realities of the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s. Tremendous economic restructuring has occurred world-wide since then. The symptoms of change include the rise of the newly industrialised countries (NICs) in Asia, the debt crisis in other parts of the South, and the end of the post-war boom in much of the industrialised North.

The term “restructuring” has become a buzzword for the changing world economy; this new reality is often characterised by the term “globalisation.” While the idea of a world
economy is not new, the term globalisation highlights a more intensely integrated global economy in the 1990s. Companies and states now think in terms of global markets and global competition. Attention is drawn to global capital, and the tremendous power of transnational corporations (TNCs). Capital mobility has reached new heights and TNCs plan world-wide production, investment, and distribution strategies across continents and nation states. The North has witnessed a loss of jobs as “their” multinationals move production to the South, creating a “global assembly line.” Technological change has been rapid and has facilitated this globalisation through improvements in communication and transportation, eliminating economic distance barriers. Computerisation has also altered production processes and enabled jobs to be moved around the world in search of cheaper labour.

In the context of heightened international competition and rapid technological change, capital strives for more flexibility; another buzzword of the 1990s. While the increase in the mobility of capital has been most dramatic, there have also been some changes in the international mobility of labour. Migration from the South to the North has increased, both permanent (legal and illegal) and temporary (guest workers). Household economic strategies now span North and South in many cases, as families are dependent on the remittances of migrant workers. Racial tensions have escalated in the North with the influx of immigrants from the South, and much of the tension is over competition for what is perceived as a declining number of jobs.

While some countries have benefited from this restructuring, many others in the North and South have seen their economies falter. Countries such as Canada, Britain, and the U.S. have lost their manufacturing base, and have high levels of unemployment. In the South, the debt crisis has affected many countries, and there have been reversals in many economic indicators. Africa and Latin America have been particularly hard hit. The old world order has been altered as Japan, Germany, and Southeast Asia challenge economic leadership, American and many European economies falter, and the Communist bloc disintegrates.

The changing world economic reality has put pressure on policy. Liberal “free market” economic policies have been the order of the day in many struggling countries. These policies include reducing trade barriers through the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and bilateral agreements, deregulation of markets, structural adjustment policies, and privatisation of government enterprises. Generally, these policies have supported the unfettered mobility of transnational capital. State capitalism, on the other hand, has characterised the successful economies of Japan, Germany, and Southeast Asia. One area where increased regulation and intervention in the market has had some currency world-wide is environmental concerns, which have also become “global.”

**Implications for Women**

These new economic realities and the political reactions to them (i.e., policies of structural adjustment, free trade, export-led industrialisation, etc.) have different
implications for women and men. For example, Guy Standing (1989) argues that there has been a feminisation of the labour force throughout the 1980s in industrialising countries. Structural adjustment policies have brought considerable pressure for government to deregulate. As employers seek to improve their competitive position through flexible labour practices, deregulation has occurred and more jobs have become "feminised"; they have taken on the characteristics of insecure, low paying jobs with few advancement possibilities. This accounts, in part, for the increase in female labour force participation as men are less willing to take these jobs. In many countries, female unemployment rates in the 1980s declined relative to male rates. Standing blames this trend on the feminisation of labour and the desire on the part of employers to have a cheaper, more disposable or flexible labour supply.

Export-led industrialisation has also contributed to the growth of low-waged female employment in developing countries, particularly in export processing zones. Export processing zones (EPZ) are a strategy developed by corporations during the 1960s and 1970s to lower costs by reorganising production on a global scale. Transnational corporations decrease production costs by transferring low-skilled jobs to export processing zones in order to take advantage of low-cost labour in developing countries. Export processing is particularly suitable for highly competitive industries where labour costs are a large share of the operating budget, such as in textile and garment and electronics industries. Women make up the large majority of workers in these industries (Tiano, 1990), as they are considered to be more patient and more prepared to do the tedious, monotonous jobs (Gladwin, 1993). Women are perceived to be cheaper to employ, more passive, and less likely to unionise.

As the developing world adjusts to the economic crisis, few jobs are being created in the formal economic sector, with the exception of EPZs. With fewer formal sector jobs available, unemployed workers and new entrants to the labour market are forced into the informal sector to survive. In addition, many formal sector jobs become "informalised" as employers seek to increase flexibility and decentralize the production process through subcontracting. For example, recent research has shown that much of the work in EPZs is not direct wage work but indirect and unrecorded work done through subcontracting to women in their homes (Beneria and Roldan, 1987). This labour-intensive, low-paid work which involves no overhead or other labour costs to employers appears to be on the rise as the pressure to become more competitive increases under structural adjustment.

As more people enter the informal sector, average wages fall. Women form the largest part of the work force in the informal sector and they are concentrated in the more precarious and lowest paid jobs, such as household help. They also engage in small-scale manufacturing, retail trade, small-scale transport, self-production (gardens, cooperative child care, labour exchange for house construction) as well as illegal or quasi-legal activities (beer brewing, smuggling, begging, drug cultivation) (Cornia, Jolly and Stewart, 1987; Vickers, 1991). They generally earn less than the minimum wage and earn less than men even when they have similar occupations. Income differences between women and men are larger than in the formal sector (Tokman, 1989).
As real wages fall, prices rise, and social services and social security systems contract, the number of women seeking an income has increased. There has been an increase in women's domestic activities, that is, the work of gathering fuel and water, caring for children and the elderly, buying and processing food, preparing and serving meals, doing the laundry, keeping the house clean, nursing the sick, and generally managing the household. On average, women in developing countries are working longer days and putting in longer hours than men.

In most countries, the number of female-headed households has been growing in both rural and urban areas (Bryden and Chant, 1989; UN, 1991). This increase is a result of many factors, significantly male migration to seek employment. Migration of men leaves female-headed households relying on insufficient and unstable remittances. Surveys on poverty always show that women-headed households are disproportionately represented (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1989). This is not surprising since women earn on average less than men, have relatively fewer assets, and have less access to paid work and to production resources such as land, capital, and technology. They also have responsibility for domestic activities and childcare. All of these factors contribute to the feminization of poverty.

These new economic realities are also having a negative effect on women in the North. The feminisation of the labour force is happening in industrialised countries as well as industrialising countries (Armstrong, 1993). With the advent of free trade, the introduction of new technologies, and the increased use of flexible management strategies, employment has shifted from the goods producing sector to the service sector and from full-time jobs to non-standard jobs (i.e., part-time, part-year, temporary, casual). More jobs have the characteristics of female jobs. They are short-term with low pay, no possibility of advancement, and few benefits, if any. While men continue to get more than their fair share of the better jobs, more men are having to move into this “feminised” work.

Some jobs are moving from the North to the South. For example, as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) goes into effect, manufacturing jobs, especially labour-intensive type such as textiles and electronics, are moving from the United States and Canada to Mexico where labour, especially female labour, is cheaper. As unemployment increases and full-time unionised jobs disappear the power of trade unions to bargain collectively for benefits and wages declines. As jobs become more difficult to find, firms find it easier to gain wage and other concessions from workers. As a result, the conditions of work are eroding and the standard of living is dropping. Families find it necessary to have more than one income earner and married women with young children have entered the labour force in greater numbers throughout the 1980s. While working conditions are bad for many workers, they are particularly bad for women. Most women are not only ghettoised into low-paid, low-skilled, and part-time jobs, they also have a second, unpaid job caring for a family household. While this describes the impact of restructuring on the majority of women some women in the South and in the North are doing quite well. One characteristic of restructuring which has been observed in many countries is that it creates
polarisation of incomes and a decline in the middle earnings groups. In other words, a few people become better off and many people become worse off.

The majority of women in the industrialised world are working for pay or looking for work outside the home and most are doing a second job of caring for children and a household. The division of labour within the household has not changed significantly in most countries and women continue to do most of the work. Women are concerned about childcare, household management, and care of the sick, elderly, and disabled. These tasks are all increasing as restructuring of the welfare state occurs. As the state restructures, they cut back on health care and education costs. They de-institutionalise people through early hospital discharges, closing nursing homes, and shutting facilities for the disabled. They also save money by closing hospitals and cutting school programs. There is an increasing emphasis on volunteerism, self-help and community care, all of which have strong implications for women and their workload as women provide much of this work on an unpaid basis. Women not only increasingly provide unpaid services as the state cuts back, they also fill the majority of state financed health, social services, and education jobs. These state jobs provide women with wages and employment conditions that are better on average then those in private sector. As the state restructures, wages are frozen and jobs disappear. Women and men are forced into unemployment, lower paying jobs in the private sector, or into the fast growing informal economy.

There are social needs that must be met. With the increase of women’s labour force participation, the need for child care is enormous. As the population ages, there is an increasing need for care for the elderly. Female headed single parent families are on the increase and so are their needs since their real incomes are decreasing. If people cannot afford to meet their needs through the market, and if the state or employer does not provide them, then they must be met in the household and that usually means by women. As the state cuts back social services, there is an implicit assumption of a gender division of labour in which women in the household or in the community will carry out these activities and meet these needs on an unpaid basis. The government’s ability to divest itself of many of the responsibilities of the welfare state implicitly assumes the availability of women in the home to provide these services. Restructuring and adjustment increases the workload of women, perpetuates the traditional gender division of labour, reinforces gender relations, and maintains the notion that women are naturally suited for caring work.

While the position and condition of women in the South and the North are vastly different, it appears that adjustment to the new economic realities in both regions depends on the existence of gender differences. It is taken for granted that women’s wages will be low when they work for pay and that their household work is elastic and can be stretched to cover costs no longer covered by employers or state services (Moser, 1989). With the implementation of adjustment, the working day has been lengthened for women. While some women can handle this through hiring help, the vast majority cannot. A single wage is not enough to support a family and more women and youths have had to find employment. This is particularly the case where women head single parent families and
the number of these families are increasing all over the world. Women in almost every society are paid less than men in both the formal and informal economy. As wages decline there is pressure to increase the number of hours of work. As prices rise and food subsidies are eliminated in the South, and as household income declines in the North, women’s unpaid work in the home increases as they try to stretch their resources to meet their families’ needs.

**Theoretical Debates**

While globalisation and restructuring are widely used descriptive terms for the current economic context, they do not connote a particular theory of economic development. They are labels used by all sides in the current discourse. Globalisation motivates the analysis of countless national and international reports on economic policy from all points on the political spectrum.

Globalisation is used to justify a hands-off policy approach in many countries where the theoretical assumption is that the market itself is now breaking down distinctions between the North and South and will lead to growth in the South, where profitable. This can be interpreted as consistent with neoclassical economics and the modernisation approach to development, where countries follow the path of the industrialised world. The newly industrialised countries (NICs) are used as inspiration in this interpretation (or misinterpretation), having demonstrated that it is possible for self-sustaining growth to take place. In this modernisation interpretation, the barriers to development which are now most focused on are those created by well-intentioned government interference in the market-price supports, trade restrictions, and so on. Policies of structural adjustment are aimed at removing these barriers.

While the term “modernisation theory” may no longer be in vogue, the spirit of the analysis, drawing on neoclassical “free market” economics, is alive and well. Economic policy in much of the North and South is now dominated by an economic analysis of development that focuses on an unfettered free global market. The Japanese model, on the other hand, involves an active role for the state in the area of industrial policy, which differs from the welfare state model many western countries are trying to escape.

Globalisation also dominates discussions on the left. Theorists coming out of a Marxist, dependency theory or political economy tradition are grappling with how to understand the changed economic reality. There is debate over how fundamental a transformation has occurred and whether new tools of analysis are needed. At one extreme are those who see a dramatic reconfiguration of world capitalism. Piore and Sabel (1984) call it a “second industrial divide,” similar in significance to the industrial revolution, and their approach to the analysis has been labeled flexible specialisation. They argue that changes in technology and markets mean an end to the dominance of “mass production” and raise the possibility of much more decentralized, craft-based production. In terms of development, it would mean new opportunities for previously underdeveloped regions and countries to compete globally.
Writing from a more explicitly Marxist perspective, the French “Regulation School” analysts argue that there has been a crisis of “Fordism,” the dominant mode of production and regulation in the post-war era, and that we are now in the post-Fordist era. This is characterised by a realignment of capital-labour relations nationally and internationally, changes in capital accumulation requiring new “flexibility” strategies by corporations (both in the labour process and in the product market), and requisite changes in the institutional/regulation environment needed to support the changed needs of capital. Both the “flexible specialisation” and “regulationist” analyses of restructuring originated in the experience and perspective of the North. There is considerable debate about how to apply this approach to understanding developments in the South. Many political economists are grappling with the dynamics of the new world economic order, and the implications for development in the South. Some political economists resist the attempts to interpret the changed world economy as a new system, arguing that the underlying dynamics of capitalism are unchanged and the existing analytical tools with modification can be used to understand the new conjuncture (Bienefeld, 1993).

All writers in the political economy or Marxist traditions are critical of a hands-off approach to policy, arguing that such policies favour capital and do not necessarily lead to sustainable development in the interests of the bulk of the population. They see an important role for the state in both the South and the North (Bienefeld, 1993).

Both “free market” and political economy interpretations of globalisation recognize a blurring of the relationships between the North and South as depicted in the original modernisation and dependency theories. The modernisation framework sees the basic relationship as one of the North “helping” the traditional South to climb the ladder of development and become like the modern North. Dependency theory sees the North as having created a situation of dependency with the South which it uses to enrich itself. In this view the North increases its own development by maintaining the dependency and exploitation of the South. However, current economic realities call both of these interpretations of the relationship between South and North into question. What we now see is a more complex series of relationships, a more complex world.

Transnational corporations (TNCs) are more wealthy and more powerful than many individual nations of the North or the South. Their control and their allegiance know no national boundaries. While northern-based TNCs may be enriching themselves, this no longer necessarily translates into investment and job growth in northern countries. Some nations of the South, such as the emerging newly industrialised countries are experiencing rapid economic growth and some nations of the North are experiencing negative or static growth.

While it is important to understand the complexity of change at the global level it is also important to understand changes at the level of people's lives. It is important not to see these changes in terms of an evolutionary process. That is, we must not ask how societies move or are kept from moving from an underdeveloped to a developed state. Rather we must ask what people do to construct their political, social, and economic lives and how
they adapt to or resist new conditions that confront them. We must consider not simply the larger structures and institutions but also local culture and knowledge and the importance of language in our analysis.

These aspects are emphasised in recent post-modernist and post-structuralist critiques of socio-economic theory. This has led to new thinking about development, as discussed in the next section, and about feminism (see Framework H).

Both the modernisation and Marxist approaches to development grew out of European enlightenment thought, which emphasised universal “truth,” rational scientific thought, and the belief in progress. The development enterprise, whether drawing on modernisation or Marxist perspectives, is largely rooted in this idea of progress toward a “modern” ideal, which is conceived as a linear process informed by scientific economic theory. Some scholars on the left are adopting a “post-Marxist” approach to development. Acknowledging the limitations of classical Marxist analysis, particularly its economistic, linear character, these scholars emphasise instead the fluid, contingent nature of capitalist development, the importance of human agency, and the complexity of social transformation (Corbridge, 1990; Slater, 1993; Schuurman, 1993). Scholars drawing more on the post-modernist perspective have challenged the very essence of mainstream and left development discourse, questioning the universal pretensions of modernity. They call for a new approach to development; one that acknowledges differences and searches out previously silenced voices and knowledge. These ideas are explored in more detail below.

Questions Raised for Research

1. What impact has restructuring had on women’s paid and unpaid work?

2. What are the conditions of work and incomes in the informal economy?

3. How does migration affect the household?

4. To what extent has restructuring created a polarisation and increased inequality of earnings and incomes? For men? For women? For households?

5. What strategies are TNCs using to increase competitiveness? How have flexible management strategies affected women and men workers?

Implications for Policy and Action

1. Globalisation brings an emphasis on freer trade which is resulting in multilateral changes to trade policy through GATT and the formation of regional trading blocs, such as the European Community and North America (NAFTA).
2. Social policies are subordinate to economic policies and are often argued to hinder competition and be unaffordable.

3. Policies are aimed at facilitating global capital and increasing exposure to the world market; for example, EPZs and export-oriented policies.

4. Groups such as trade unions and women’s groups are trying to resist deteriorating working conditions and levels of social services.

5. The ability of nation-states to form policy is severely restricted by international institutions such as the IMF and by the power of the transnational corporations.

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**Box 1**

**GLOBAL FEMINIZATION THROUGH FLEXIBLE LABOR**

...in essence, the supply-side model entails a global strategy of growth based on open economies, with trade liberalization as vital and export-led growth as the only viable development strategy. As such, cost competitiveness is elevated to utmost significance, and from that, labor market regulations become “rigidities,” which raise costs and thus harm living standards and employment. An irony is that in the 1980s many of the previous objectives of economic growth, notably a whole set of labor and social rights, became perceived increasingly as costs and rigidities.

A few key features of the supply-side agenda are worth noting. The goal of “rolling back the State” means focusing on rewarding merit and combining fiscal reform with a minimalist rather than “redistributive” welfare state; poverty alleviation and universal social security are no longer priority issues. A consequence of increasing “selectivity” or “targeting” has been that fewer people are entitled to state benefits in industrialised countries. This has given a boost to “additional worker” effects (pushing more women into the labor market), the informal or “black economy,” and precarious forms of working, since those without rights to benefits have been obliged to find whatever income-earning work they can. It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that the leaders have become the led; international competition from low-income countries where labor costs and labor rights are least developed has been instrumental in weakening the rights and benefits of those in the lower end of the labor market of many industrialised economies. In effect, within labor markets income security has been eroded, and economically and socially vulnerable groups have been most likely to suffer.

The supply-side economic model rejects neo-corporatist State planning and incomes policy, whereas faith in market mechanisms is absolute. One consequence is that the strength of “insiders” in the labor market has also been eroded, notably unionized (male) wage workers. That in turn has strengthened the pressure for labor market deregulation, weakening both employment security legislation and customary practices preserving job security. In country after country, including
many developing countries, governments have taken steps to make it easier for employers to dismiss workers or reduce the size of their labor force, as, for example, in the Philippines, where legislation is planned to remove most enterprises from coverage by various labor laws. By such means, they have encouraged a more flexible approach to job structures, making it easier to alter job boundaries and the technical division of labor. This has reduced the job “rights” of existing employees and allowed greater resort to so-called external labor markets. Because the employment, income, and job security of insiders has weakened, employers have been able to substitute lower-cost labor. In many cases, job flexibility also reduces the premiums that employers usually attach to workers’ employment continuity and on-the-job experience.

A further aspect of supply-side economics concerns income security directly. Governments have been urged to remove or weaken minimum wage legislation and institutional safeguards on the grounds that such wages reduce employment. One might question the logic of that argument, but among the likely consequences of a weakening of protective machinery is a growth of very low-wage employment, consisting of jobs paying “individual” rather than “family” wages. Research shows that when low-wage jobs spread, it is women whose employment in them increases. Even in many developing countries where minimum wage legislation was only weakly enforced, it at least set standards and had demonstrable effects. Deregulation sanctions and encourages bad practices.

An aspect of the supply-side agenda has been the stabilization and structural adjustment policy packages urged on many developing countries by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and other international and national donor agencies, largely in the wake of the debt crisis. To assess what is happening and likely to happen to women in the labor market, we must appreciate what this orthodox strategy involves.

First, overwhelming emphasis is put on trade liberalization and the need to orient production to export-led industrialization. This entails cutting subsidies to domestic “nontradeable” production, often including staple food items (with such effects as lengthening women’s working day). It has meant macroeconomic deflation to reduce domestic consumption or living standards, so as to shift resources to export industries, again often having adverse effects on low-income women who produce basic consumer goods. The supply-side agenda has meant a focus on cost-cutting international competitiveness, in practice implying a strenuous search for ways of lowering unit labor costs, which of course means that firms will find ways of employing workers prepared or forced to take low-wage jobs. Finally, it has also meant a spread of new production techniques, usually as part of the search for least-cost methods. This, no doubt, has increased the scope for more refined technical divisions of labor. Thus, for such conventional supply-side reasons as improved efficiency and renewed growth, governments have been pressed to remove labor market regulations, cut the public sector, and privatize public enterprises and services, all of which in one way or another have
eroded employment security and led to a reduction of employment. In the context of this global supply-side perspective, corporate management strategy has evolved in clear directions in the past decade. Stimulated by high unemployment, by new technology, by more aggressive international competition (notably from Japan and the newly industrialised countries), by deregulation and the erosion of union strength, and by the desire to overcome the uncertainty induced by the international economic instability, enterprises everywhere are devising means of reducing the fixed costs of labor. There is a global trend to reduced reliance on full-time wage and salary workers earning fixed wages and various fringe benefits. Companies and public sector enterprises in both developed and developing economies are increasingly resorting to casual or temporary workers, to part-timers, to subcontracting and to contract workers. In the process, they further erode employment and income security.

Particularly in industrialised countries there has been a shift in these directions and from direct to indirect forms of employment, including subcontracting from larger to smaller units of production, “networking,” and a revival of homeworking and other forms of outwork. But these trends have also been occurring in industrialising economies, where until recently it had been presumed that the long-term trend of industrial development would involve a shift from unregulated, informal labor to secure, regular employment. The global pursuit of flexible low-cost labor has encouraged industrial enterprises everywhere to reduce their fixed wage labor force, make payment systems more flexible and use more contract workers, temporary labor and out-sourcing through use of homeworking or subcontracting to small informal enterprises that are not covered by labor or other regulations and that bear the risks and uncertainty of fluctuating business. That is the context in which to assess the changing labor market position of both men and women in many parts of the world......


### Questions on Excerpt

1. What does Standing mean by a supply-side agenda?
2. How have workers been hurt by this supply-side agenda?

### General Discussion Questions

1. How has your country been affected by economic restructuring?
2. How do people experience restructuring on a daily basis in your country?
3. Have jobs become feminised in your country?

4. Are there EPZs in your country? If so, what are their hiring practices and conditions of work?

5. How can wages and working conditions be maintained or improved when capital is so mobile and countries are so concerned with competitiveness?

**Rethinking Historical Change, Deconstructing Developmentalism**

In chapter 1, the dictionary definition of the term “development” referred to a process of unfolding, maturing, and evolving. When applied to plants and other organisms, the evolutionary implications of the term are unproblematic: a fully developed plant, or adult animal, even human, has certain well-defined and fully predictable characteristics. If it lacks these characteristics, we are justified in stating that the organism is undeveloped or underdeveloped.

Using this term in relation to human societies is much more problematic. As noted in the previous section, and contrary to the assumptions of both modernisation theorists and Marxists, societies do not actually follow a linear path of progress. They can be restructured, de-industrialised, and all too easily dislocated, culturally and materially, from the course they had set for themselves. Nor does global capitalism produce global uniformity within or between nations. Globalisation produces, instead, a characteristic unevenness, as some nations, regions, genders, ethnic groups, and classes advance while others are subjected to new forms of subordination and generate new forms of resistance.

This section outlines some of the theoretical issues and debates that arise from critiquing the concept of “development.” These include recognising developmentalism as an ideology generated in the context of the persistent inequalities of the post-colonial world. Exciting new areas for research arising from this critique include the re-examining local histories and diversity as a product of our common global history, and scrutinising the language and practice of “development” as a mode of domination.

In chapter 1 and in earlier sections of this chapter (see Framework A), we reviewed the “stages of development” model espoused by modernisation theorists. It revolved around the dichotomies under-developed/developed, and traditional/modern. The Marxist framework, likewise, depends on the evolutionary assumption that all societies will progress from pre-capitalism to capitalism, and finally to socialism, the inevitable endpoint. As we saw, both frameworks explain failure to evolve in the expected ways in terms of obstacles or barriers that distort the normal process of “development.”

In the past two decades, a number of writers have questioned the evolutionary assumptions that underlie modernisation theory and much Marxist analysis. They have challenged the idea that human history can be viewed as a movement towards pre-defined, “higher” states. Rather than focusing upon “development” as a natural unfolding
of events which no one controls, the alternative theories that have emerged focus upon people as the agents or creators of their own histories. The idea that people are the agents of history refers not only to people’s explicit plans and programs but also to the ordinary activities of everyday life which sustain, or reshape, the cultural ideas, economic practices, and institutions which make up the status quo (Giddens, 1979, Bourdieu, 1977).

Within anthropology, the challenge to evolutionary or stages models of historical change has lead to re-examining the world system and a critique of earlier studies which portrayed certain societies as “primitive,” as if they had somehow remained whole, pristine, static, and isolated while the rest of the world was undergoing drastic changes. For example, the bushmen of the Kalahari were long portrayed in anthropological studies as exemplary primitives: egalitarian, self-sufficient, “traditional” hunter-gatherers. Re­studies which take history and political economy into account have shown that these people were actually pushed by colonial authorities into remote areas of the desert and marginalised from the trading, wage labour, and other more varied economic activities in which they had previously engaged. Both their primitivism and their “traditional” practices were, in fact, creative adaptations to the constraints and pressures of colonialism and the global economy (Pratt, 1986; Wilmsen, 1989).

Thus, central to the current rethinking of historical change is the recognition that all societies currently existing are contemporaries: they have all existed for the same duration of time, and all have changed and adapted (Wolf, 1982). Contrary to modernisation models, no society has been left behind, stuck in the past, and there are no pure, traditional societies just waiting to evolve into modern ones. Nor are there, as Marxist evolutionary theories would suggest, any pre-capitalist societies: all societies have been deeply and fundamentally affected by global capitalism and, for several centuries, none have existed outside the global economy. Quite evidently, this globalisation has not meant that all societies have become the same, economically or culturally. Diverse local histories have emerged from particular interactions of the local and the global as people have accommodated, and resisted, the conditions they have encountered and pursued their daily activities in culturally meaningful ways.

Recognising that it was “the same historical movement that created a capitalist mode of production in one sector and region, and noncapitalist modes in other sectors and regions; that created, in short, the modern world in all its unevenly developed complexity” (Roseberry, 1989) represents a major challenge to the modernisation framework for looking at development. This challenge draws upon dependency theories, but goes beyond them in its emphasis on culture and on people as the agents of their own histories. Dependency theorists often portrayed local communities as passive victims being progressively underdeveloped by rich countries, not recognising the diverse ways that global capitalism intruded upon the local scene, nor the particular ways in which capitalism has been shaped and reshaped by local practices and resistance.
Rethinking historical change thus implies that those who have commonly been described as “primitive,” “traditional,” “backward,” or “underdeveloped” are not frozen in a static past (as in modernisation models) but represent particular local, creative adaptations to current economic and cultural conditions. Local histories are unique, and often “convoluted” (Wilber and Jameson, 1984). They do not represent the steady march of progress. They are neither passive reflections of unitary world capitalist forces (as in dependency models) nor yet autonomous from them, as whole and unchanging “cultures” outside of history (as in some modernisation models).

Re-examining local histories has become an important focus of current research. Researchers who reject evolutionary models no longer seek to make generalisations that explain “development” or its failure. Rather, they seek to understand the more specific, local reasons that have led people to construct their social and economic life in particular ways, and shaped their adaptations to and struggles over the material and cultural conditions of their existence (Hill, 1986; Pred and Watts, 1992).

A further line of research emerging from the critique of modernisation and other evolutionary theories has been a closer scrutiny of the origins and effects of developmentalism, the ideology or worldview underlying modernisation (Long and Long, 1992; Sachs, 1992; Schuurman, 1993). This ideology legitimises the persistent inequalities of the post-colonial era. As an ideology, developmentalism had its roots in European ethnocentrism. It incorporated, almost unchanged, the static representations of the past and of the traditional (and inferior), unchanging “other” which had characterized and justified the “civilising” mission of centuries of colonialism (Asad, 1973; Said, 1978).

Modernisation in the post-colonial period has been perhaps more insidious than the ideologies of colonialism, since it seemed to imply that if only people in poor countries would work harder and follow appropriate policies, they would eventually “catch up” with and become the same as the dominant nations. It thus placed the blame more squarely on their failures and shortcomings, where colonial regimes had been more prepared to admit that their presence in the colonies made impossible, not to say inappropriate, for any such emulation to occur. The attempt to understand the historical creation of the ideologies supporting colonialism, modernisation and “development” has involved turning the mirror back on western culture and knowledge, examining its own peculiar assumptions and biases (Roseberry and O’Brien (eds.) 1991; Comaroff and Comaroff, 1992; Said, 1978; Bernal, 1987).

In addition to examining the ideology which underlies the modernisation framework, critics have re-examined the practices through which modernisation has been imposed and through which western nations have exerted control over the South in the post-colonial era. These practices include imposing labels (“backward,” “underdeveloped”) and deploying experts, projects, and programs that assert modernisation is possible if certain prescriptions are followed.
Sometimes referred to as "post-modern," one strand in the critique of the practices of modernisation-style development takes its principal theoretical orientation from the work of Michel Foucault, who examined the workings of state power through the process of "normalisation." This is the process through which a citizenry becomes re-organised and labelled according to bureaucratically imposed categories, which privilege or punish according to certain standards and rationales. The arbitrary nature of these standards is disguised, so that they come to appear normal and self-evident. For example, once a community is labelled "traditional," it comes to appear that everything about them is less rational and less relevant than the attributes of a "modern" community. It is as if the label itself provides the diagnosis of a problem and proposes a particular solution; no further investigation necessary. The label "female headed household" is similarly problematic: it appears to name a category of households with a similar "problem"—no man present—when actually their experiences, resources, and the cultural contexts in which they operate imply diverse predicaments, to which lack of a male present may not actually be the key.

Through the process of labelling and normalisation, individuals, classes, genders, ethnic groups, and even nations become redefined according to one-dimensional labels which simplify, and therefore belie, their complex histories and motivations. They become portrayed as passive "clients," "victims," "participants," "target group members," "cases" in programs apparently intended for their benefit (Wood, 1985; DuBois, 1991; Ferguson, 1990; Escobar, 1984).

A related strand of critique has focused on "development" agencies and experts imposing western categories and technical knowledge that displace local knowledge and expertise. Some national elites in the South, city bred and trained in western educational systems, are equally guilty of such impositions. They may have even more problem recognising the value of indigenous knowledge since, unlike the foreign expert, their class status and privilege are based upon sustaining the distinctions they can draw between themselves and poorer masses (Chambers, 1983). The move towards recognising and valuing indigenous knowledge is growing among development practitioners (Chambers, 1988; Moore, 1992.; Edwards, 1989; and Nindi, 1990).

Feminist theorising on the operation of power in the production (and silencing) of knowledge, and the significance of starting from the experiences and standpoints of women (and other oppressed groups) has provided a major contribution to the critique and rethinking of standard research methodologies based on a hierarchy between researcher and researched (Harding, 1987; Kirby and McKenna, 1989; Maguire, 1987). Participatory action research, popular theatre, and other participatory strategies that attempt to address the problems of hierarchy, facilitate knowledge sharing rather than imposition, and link research directly to movements for social change have been developed and shared by feminists and others concerned with liberation, such as the educator Paolo Freire. In this area, effective practices are harder to achieve than theories of popular education, conscientisation and participation would suggest (Rahmna, 1990). At times, these participatory methodologies have been co-opted to serve the interests of
those in power. Co-optation can be very subtle, as power and hierarchy so easily reassert themselves. Sometimes, inadvertently, the self-appointed liberators end up imposing their own agendas:

The enthusiasm for liberating others has only infrequently been matched by any respect for the categories, particularly the native ‘half baked’ theories of oppression used by others. For, to accept such home-brewed theories is in effect to cut out the role of the experts on revolution and de-expertise dissent... Ideologues are always embarrassed by their targeted beneficiaries, allegedly stuck in an earlier stage of history and disinclined to show much interest in the good turn going to be done to them ... Human nature being what it is, while everyone likes to be a social engineer, few like to be the objects of social engineering ... [T]o survive beyond the tenure of modern knowledge systems, the language of liberation will have to take into account, respectfully, the quests for freedom which are articulated in other languages and other forms, sometimes even through the language of silence.


Stimulated by such critiques, a concern of feminists and others has been identifying modes of resistance through which oppressed people counter the process of normalisation, and contest the imposition of labels, programs, and practices which disadvantage them. Earlier generations of Marxist scholars looked forward to revolution as the principal mode of resistance against class oppression. Many feminists have pinned their hopes on collective action and the mass organisation of women to counter gender oppression. But recent work by Marxists and feminists recognises resistance in its more subtle forms. Those oppressed by class, race, and gender—often multiple jeopardies—may not be able to take the risk of overt and collective action (Scott, 1985). This does not necessarily mean they are passive or ignorant of the forces that oppress them. They do not suffer from false consciousness, and many have no need for “consciousness raising.” It is simply that outsiders concerned about liberation, looking for more dramatic rebellions, have often failed to notice covert and indirect strategies of resistance. Though low key, perhaps, these strategies of resistance are nevertheless effective in registering dissent and whittling away at conditions of oppression to the extent possible within current circumstances.

Feminists have documented many strategies of women’s resistance, some of which have existed for centuries, while others have been generated more recently to meet new conditions (Risseeuw, 1988; Abu-Lughod, 1990). In the development field, examples of resistance might include sabotage and general non-compliance, poor participation in “participatory” schemes imposed from above, not accepting technical advice and input judged by poor farmers to be inappropriate to their needs, and maintaining shamanism and other spiritual practices that question the hegemony of scientific logic (Nandy, 1989; Scott, 1990; Bernstein, 1979; Ferguson, 1990). Many forms of resistance, by women or
men, are attributed by dominant groups to the ignorance, backwardness, laziness and irrelevant traditionalism of the resistors.

What are farmers really saying when they state that they are “too busy” to attend extension meetings? Or when they are a few seconds late doffing their hats to the landlord, apparently daydreaming? Or just a trifle slow to obey an order? What are women saying when they state that forms of birth control imposed on them by well-meaning population planners “don’t agree” with their systems or are contrary to their traditions? Or when they keep their savings hidden from their husbands, but don’t directly challenge the husband’s authority to determine household spending? Or when they insist, to their male kin, that it is the spirits who forbid the sale of land to outsiders? Or when they state, to urban and/or western feminists, that feminism is not for them?

Where direct challenges to systems of power would be punished, perhaps severely, indirect forms of resistance keep the oppressor guessing. What do they really mean? “One can never be sure and the strength of resistance lies in the fact that one can never be sure” (Nandy, 1989:268-9). If neither oppressors nor self-appointed liberators can ever be sure, this poses problems that new theories and practices must address.

Postmodern approaches to development studies focus on unpacking the power relations and hidden agendas implicit in language or discourse. This type of analysis, also known as deconstruction, provides powerful analytical tools that can be applied equally to the discourse of official agencies and institutions, the discourse of those seeking to promote radical change, and the discourse of everyday life through which both power and resistance are articulated. This entire chapter, even this whole manual, could be seen as an exercise in deconstruction because we are examining hidden assumptions behind particular bodies of theory and practice. A clear way to demonstrate the uses of deconstruction is to examine key words, and the way their meaning shifts as they are deployed in varying contexts in the service of particular agendas, as in the following example.

We have already seen how the word “development” is deployed by theorists and practitioners drawing upon quite different conceptual frameworks with different processes and goals in mind. Other key words that merit careful scrutiny include equity, participation, and sustainable development. These words, separately and in combination, are used to refer to vastly different scenarios. As critics (Lele, 1991; Moore, 1992; and Chambers, 1988) point out, the diversity of meanings attributed to these key terms is not simply a matter of confusion. Ambiguity is actually a key aspect of the effective deployment of these words to meet particular agendas. Everyone, whatever their political persuasion, can agree that equity, participation, and sustainability are desirable. People may think that policies and programs couched in these terms reflect a broad consensus on the goals and processes of development, masking major differences and reducing the scope of critical debate to questions of selecting the most efficient delivery mechanisms. Labels, language, and discourse in general have political effects in the world and have
strategic potential to benefit or harm certain groups when deployed in particular ways, as the following examples illustrate.

Within a modernisation framework, equity refers to equal legal rights to participate in the ever expanding global capitalist economic system (sustained growth). Equity does not, in this framework, imply equal effective opportunity to participate. The modernisation framework does not recognize the systemic class, race, or gender barriers which negate the idea of an open society in which every individual progresses according to his or her merits. Participation, here, does not imply making any choices about goals or lifestyle—it assumes there is only one way to be modern. No ecological or temporal limits, and no recognition of the uneven costs and benefits of the global economy accompanies the idea of sustained growth.

Within the institutional framework of “development” agencies, these same terms have a different set of meanings, and carry different assumptions. The idea of equity becomes the equal right and obligation to participate in development programs and projects determined by outside agencies (government, non-government, national, international). Non-participation is taken as evidence of backwardness, since these programs and projects are designed by “experts” to “develop” local economic and political systems. Sustainability in this context is often associated with the idea of efficiency and low cost. If the programs have been well designed, and participation is high, they are supposed to continue indefinitely based on minimal resource input by government. Examples include centrally designed community health care systems that are intended to reduce the need and demand for high quality medical services, or road improvements to be undertaken and maintained by villagers.

A third set of meanings for these same terms can be drawn from a more radical framework with empowerment as its central objective. Equity, in this case, means equal effective power (overcoming race, class, and gender barriers) to participate in defining the goals and agenda of development processes that meet every human’s need for a secure and decent livelihood in present and future generations (sustainable development). The starting point for achieving these goals has to be recognising differences (according to gender, race, and other dimensions). Sensitivity to difference (race, class, gender, region, history, etc.) is an essential component of attempts to develop new visions and plan for change: one group’s liberation or “development” may otherwise cause another to be neglected or, worse still, further oppressed. Third world feminists and those identifying with post-modernism have made major contributions to critique and new theorising on questions of power and difference. Their work is examined in the next section.

Questions Raised for Research

1. What can be learned about conditions of integration into the world economic system from examining regional pre-colonial and colonial history?
2. What material and cultural struggles are reflected in daily life as it can be observed today?

3. What are the principal terms and labels used to describe the process of development, and to represent the ways of life of those apparently needing development?

4. Through what forms of practice (beliefs, speech, actions, modes of organization, etc.) is resistance expressed by subordinated groups, and why does it take these forms?

5. What is the vision of "development" or progress held by a particular social group; what are they trying to improve about their lives and conditions, and what start can be made on the changes—local and global—necessary to achieve their goals?

Implications for Policy and Action

1. Liberated from the idea that development involves pushing or pulling people down pre-established pathways, development practitioners can focus upon understanding the variety of goals that people in a particular place and time are trying to achieve, and work with them to explore and overcome the constraints that frustrate them.

2. Sensitivity to difference (race, class, gender, region, history, etc.) is an essential component of attempts to develop new visions and plan for change: one group's liberation or "development" may cause another to be neglected or, worse still, further oppressed.

3. However severely they may be oppressed, no social group is without its own analysis of the causes and nature of their oppression, and its own strategies of resistance. Changes promoted by outsiders without full understanding these strategies and conditions can undermine the people they are intended to "help." Caution, consultation, creativity, and a willingness to learn and adapt rather than impose are key characteristics of effective development partnerships.

4. Labels, language, and "discourse" in general have political effects and have strategic potential to benefit or harm certain groups when deployed in particular ways. This aspect needs careful attention in policy and action agendas.

Box 2

**DILEmmas OF DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSE: THE CRISIS OF DEVELOPMENTALISM AND THE COMPARATIVE METHOD**

...What these pairs of perspectives—modernisation theory and Marxism, development thinking and dependency theory—have in common is economism, centrism and teleology: economism because economic growth is the centrepiece of social change, teleology in that the common assumption is goal-oriented development, centrism because development (or underdevelopment, according to the dependency view) is led from where it is furthest advanced—the metropolitan world. As
such they are variations on a theme. This testifies to the strength and complexity of developmentalism as a paradigm. Part of this strength is that developmentalism is a layered, composite discourse which combines several discourses: liberal and radical, secular and religious. Universalizing from western experiences developmentalism created an ahistorical model of change which, on the one hand, created a "third world" which was but an historical construct, and on the other, constructed "the West" which had no basis in historical reality either. The actual modernisation paths of western countries differed among themselves (e.g., early, late industrializers) and differed from the ideology of "development." Different countries applied different combinations of mercantilism and free trade, varying according to periods and contexts. Thus, ethnocentrism to characterize the bias of developmentalism would not even be a correct term. The divergence among western countries is much larger than the ideology of modernity and development suggests. A concept such as democracy does not carry the same meaning even among western countries.

Postmodernism is a western deconstruction of western modernism, and to address the problem of developmentalism, more is required. What matters most and comes across least in many analyses of development discourse is the complexity and 'holism' of western developmentalism. Developmentalism is not merely a policy of economic and social change, or a philosophy of history. It reflects the ethos of western culture and is intimately intertwined with western history and culture. Ultimately, the problem of developmentalism cannot be settled in terms of political economy, not in terms of social philosophy, the critique of ideas or the disassembly of discourse: it requires a profound historical and cultural review of the western project. This task we might term the deconstruction of the West (using a fashionable term but also extending its use, for deconstruction refers to the analysis of texts).

The deconstruction of the West is about returning the West to world history. This follows from the logic of decolonization. It also follows from the crisis of the western development model, not least in the West itself. This may yield a basis for reopening the debate on rationality and values. Here I will only indicate briefly what directions the deconstruction of the West might take.

The deconstruction of the West can be taken as a historical as well as a conceptual project. Taken as a historical project the key question is: to what extent is what we call 'western civilization' actually a universal human heritage, which comes to us, for historical and geographical reasons, in the guise of a western synthesis? In this context, certain forms of being 'anti-western' are as irrelevant as, for instance, being anti-algebra, which in the first place is not western but Arabic in origin, and in the second place does not make sense. In a conceptual sense this translates into the question of what, in 'western' contributions, is particularist and what is universal, what is culture specific and what is general or generalizable.

The analysis of western discourses is important, but wider cultural confrontation is also required: the analysis of cognitive patterns.
underlying discourse, of western iconography and art, of western popular culture. Here we approach the point of reversal: the erstwhile model examined as a problem. Part of the project of analysis of the West in terms formerly reserved for history’s backwaters. The analysis of western fetishism, not as a fad but as an act of therapy....

These enquiries pave the way for a more specific project: the deconstruction of 'development.' This again can be taken in several modes. It can be taken in the sense of the deconstruction of development discourse. This approach has been adopted in this essay in a historical-interpretative fashion. It may be taken also in a stricter sense of deconstruction development policies and take the form of the disaggregation of policy formulations, for example, between those that are (a) inevitable, (b) necessary, (c) desirable or acceptable under certain specified conditions, and (d) nonsensical and reflecting western biases and ethnocentrism. Accordingly, the deconstruction of development is the prerequisite for its reconstruction. This cannot be a single reconstruction but should be, given varying itineraries and circumstances in different countries, i.e., polycentric reconstructions.


Questions on Excerpt

1. What is the problem with using a traditional-modern dichotomy to talk about development?

2. Why is it necessary to “deconstruct the West” and re-examine its history and cultural ethos?

Box 3 THE POLITICS OF DEVELOPMENT POLICY LABELLING

...By definition, then, such processes (if which 'labelling' is one) do not appear significant...yet. We start from the premise that they are. It is therefore our current project to convince others through the following case studies that such 'deep' structures should occupy a more prominent position in the analysis of the state, and the politics of development policy in particular. It is a programme of recognizing the political in the apparently non-political. It also becomes a way of understanding the state through an examination of certain practices of intervention and agency involvement in development....

So the issue is not whether we label people, but which labels are created, and whose labels prevail to define a whole situation or policy area, under what conditions and with what effects?....

A central feature of this labelling process is the differentiation and disaggregation of the individual, and the individual’s subsequent identification with a principal label such as 'landless,' 'sharecropper,'
or, in another context, 'single parent.' Individuals are overdetermined in this way. The list of such labels can be continued more or less indefinitely. As suggested above, labels like 'refugee,' 'youth,' or 'woman' look inevitable, given, benevolent, or natural. However, they are evidence that choices have been made between which designation of people to adopt. Remember that it is not whether, but which, by whom, under what conditions, for what purpose, with what effects! The process whereby the individual is differentiated is highly significant to our theme. The principle is familiar from structural-functional sociology or role theory, or from the discussion in public administration of compartmentalization, the case, precedents and standardization (see Schaffer 1969)....

Labelling then refers to the weighting applied to such differentiated elements. 'Problems' requiring attention and policy are constructed and defined in this way, leading to one label or element representing the entire situation of an individual or a family. Take, for example, the designation 'landless,' which is prominent in Bangladesh government and development agency rhetoric. It appears both uncontroversial and benevolent. That is to say, it is difficult to dispute now that a rapid increase in rural landlessness constitutes a problem, and that it signifies good intentions to devise policies for the landless as a target group. However, this designation relies upon a differentiation between a poor person's (or a family's) many roles and the choice to focus on one of them. To be without sufficient land for family subsistence is clearly very important in rural Bangladesh, but the circumstances of possession of, access to or rights over land are very complex and variable. Although the term 'landless' appears to refer to a sufficiently strong category upon which to predict a range of behaviour, it is not true that the designation has uniform implications for the people thus labelled. It does not reveal how such people actually survive. It relies upon the crude, over-simplified variable of nonpossession of land to tell this story of the varied relationships through which survival is arranged....

Another approach to this process of differentiation and weighting is to distinguish between the notions of 'case' and 'story.' The 'case' (i.e., a compartmentalized aspect abstracted from a person's total situation or 'story') is institutionalized over time through labels most familiarly, of course, through stereotyping. Government programmes transform people into objects—as recipients, applicants, claimants, clients, or even participants. It will be necessary to make significant conceptual distinctions between some of these terms, but for the moment they can together be regarded as evidence of de-linking—the separation of people from the 'story' and their representation as a 'case.' In some discussions, this might be recognized as the familiar process of bureaucratic alienation and even regarded as the inevitable, necessary cost (or, for some, risk) of maintaining administrative justice.

More is involved, however. There are fundamental political consequences of such de-linking. Both contemporary and historical connections are either severed or re-interpreted. Identities (family, kin, clan, neighbourhood, age group) are broken, to be re-established on the
basis of a person’s relationship to an actual or potential category of state activity. The designation thereby acquires a logic in which specified kinds of behaviour and interaction are demanded....

At the same time, separation of case from story (i.e., the tendency away from self-evidence) is an index of power for the possessor of the case. To remove people from their own story as a precondition for their access to publicly managed resources and services is a central feature of the political disorganization of subordinated classes. Authoritative labelling, defining the boundaries of competence or relevance in policy fields and bureaucratic encounters, has this function. Within the donative discourse of development policy, programmes are directed towards activity which is weakly linked or de-linked by ideological representation or practice to multidimensional systems of exchange or social structural history. The donative discourse brings the notion development very close to relief and charity—people become ‘refugees,’ ‘itinerants,’ ‘slum dwellers,’ ‘vagrants,’ and so on.


Questions on Excerpt

1. If labels are only words, why do they matter?

2. What connections are being drawn here between power, knowledge, and domination?

General Discussion Questions

1. Are the terms “traditional” and “modern” used in development discourse in your country? What political messages do they carry? Which groups, regions, or activities are labelled “traditional” or “modern”?

2. What attempts have been made in your country to articulate alternative visions of development? Whose interests do these visions serve?

3. To what extent are indigenous forms of knowledge, based in experience rather than formal education, valued in your country? What are the forums in which it is expressed?

4. What forms of resistance to imposed categories and agendas are found among oppressed groups in your country?

5. How have activists, including feminists, worked to overcome the barriers to sharing created by unequal power between themselves and those they seek to understand and assist?

6. What meanings do the terms equity, participation, and sustainability currently have in your country’s or your organization’s policies and programs?
Rethinking Gender, Race, and Identity in a Global Context

Responding to considerable pressure from women around the world, the United Nations declared 1975 International Women’s Year. That year the first UN sponsored intergovernmental conference on women opened with much fanfare and optimism in Mexico City. The participants came together to celebrate and strengthen global sisterhood. While acknowledging differences among the world’s women, the conference organisers confidently expected the common bonds between women, particularly their oppression by men, would provide the glue needed to foster global sisterhood (Tinker, 1990; Pietila and Vickers, 1990).

In contrast, this conference, and an international conference on women and development held at Wellesley College in the United States in 1976, revealed some important divisions among women in the South and North. The vision of an easy global sisterhood shattered as women from the South voiced their concerns about the domination of research agendas and publications by women from the North. They questioned the relevance of much Northern-based feminist research for women in the South. They pointed to the specific problems of the South, particularly their disadvantaged position in the world economy and the destructive legacy of colonialism, racism, and imperial capitalism, and called for feminist research which would focus on women’s lives in the specific context of Southern problems and possibilities (Wong, 1981).

Scholars and activists in the South increasingly turned their attention to the specific problems and preoccupations of their regions, particularly the impact of race, colonialism and global inequalities on women. Drawing on their own experiences and those of feminist activists and theorists in the South, along with the writings of black and minority scholars in the North, dependency theorists and some Marxist feminists, a Third World or Indigenous Feminism began to emerge which distinguished itself from much feminist research in the North. While recognizing the complexity of third world “realities,” and the existence of gender inequalities in the South, scholars working within this emerging perspective initially emphasized the “commonality and power of the global economic and political processes that set the context for diverse national and regional experiences, and often constrain[ed] the possibilities for alternative strategies and actions” (Sen and Grown 1987: 9). Considerable debate occurred over approach. Some scholars remained committed to the liberal perspective and thus focussed on the family, kinship relations and women’s place in the home and the workplace (Sudarkasa, 1973; Oppong, 1983; Mukherjee, 1978). Others were more squarely in the radical tradition, and consequently emphasised the role of class and international capitalism in women’s subordination and political action (Arizpe and Aranda, 1981; Jelin, 1980; Ng, 1985; Mbilinyi, 1984; Kishwar and Vanita, 1984). However, third world scholars generally agreed on the need to focus on the poor, especially poor women, on the importance of global economic inequalities and on the need to search for solutions to women’s problems which are grounded in the realities and experiences of women in the South. At the same time, most scholars and activists in the South, like their counterparts in the North, “did not entirely relinquish the fascination of finding global explanations to the subordination of women”
GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT


Research and activist institutions in the South blossomed and played a key role in these debates. The Association of African Women for Research and Development (AAWORD), launched in 1977, sponsored networking among African researchers and the publication of articles on methodology and development for women in Africa (1983). The Institute of Social and Economic Research as well as the Women and Development Unit of the University of the West Indies (WAND) have carried out research which has provided both theoretical and methodological insights into Caribbean women's lives (Barriteau, 1992). The Center for the Development of Brazilian Women, founded in 1975, provided an umbrella for Brazilian feminists largely concerned with the economic dimensions of women's subordination (Alvarez, 1989). Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Encounters have been held since 1981, where feminists from the region have had an opportunity to discuss both substantive and organizational concerns (Vargas, 1992). The Gender and Development Unit of the Asian and Pacific Development Center (APDC), the Pacific and Asian Women's Forum (PAWF) and the Asian Women's Research and Action Network (AWRAN) have stimulated important research on women in the region. Manushi, which started in 1979, has provided a vehicle for Indian feminists to develop their own brand of feminist theorising and action (Kishwar and Vanita, 1984). Indian feminism flowered in this period, inspiring the creation of organisations such as Economists Interested in Women's Issues Group and the Centre for Women's Development Studies in New Delhi. And in 1984 a third world women's organisation, Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) grew from a small seed planted in Bangladesh, India, into an international forum for women in the South concerned with development strategies, policies, theories, and research, particularly the impact of development on poor people, especially women (Sen and Grown, 1987).

The flowering of both research institutions and research in the South provided a platform from which feminists in the South and North could begin to share concerns and ideas on a more equal footing. The focus on global political economy and the interaction between gender and class resonated with and influenced feminists in the North who were working within the socialist feminist perspective. In the 1980s, fora such as the mid-decade UN meeting in Copenhagen, and the 1985 NGO forum, held alongside the final meeting of the UN Decade for Women in Nairobi, provided a meeting ground for feminists working within this perspective in the South and the North. Both agreed on the centrality of economic and political factors, the importance of class, gender relations, and the sexual division of labour, particularly women's productive and reproductive labour (Young, et al., 1981; Mies, 1989). However, third world and Black feminists focused more specifically on issues of race, ethnicity, and culture and called for a socialist feminism that placed these elements at the centre of its analysis (Sen and Grown, 1987).

In recent years, some scholars in the South have become sceptical of western-based "solutions" and theories, whether based on liberal or Marxist/socialist feminist perspectives. This scepticism has no doubt been reinforced by global restructuring, with
its blurring of the North/South divide, the limits posed to economic growth by growing environmental degradation, along with the demise of socialism as a viable alternative to liberal neo-classical, economic market oriented “solutions” to the world’s development problems. This scholarship has both contributed to and drawn on postmodernist thought, with its emphasis on knowledge, language, and power and its scepticism towards grand theory, particularly western claims over the definition of modernity (Foucault, 1980; Said, 1978), standpoint feminism with its focus on women’s lived experiences (Harding, 1991), and on postmodern feminism, which adopts a post-modernist stance towards difference, discourse, and grand theory without abandoning feminism’s commitment to gender equality (Flax, 1990; Nicholson, 1990; Hennessy, 1993; Parpart, 1993).

One strand in this critique has focused on the representation of third world peoples by northern scholars and development experts. Drawing on the literature on deconstruction and the post-colonial critiques of Said (1973; 1993), Spivak (1990), and others, particularly dualistic (binary) thinking, scholars such as Ong (1988), Lazreg (1988), Minh-ha (1989), and Sangari and Vaid (1989) have shown how northern representations of third world women as the vulnerable, helpless, backward “other” have reflected and perpetuated deeply held western biases. Indeed, Aihwa Ong insists that “For feminists looking overseas, the non-feminist Other is not so much patriarchy as the non-Western women” (1988: 80).

This critique of colonial/post-colonial representation has aroused considerable interest in the relationship between power, knowledge, and language/discourse. Feminist scholars in the South have become increasingly vocal about the need for studies that give voice to the complex, diverse, and multi-layered realities of third world women’s lives. The importance of recovering women’s previously silenced voices and knowledges has inspired studies such as the diary of Rigoberta Menchu (Burgos-Debray, 1984), the life stories of Bengali women (Kalekar, 1991), and a rural Tanzanian woman (Mbilinyi, 1989). Environmentalists such as Vandana Shiva (1988) and Bina Agarwal (1991) have emphasised the complex, sophisticated environmental knowledge of poor women in the South and the potential there for sustainable development. Scholars have also begun making more liberal use of direct quotations in their writings in order to let informants “speak” for themselves (Bozzoli, 1992; Ong, 1987; Okeke, 1994). The focus on indigenous knowledge and recovery of previously subjugated knowledges continues to be an important theme for Southern researchers.

The growing scepticism towards the universal claims of western theories, especially their control over the definition of modernity, has undermined the search for universals and shifted the focus of many Southern scholars to local, spatially, and culturally specific studies. Community studies have provided in-depth analyses of women’s daily lives in the South. Latin American scholars have emphasized the urban poor (Jelin, 1990; Findji, 1992), while rural communities have been more often the focus of African scholars (see articles in Momsen and Kinnaird, 1993). Environment, gender, and community have been a major interest of scholars and activists in all parts of the South. Vandana Shiva (1988) in India and Wangari Mathaii in Kenya, for example, have focused on third world
women’s special relationship to and knowledge about the environment. While not always sensitive to difference, especially along class lines, this literature does emphasize the material and spatial contexts within which women in the South, especially poor women, play out their lives (Agarwal, 1991).

This focus on context and knowledge has spawned an increasing recognition of the importance of identity and difference. Increasingly, scholars in the South are abandoning the search for the third world “woman” and turning their attention to the many differences that divide women in the South. In Latin America and the Caribbean, for example, recent Feminist Encounters have been faced with a growing awareness of women’s diversity in the region and for the need to adopt a more democratic and pluralist approach to women’s issues (Vargas, 1992). Studies of religious, cultural, ethnic, national, and other identities have blossomed as scholars recognize the strength of these constructs on both women’s (and men’s) self perceptions and actions. Religious fundamentalism, with its patriarchal tendencies, has been a persistent theme in southern feminist scholarship (Imam, 1994; Mumtaz, 1994; Kumar, 1994; Mernissi, 1987). The role of race in women’s lives, particularly in post-colonial societies, has become a major scholarly preoccupation (Barritteau, 1992).

Ethnicity, once associated with pre-modern “tradition” and thus relegated to historians and anthropologists, has resurfaced and been acknowledged as a crucial element in present day societies in the South (and North). The recovery and strengthening of “tradition” has been seen as a way to challenge destructive western representations of third world women, and to create institutions and value systems rooted in one’s own history.

However, this process is a two-edged sword as many traditions are sexist in nature, and seek to maintain women’s subordination. Hindu culture, for example, has “a powerful traditional discourse that values woman’s place as long as she keeps to the place prescribed” (Narayan, 1989:259). Yet these same traditions have provided a basis for critiquing destructive colonial discourses. To undermine such traditions is no easy task. Nevertheless, young scholars in the South are increasingly willing to challenge cultural traditions that perpetuate women’s subordination (Okeke, 1994; Amadiume, 1987; Vargas, 1992; Mukabi-Kabiri, et al., 1993). This scholarship is an important reminder that positivism and modernity are not the only forces working against women’s interests.

The focus on identity, difference, and culture has undermined the notion that a few universal divisions (such as class or race) identify and determine people’s lives. Scholars from the South (and North) are increasingly aware of the complexity of people’s daily existence. Women’s lives in the South are built around multiple axes, such as race, class, gender, culture, age, and ethnicity which interact in complex and often unexpected ways both over time and place. In Latin America, the search to understand this process has led to a recognition of the plurality of women’s experiences and “the possibility of multiple representations and identities .... The acknowledgment of these multiple and diverse rationalities refutes the idea of an emancipatory process that articulates aspirations within
African and Asian scholars have also begun to focus on the multiple identities and oppressions of women in their regions and the need for a more nuanced, complex, and contextual analysis of women’s daily lives (Okeke, 1994; Ong, 1987; Rajan, 1993).

Scholars in the South who are writing within the current debates on difference, culture, and identity are calling for fundamental rethinking of women’s position in regard to economic and political issues. Economic development, especially the economic problems facing women, continues to be a central preoccupation for feminist scholars and activists in the South. Much of this writing is still deeply influenced by either liberal modernisation perspectives (Viswanath, 1991; Thomson, et al., 1989) or socialist-feminist analysis (Meena, 1991; Eviota, 1992; Heyser, 1987; Perez-Aleman, 1992). However, scholars from the South are increasingly arguing for a new approach to development, one that takes women’s multiple, fluid identities and their local knowledge into account. The answers to developmental problems are less and less seen as the prerogative of the North. Scholars in the South are increasingly demanding development policies and plans that are embedded in the specific, complex, and diverse realities of their own societies, rather than “cooked up” by mainstream development “experts” in the North (Iadria, 1993; Ong, 1987; Barriteau, 1992; Bunch and Carillo, 1990). As Bina Agarwal points out, the South needs:

an alternative transformational approach to development [which] would...
concern both how gender relations and relations between people and the non-human world are conceptualised, and how they are concretised in terms of the distribution of property, power and knowledge (1991:58)

The study of women’s political action, both at the level of the state and in social movements, has been affected by the focus on difference, multiple identities, and discourse as well. While concerned that the focus on difference and multiple identities could undermine feminist politics, and rarely sympathetic to the extreme relativism of “high post-modernism,” feminist scholars in the South are increasingly aware of the need to acknowledge the implications of difference and discourse for women’s resistance and collective action. As Vargas points out:

The Latin American women’s movement shows that it is no longer possible to speak of women’s identity, anchored and built on their experiences as a subordinate gender....We are living in a time, not only in Latin America, characterized by the simultaneous emergence of new social subjects, multiple rationalities and identities, expressed in the social movements (1992:196).

Latin American feminists have also realised that the feminist movement “cannot be based only on a single dynamic or on an exclusive, privileged axis, but must be grounded in the articulation of differences, of the multiple and diverse rationalities already present within it” (Vargas, 1992: 212). For this to happen, women must recognise and welcome competing identities and discourses and discover ways they can provide the basis for political action. In Kenya, for example, feminists have placed the gendered character of
culture and language at the centre of the struggle for women’s democratic rights (Mukabi-Kabira, et al., 1993; Nzomo, 1993).

Identity has become a political battleground, with religious, ethnic, and cultural identities competing for women’s political allegiance—sometimes to reduce their participation, and sometimes to mobilise it. The discourse of identity, the claims to knowledge and authority, influence women’s political activities. In Pakistan, for example, fundamentalist Muslim groups are pushing women out of politics (Mumtaz, 1994) while in Northern Nigeria a Muslim women’s organisation is attempting to redefine women’s political rights within Islam. Other women are caught between their Muslim heritage and a desire to mobilise women against patriarchal traditions (Imam, 1994). Culture, language, and identity have thus become central issues in the study of women’s political action in the South, both for mobilisation and resistance. And they promise to remain so (Radcliffe and Westwood, 1993).

The writing of scholars and activists in the South have both influenced and been influenced by scholarship in the North. Minority scholars in the North, especially Black women, have found the focus on difference and representation particularly important. Their devastating critiques of western scholarship, with its claims to “know” women in the South and minority women in the North, has reinforced southern scholarship. Both undermined northern feminist hegemony and set the stage for a more considered approach to difference (hooks, 1991; Mohanty, et al., 1991). Scholarship on the multiple oppressions of Black and minority women in the North (King, 1988; James and Busia, 1993) has reinforced studies from the South (and North) pointing to the crucial role played by race, class, ethnicity, and gender in women’s lives. The issue of multiple identities and differences, the importance of language/discourse and its connection to power and the need to recover women’s voices and knowledge have become core elements in current feminist thinking.

The focus on difference, identity, and discourse has played out in different ways within feminist scholarship in the North. Many feminists have incorporated elements of this thinking into their analysis, but remain basically tied to established feminist perspectives. Sandra Harding (1992), for example, has accepted the implications of multiple identities and the constructed subject without abandoning her commitment to standpoint feminism. Many socialist feminists continue to write on political economy issues, but often with a new emphasis on culture, language, and difference (Beneria and Feldman, 1992; Mies and Shiva, 1993). Some feminists in the North have been drawn to post-modern thinking, which spawned many of the current debates. A few feminist post-modernists, such as Luce Irigaray (1985), place post-modern ideas at the centre of their analysis. Others adopt a more synthetic approach. Some of these post-modern feminists, most notably Jane Flax (1990), and Judith Butler and Joan Scott (1992), believe post-modernist thinking can be readily incorporated into feminist theory and politics. Others, such as Linda Nicholson (1990), Nancy Fraser (1990), Kathleen Canning (1994), and Rosemary Hennessy (1993), call for a strategic engagement between feminist and post-modernist thought, but one which will transform both perspectives rather than simply seeking an alliance between the
two. Fraser and Nicholson believe the two approaches complement each other. "Postmodernists offer sophisticated and persuasive criticisms of foundationalism and essentialism, but their conceptions of social criticism tend to be anemic. Feminists offer robust conceptions of social criticism, but they tend at times to lapse into foundationalism and essentialism." They call for a critical engagement between the two, one that combines "a post-modernist incredulity toward metanarratives with the social-critical power of feminism" (Fraser and Nicholson, 1990:20,34).

Clearly, the encounter between feminists in the North and South, as well as among feminists with different approaches and perspectives, is ongoing, indeterminate, and fluid. It is contested terrain which will no doubt continue to foster debate and negotiation. This terrain is becoming global, drawing on the thinking and writing of scholars all over the world. Hopefully, feminism has arrived at a point where difference and ambiguities can be celebrated without sacrificing the search for a "broad, richer, more complex, and multilayered feminist solidarity; the sort of solidarity which is essential for overcoming the oppression of women in its 'endless variety and "monotonous similarity" (Fraser and Nicholson, 1990:35).

Questions Raised for Research

1. Do the specific realities of women in the South (and many women in the North), particularly colonialism, poverty, and culture raise issues not adequately addressed by existing feminist theory?

2. How do race, class, and gender intersect to influence women’s lives?

3. How does the construction/representation of women by those who control the dominant discourse affect women’s lives?

4. Why is it important to search for women’s voices and knowledge, particularly those that have been hidden from history or silenced altogether. What can these voices add to feminist theorising?

5. What is the connection between language and power? What do we learn by analysing the words people use in describing one another and themselves? How do words/discourses affect action?

Implications for Policy and Action

1. Writings by feminists in the South argue for policies which are grounded in the material, spatial, and ideological/discursive contexts of women’s lives.

2. It is important to create and strengthen institutes and organisations in the South which can build capacity among southern researchers and activists and to foster a research/action agenda based on the priorities and concerns of women in the South.
3. Policy makers must recognize that knowledge exists on many levels and that the voices and opinions of the less powerful and educated may offer more relevant solutions to developmental problems than all the “experts” in the North.

4. Hidden assumptions embedded in policies and programs are a vehicle for the exertion of power over others and should be exposed.

5. Policies should emerge from a participatory process which includes the voices of all women concerned.

Box 4

THE INADEQUACY OF THE DOMINANT RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Despite decades of research activity in African societies, social and economic problems are worsening and several African countries are on the brink of economic collapse. Women are particularly affected since many of the policies and historical processes designed to integrate Africa into the world economic system have been detrimental to them. The differential integration of African men and women into the world economic system resulted in the deterioration of the status of African women and is an aspect of the political economy of European patriarchy. As a consequence of European penetration into Africa, the devaluation and neglect of the productive and reproductive labour of women within subsistence economies continues to determine the position of the majority of African women. Instead of studying the impact of these processes on African societies, most research has concentrated on producing essentially descriptive and useless data.

One of the most serious constraints to research on women’s issues in Africa is related to the matrix of the dominant research methodology influencing African social science research. Developed and controlled by Europeans, the methodology cannot be separated from the political, economic, and cultural domination of Africa by Europe and the subsequent marginalisation of the majority of African women. As a product of the value maintaining institutions of imperialism, this methodology reflects inequality in the power relations between African countries and European countries and also within these countries. Knowledge and scholarship are defined in western terms promoting the premises, value systems, and philosophies of European societies. For the most part, this methodology has had a negative and disruptive effect on African systems of knowledge, science, technology, art, production, reproduction, etc. It has also sustained a process of economic exploitation, underdevelopment, and inequality. European interests in African social systems stemmed from and resulted in conceptual orientations, perspectives, methodologies, and research tools that reinforced this unequal relationship.

Positivism, social Darwinism, structural-functionalism, acculturation, development theory, etc. have all been spawned from theoretical frameworks which imposed European superiority, stressed stability and
order as a means of maintaining European colonialism, and viewed ‘civilization’ as progress through unilineal stages of evolution. Dichotomous models further mystified reality by stressing unrelatedness rather than wholeness. The powerful organic links between entities were ignored and represented in conceptual frameworks as dichotomies, such as rural/urban, formal/informal, public/private, traditional/modern, developed/developing. These are presented as mutually exclusive rather than organically linked. Even the continent of Africa had its geographical integrity dichotomized into two or three separate zones. In this matrix, the ideology of racism has played and continues to play a very important role. Categorising Africans as a subspecies of humanity was sustained by ‘scientific research’ and justified European domination. This ideology helped structure the international money economy and in multi-racial societies in Europe, the Americas, Australia, and Africa, color or descent from color became an important determinant of socio-economic status and access to prestige and political power.

The exploitation of Africa was not restricted to mineral and vegetable resources or the cheap labour and markets. Research also had an exploitative commercial function. Raw data became part of the ‘cargo’ extracted from Africa for processing and expropriation in the West. Like most money-making international business activities, research often represents interests and priorities that are more beneficial to non-Africans than to Africans. Most research programs designed and executed by outsiders are of theoretical and academic importance to foreign researchers. They often fulfill Ph.D. requirements at European and American universities or cover salaries of scholars—so called ‘experts’ and advisers from non-African institutions. Some of these research activities are components of development projects costing millions of dollars and benefitting profit-making development agencies in Europe and the United States.

Most of the research on African women belongs to this tradition and reflects a structure very much in keeping with the unequal structure of the world economic system. Data on women in Africa facilitated the exploitation of African women as guinea pigs, consumers, and cheap sources of labour. Of equal importance has been the overriding interest in fertility data on African women inspired by neo-Malthusian projections used to justify targeting African women for aggressive population control activities.

DEVELOPMENT CRISIS AND ALTERNATIVE VISIONS

For many women problems of nationality, class, and race are inextricably linked to their specific oppression as women. Defining feminism to include the struggle against all forms of oppression is both legitimate and necessary. In many instances gender equality must be accompanied by changes on these other fronts. But at the same time the struggle against gender subordination cannot be compromised during the struggle against other forms of oppression or be relegated to a future when they may be wiped out.

Many third world women are acutely conscious of the need for this clarification and self-affirmation. Throughout the Decade they have faced accusations from two sides: from those who dismiss them as not being truly "feminist" because of their unwillingness to separate the struggle against gender subordination from that against other oppressions and from those who accuse them of dividing class or national struggles and sometimes of uncritically following women's liberation movements imported from outside. This is why we strongly affirm that feminism strives for the broadest and deepest development of society and human beings free of all systems of domination. Such a global vision has been articulated before particularly at strategy sessions in Bangkok in 1979 and at Stony Point New York in 1980. This book builds on those earlier initiatives sharpens our analysis and strengthens our attempts at change. While we refer to this as a "third world" perspective it includes all those who share our vision: from the South countries from oppressed and disadvantaged groups and sectors of the women's movement within the North and all others who are committed to working towards its fulfillment.

In this context we believe that it is from the perspective of the most oppressed (i.e. women who suffer on account of class, race and nationality) that we can most clearly grasp the nature of the links in the chain of oppression and explore the kinds of actions that we must now take. Such a perspective implies that a development process that shrinks and poisons the pie available to poor people and then leaves women scrambling for a larger relative share is not in women's interest. We reject the belief that it is possible to obtain sustainable improvements in women's economic and social position under conditions of growing relative inequality if not absolute poverty for both women and men. Equality for women is impossible within the existing economic political and cultural processes that reserve resources power and control for small groups of people. But neither is development possible without greater equity for and participation by women.

Our vision of feminism has at its very core a process of economic and social development geared to human needs through wider control over and access to economic and political power. The substance of this book evolved out of the experience of women who have attempted in practical and analytical ways to come to grips with the implications of such a vision. Our purpose was not to expand or present new data or research results but rather to place the diverse body of micro-level case studies
projects and organizing attempts in a wider and more unified context. We hope thereby through the collective process that this book represents to move toward a framework that can re-knit the fabric of development theory and action by drawing together the strands of improved living standards socially responsible management and use of resources elimination of gender subordination and socioeconomic inequality and the organizational restructuring that can bring these about....


**Questions on the Excerpts**

1. How is women’s oppression linked to problems of nationality, class and race?

2. Should feminism be defined to include the struggles against all forms of oppression? How can that be achieved, particularly for women in the South?

3. Are research methods which have been created in the North appropriate for studying the lives of women in the South?

**General Discussion Questions**

1. How has feminist theorising been influenced by the focus on identity, specificity, and experiences of women around the world?

2. Many feminists believe poverty is a crucial issue for women and, indeed, the prism through which women’s oppression should be analysed. Has feminist theory adequately addressed this issue?

3. Should research on women in the South be carried out only by women from the South? What about men? What about sympathetic female (and male) researchers from the North?

4. Discuss the way women in the South have been represented by Northern scholars and activists as well as by their own elites. Note the use of terms such as the “vulnerable groups.” How does this language/discourse affect policies towards women in both the South and the North?

5. Why do post-modernist feminists believe existing social science theories exclude the experience of women? Are there other feminist approaches that argue along similar lines?

6. Can a post-modernist feminist approach foster feminist theorising that is inclusive, celebrates diversity and difference, and yet maintains a commitment to gender equality? Can this approach offer new insights/tools for feminist scholars and activists around the world?
CONCLUSION

Grounded in an increased sensitivity to the diverse material and cultural realities of everyday life, the current debates in feminist theory and in development theory outlined here reflect common concerns with the politics of identity. Both recognise the need to engage in fundamental “revisioning,” although the mechanisms to undertake such a project on neutral and/or global grounds remain elusive. Power relations pervade the contexts in which visions of a better world are generated. They pervade also the contexts in which theoretical frameworks are routinely produced, and research and practice are undertaken. This does not mean, however, that we should give up the attempt to communicate with each other and co-operate in building a better world. Increasing links among feminist theorists, activists, and practitioners globally indicate that dialogue is possible and productive. In the long run, it may not be race or national differences, North or South, but class differences between educated, urban women and poorer rural or urban women facing a daily struggle for survival that prove to be more difficult to overcome. This means that each of us needs to approach the tasks of theorising, researching, developing policies, and working for change with greater humility than has often been the case.

In an increasingly global but unequal and uncertain world, it is more crucial than ever to make the effort to understand where an individual or group is “coming from”; how they are situated in relation to a particular historical, cultural, and economic context; their existing patterns of life and resistance; and the priorities that stem from them. This certainly implies a major step away from the grand schemes and blue prints of modernisation policies, and also a move away from the revolutionary, reformatory, or even educational zeal characteristic of movements for radical change, whether socialist or feminist in orientation.

In relation to action agendas, strategy is becoming increasingly important: engaging in patient, consultative work to determine when and how to intervene in ways that support and strengthen, rather than critiquing or undermining those who are striving to improve their own situation.

Research, if it is to support action agendas, needs to be more integrated than it has often been in the past; less focused on one issue or sector and more adept at identifying the relations between power, meaning, practices, resources, and constraints in the configurations that present themselves at particular places and times. This implies also a closer link between research and action, and more research carried out by and for those whose situation it is intended to improve. Such work, and that of feminist activists generally, has provided crucial sources of insight which influence the development of theory and practice on a broader scale.

This chapter has reviewed feminist theories, development theories, and theories which combine concerns with women or gender and development. Each of the frameworks and approaches presented here continues to evolve, developing new lines of questioning as
horizons shift and new issues emerge. Each has been open to the insights offered by other frameworks, while maintaining a different focus. Each has made, and continues to make, a contribution to knowledge and understanding, policy and action. For example, the critiques made by Black and Third World feminists have offered insights to those working within the socialist feminist or gender and development frameworks, and required them to give more serious attention to race and other differences among women. At the same time, the socialist feminist insistence upon the centrality of gender and class has been an important counterbalance to some post-modern approaches which highlight issues of difference, but do not always give sustained attention to the political and economic questions of “who benefits, and who loses” from the way that differences are linked to power and resources. The post-modern attention to language has, nevertheless, been very productive in highlighting some of the ways in which power actually pervades our everyday lives and the institutions that surround us. Each framework has its strengths and weaknesses, its areas of insight and its areas of blindness.

Theoretical frameworks have a positive role to play in all research and action agendas, suggesting a particular line of questioning, and helping the analyst to identify where to start, what to focus on, and how to relate one issue to another in the attempt to generate a full understanding of the problem at hand. As we have seen, frameworks are not static, but shift and evolve over time, although their underlying assumptions usually endure, enabling us to distinguish one framework from another even when some elements are common to more than one. It is the collective work of activists, scholars, researchers, and writers that leads to the emergence of new theoretical approaches over time.

Much empirical research, development policy, and programming undertaken by government and non-government agencies takes place without any explicit reference to theory. Nevertheless, certain assumptions about the nature of social problems and their solutions do underlie this work. It is important to be able to identify such assumptions in order to examine and, if necessary, critique them. It is then possible to propose alternative approaches based on different assumptions, and engage in new theorising which makes explicit the assumptions, concerns, and social visions on which alternatives could be based.

Both recognising theory and engaging in our own theorising are important to the process of bringing about social change. Unacknowledged or hidden assumptions embedded in research, policy, and programs are a vehicle for exerting power over others. Making the assumptions underlying our own goals and visions explicit is a means of empowerment, inviting others to engage in critical debate, opening up to many voices, and strengthening the potential for collective revisioning on an open and equal basis.

The application of theoretical frameworks in policy and programming is further examined in the next section of this chapter.
SECTION 3
Theoretical Frameworks

FRAMEWORK A: MODERNISATION THEORY

Modernisation theory emerged in the 1930s with the early development initiatives of colonial rulers and economists, and gained momentum in the post-war/post-colonial period. Western economists and sociologists began to theorise in the 1950s about how to promote “development” in the newly independent countries and development planners designed projects aimed to modernise less developed countries all over the globe. Modernisation was concerned with turning these economies and societies into images of the industrialised, high mass consumption, democratic societies of the western world. Obstacles to growth were identified in traditional cultural practices and values, as well as in social and economic infrastructures. Observable, cultural, economic, and political divergence from the model provided by the West was enough to define a country and its institutions and practices as “pre-modern” and in need of immediate change (see chapter 1).

In sociology, leading modernisation writers in the 1950s and 60s, such as Talcott Parsons and Daniel Lerner in the U.S., drew on the early analysis of social change of Emile Durkheim and Max Weber writing at the turn of the century. In economics, the modernisation approach is closely tied to mainstream neoclassical economics which dominate American and British economies and emphasises the benefits of free market using a model of “rational” choice. Prominent early writers included Walter Rostow and Arthur Lewis. Modernisation has been the dominant approach underlying development research and policy in the post-war period and continues to guide development efforts today.

The basic idea of modernisation is that development is a natural linear process away from traditional social and economic practices toward a western-style economy:

“It is possible to identify all societies, in their economic dimensions, as lying within one of the five categories: the traditional society, the preconditions for take-off, take-off, the drive to maturity, and the age of high mass consumption.” (Rostow, 1960: 4). The measures of success include GNP, income levels, employment measures, education levels, industrial structure, all of which emphasise adopting western economic institutions, technology, and values. The challenge is to identify barriers to self-sustaining growth. These barriers may be technological, educational, or cultural. Intervention is needed to overcome the obstacles which tend to be in the country itself, rather than in the functioning of the international economy. Ways are sought to integrate the economy into the international market. Some writers emphasise a dual economy, where the traditional and modern sectors coexist.
A number of assumptions operate in modernisation theory:

- Economic growth will benefit all members of the society, through "trickle-down" effects and other spread effects
- Access to cash and markets will improve conditions for people
- Macroeconomic policies are gender neutral and benefit all of society.
- Modern technology is superior to traditional technologies and non-market processes have tended to be ignored in the economic analysis.

Modernisation theory has been the dominant guide to the policies of the main international agencies such as the World Bank and the IMF, as well as the main aid organizations, such as USAID.

Modernisation theory can be used to justify either a laissez-faire approach to development policy (emphasis on the market), or a planning approach where intervention is seen as necessary to remove obstacles and create industrialisation.

Questions Raised for Research

1. What are the obstacles to western-style growth?
2. What macroeconomic policies and sectoral policies will foster growth? What are the impacts of various policies, in terms of growth, incomes, employment levels?
3. How can the diffusion of western education and technology be facilitated?

Implications for Policy and Action

1. Policies may be needed to facilitate the development of modern economic institutions and the extension of the cash economy, for example, policies to provide credit and financing for income generating projects. Policies are needed to improve basic human and physical capital, such as literacy, education, health, roads, etc.

2. Policies should be tailored to promote the development of leading sectors, which will then create spread effects. The emphasis changes over time as various approaches are tried and fail. These approaches include industrialisation via import substitution, emphasis on capital goods production, emphasis on building infrastructure, emphasis on external trade (exports), emphasis on basic needs.

3. Policies in current modernisation thinking emphasise structural adjustment: the market, debt reduction, export-led growth, and an end to price subsidies.
THE STAGES OF ECONOMIC GROWTH: A NON-COMMUNIST MANIFESTO — The Preconditions For Take-Off

The second stage of growth embraces societies in the process of transition; that is, the period when the preconditions for take-off are developed; for it takes time to transform a traditional society in the ways necessary for it to exploit the fruits of modern science, to fend off diminishing returns, and thus to enjoy the blessings and choices opened up by the march of compound interest.

The preconditions for take-off were initially developed in a clearly marked way in Western Europe of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries as the insights of modern science began to be translated into new production functions in both agriculture and industry, in a setting given dynamism by the lateral expansion of world markets and the international competition for them. But all that lies behind the break-up of the Middle Ages is relevant to the creation of the preconditions for take-off in Western Europe. Among the Western European states, Britain (favoured by geography, natural resources, trading possibilities, social and political structure) was the first to develop fully the preconditions for take-off.

The more general case in modern history, however, saw the stage of preconditions arise not endogenously but from some external intrusion by more advanced societies. These invasions—literal or figurative—shocked the traditional society and began or hastened its undoing; but they also set in motion ideas and sentiments which initiated the process by which a modern alternative to the traditional society was constructed out of the old culture.

The idea spreads not merely that economic progress is possible, but that economic progress is a necessary condition for some other purpose judged to be good, be it national dignity, private profit, the general welfare, or a better life for the children. Education, for some at least, broadens and changes to suit the needs of modern economic activity. New types of enterprising men come forward—in the private economy, in government, or both—willing to mobilize savings and to take risks in pursuit of profit or modernisation. Banks and other institutions for mobilizing capital appear. Investment increases, notably in transport, communications, and in raw materials in which other nations may have an economic interest. The scope of commerce, internal and external, widens. And, here and there, modern manufacturing enterprise appears, using the new methods. But all this activity proceeds at a limited pace within an economy and a society still mainly characterized by traditional low-productivity methods by the old social structure and values, and by the regionally based political institutions, that developed in conjunction with them.

In many recent cases, for example, the traditional society persisted side by side with modern economic activities, conducted for limited economic purposes by a colonial or quasi-colonial power....
The Take-Off

We come now to the great watershed in the life of modern societies: the third stage in this sequence, the take-off. The take-off is the interval when the old blocks and resistance to steady growth are finally overcome. The forces making for economic progress, which yielded limited bursts and enclaves of modern activity, expand and come to dominate the society. Growth becomes its normal conditions. Compound interest becomes built, as it were, into its habits and institutional structure.


Questions on Excerpt

1. What social and political changes are suggested as essential to economic progress?

2. What is the implicit attitude toward traditional society and its values?

General Discussion Questions

1. Using the modernisation approach, what policies would you urge on your government for reducing rural poverty?

2. What does your country hope to achieve by education? Is this consistent with a modernisation approach?

3. What kind of data would a modernisation economist want in order to evaluate the impact of structural adjustment policies? What information do you think would be needed?

4. Can you think of policies used in your country which fit the modernisation approach? What was their impact on the well-being of women?

5. Do you think "development" is possible without imitating western cultures?

FRAMEWORK B: MARXIST/DEPENDENCY THEORY

Karl Marx has provided many of the concepts and analytical tools most commonly used to discuss inequitable social relations. He believed differing material interests, based on one’s economic position and the way one earned a living, resulted in differing perceptions of social reality and relegated individuals and families into social classes. Conflict between these classes is seen as the driving force underlying political and social strife. Marx believed the contradictions within capitalism would eventually lead to
overproduction, underconsumption, depression, and the overthrow of capital by the working class. Yet capitalism continued to flourish, albeit with periodic depressions, and indeed, gradually established hegemony across the globe.

Vladimir Lenin, in an effort to explain this, concluded that imperial expansion enabled capitalism to temporarily circumvent the problem of overproduction. The colonies had served as captive markets for the absorption both of surplus production and surplus capital. He predicted that finance capital would become increasingly crucial to this process and would eventually control the global economy.

In the 1960s, continuing underdevelopment in Latin America inspired some social scientists who drew on Lenin's explanation of imperialism to explore the impact of this unequal relationship on the economies and peoples in the South. They rejected the liberal assumption, central to the modernisation approach, that underdevelopment was due to inadequate national policies and insufficient understanding of western technology in the South, arguing instead that underdevelopment was largely the result of unequal and exploitative economic relations between the dominant powers in the North (metropole) and their client states in the South (periphery). They examine patterns of trade or exchange between developing and industrialised countries and conclude:

1. Economic underdevelopment is created by a persistent outflow of economic surplus.

2. The prospects for economic development in any one country are determined by its position in the international economy.

3. That position in the international economy is historically determined.

4. Present day underdeveloped/developing countries cannot expect to pass through the same phases of economic development as advanced capitalist countries because internal conditions are different.

5. Industrially advanced countries at various stages of development have been able to use underdeveloped economies as sources of cheap raw materials, markets, or their goods and outlets for surplus capital.

This view, called dependency theory, dominated left development scholarship in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The perpetuation of these unequal relations, they argued, is managed by a clientele class in the South which collaborates with the dominant capitalist class in the North. Market and technology transfers are thus structured in ways that maintain and perpetuate underdevelopment in the South and the domination of the North. To overcome this, dependency theorists called for the overthrow of this clientele class, an end to links with the North and a focus on self-reliant development. This perspective and
its prescriptions attracted many intellectuals (and some policy makers) in the South, who saw in it both an explanation for their underdevelopment and a means to overcome that legacy.

Most liberals and neoclassical economists, working within a modernisation paradigm, rejected the dependency approach outright; some, such as the ECLAC school led by Raoul Prebisch, recognized that deteriorating terms of trade in the periphery affected the accumulations of capital and consequently the rate of economic growth (Blomstrom and Hettne, 1986:433).

Some Marxists raised questions as well. Dependency theorists, according to their critics, had simply turned modernisation on its head, arguing against capitalism and technology transfers rather than for them. Scholars such as Colin Leys pointed out that the role of classes and interest groups in the South had been ignored. Marxists such as Bill Warren found the prospects for capitalist development relatively good in many underdeveloped countries. Capitalism, he argued, did not cause underdevelopment. Classes and contradictions within third world nations and their impact on relations with the North must be understood if one is to properly evaluate third world development (or underdevelopment). In the late 1970s and 1980s the focus of the Marxist literature on development was on how the capitalist mode of production articulated with other modes of production in particular social formations. This mode of production analysis supplanted dependency theory in the 1980s.

While dependency theory no longer dominates political economy or Marxist analysis of development, remnants are still found in the emerging political economy interpretations of recent global economic changes (see “Globalisation” at the beginning of section 2 in this chapter).

**Questions Raised for Research**

1. What are the capital flows, technology transfers, and economic relations between the South and the North?

2. What role do third world elites play in (under) development in the South?

3. How have classes and contradictions within third world countries affected their relations with the North? What have been the developmental consequences of those relations?

4. How does the capitalist mode of production interact with other modes of production, such as independent commodity production (for example, small family farms)?
Implications for Policy and Action

1. Policy makers should consider the possibility of cutting links with the North and fostering self-reliant development.

2. Policy should encourage those people in the South who can build internal development and should design policies that would permit local elites to challenge the domination of capital from the North.

3. Action should be directed at developing alternatives to capitalism.

4. Modes of production theorists focus on the growth potential of the indigenous business class and see them as better leaders of development than the foreign business owners.

Box 7

Development Theory in Transition
The Crystallized Theory of Dependence

Frank André Gunder Frank joined the circle of Latin American dependentistas during the mid-1960s, and he soon became one of the driving forces behind the early development of the dependency school. He became internationally known for his critique of the established development theory.... It should be mentioned that outside Latin America the dependency school has been more or less identified with Frank.

Frank was one of the first in Latin America to work with an alternative theory of the Latin American economic development. The earliest results from this attempt were presented in a book entitled Capitalism and Under-development in Latin America, published in 1967. In this book, which was an analysis of the economic history of Brazil and Chile, he came to the conclusion that 'development and underdevelopment are two sides of the same coin.' Thus, according to Frank, it was the incorporation into the world capitalist system that led to development in some areas and underdevelopment in others.

Following Baran, Frank stressed that it was the utilization of the economic surplus that had caused development and underdevelopment. Frank's analysis accentuated the monopolistic structure of capitalism and its effects on the real and the potential surplus. The world capitalist system was characterized by a metropolis-satellite structure, where the metropolis exploited the satellite. While this had facilitated the expropriation of large portions of the underdeveloped countries' actual surplus, it had also prevented these countries from realizing their potential surplus. The monopoly structure was found at all levels, i.e., the international, the national, and the local level, and created a situation of exploitation which, in turn, caused the 'chain-like' flow of the surplus from the remotest Latin American village to Wall Street in New York.
The monopoly capitalist structure and the surplus expropriation/appropriation contradiction run through the entire Chilean economy, past and present. Indeed, it is this exploitative relation which in chain-like fashion extends the capitalist link between the capitalist world and national metropolises to the regional centres (part of whose surplus they appropriate), and from these to local centres, and so on to large landowners or merchants who expropriate surplus from small peasants or tenants, and sometimes even from these latter to landless laborers exploited by them in turn. At each step along the way, the relatively few capitalists above exercise monopoly power over the many below, expropriating some or all of their economic surplus and, to the extent that they are not expropriated in turn by the still fewer above them, appropriating it for their own use. Thus at each point, the international, national and local capitalist system generates economic development for the few and underdevelopment for the many. 

( Ibid: 7-8)...


Questions on Excerpt

1. Why does Frank believe development and underdevelopment are two sides of the same coin?

2. How did the metropolis exploit the satellite or third world countries?

3. Do you have to understand the global capitalist system to understand the causes of underdevelopment in the third world?

General Discussion Questions

1. Has the dependency approach been used in your country? What have been its strengths and weaknesses when applied to your country?

2. How is your country linked to international capitalism (trade, exchange rate, industry ownership, foreign investment)?

3. What has your country gained and lost from these linkages?

4. Why did intellectuals in the South find the dependency school so attractive?

FRAMEWORK C: LIBERAL FEMINISM

Liberal feminism is rooted in the liberal philosophical tradition of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries which focused on the ideals of equality and liberty. The liberal conception of equality is based on the fact that all men have the potential to be rational
and any inequality has to be justified in rational terms. The liberal conception of liberty means that people were governed only with their consent and only within certain limits, generally defined in terms of the public sphere, which the government can regulate and the private sphere, which it cannot. Liberals continue to debate just where the line should be drawn between the two spheres but they agree that it must be drawn in order to preserve liberty. These ideas are important underpinnings of liberal feminist thought.

The first western feminist theorist, Mary Wollstonecraft, in A Vindication of the Rights of Woman published in 1792, argued that women’s capacity to reason was equal with that of men and that biological sex differences were irrelevant to the granting of political rights. She argued the fact that women appeared to be inferior in intellect was due to their inferior education and, therefore, was the result of women’s inequality rather than a justification of it. Twentieth century liberal feminists also use this distinction between biological facts and social norms when they draw the distinction between sex (biological differences) and gender (historical, social and cultural differences between women and men). Liberal feminists see women’s subordination as resulting from gendered norms rather than biological sex and aim to change these norms. Liberal feminists argue that inequality against women cannot be justified on rational terms and trust that rational men can be convinced of the folly of perpetuating that inequality.

Liberal feminists are concerned about equal opportunity for women and men. They are concerned that women receive equal opportunities in education and before the law. This motivated the campaigns worldwide for voting rights and property rights. They are concerned that equal job opportunities are open to women so that women may achieve positions of power in government and business. Liberal feminist activists are concerned with ensuring that laws and policies are not discriminatory against women and that women have equality of opportunity in all aspects of life.

Contemporary liberal feminists, like other liberals, are concerned about the distinction between the public and private spheres of life. They argue that women should have the right to choose on issues such as abortion, pornography and prostitution. This commitment to the existence of a public and private sphere distinguishes liberal feminist theory from other feminist theories. However, it should be noted that they draw the line between public and private differently than other liberal theorists. Since they are concerned with such issues as domestic violence and the economic vulnerability of homemakers, they argue that some regulation of domestic life is in order to protect women’s safety and well-being.

Questions Raised for Research

1. What are the barriers women face to equal participation in the economic, social and cultural life of their communities and countries?

2. How can these obstacles be removed? How can attitudes, laws and practices be changed?
3. How are women affected by various policies? Do policies hinder or facilitate opportunities and well-being for women?

Implications for Policy and Action

1. Liberal feminist theory has been the dominant guide for setting up special women's departments/machinery in government. These departments promote the interests of women, within the existing socio-economic system.

2. Policies are proposed to remove discriminatory practices by institutions, or actions are taken to create alternative institutions which provide support to women. For example, if women have unequal access to credit, then bank policy can be changed or special programs can be set up for women’s credit.

3. Liberal feminists are interested in increasing the proportion of women in elected and appointed government positions.

4. Liberal feminists are interested in reforms which will improve the condition of women. They are less concerned with issues of empowerment and changing the position of women.

Box 8 Feminist Politics and Human Nature

Liberal feminists believe that sex discrimination is unjust because it deprives women of equal rights to pursue their own self-interest. Women as a group are not allowed the same freedoms or opportunities granted to men as a group. In a discriminatory situation, an individual woman does not receive the same consideration as an individual man. Whereas man is judged on his actual interests and abilities, a woman’s interests and abilities are assumed to be limited in certain ways because of her sex. In other words, a man is judged on his merits as an individual; a woman is judged on her assumed merits as a female. Liberal feminists believe that justice requires equal opportunities and equal consideration for every individual regardless of sex. This view is obviously connected with the liberal conception of human beings as essentially rational agents. On this conception, sex is a purely 'accidental' or non-essential feature of human nature. The sex of an individual should be considered only when it is relevant to the individual's ability to perform a specific task or to take advantage of a certain opportunity.

Within contemporary society, liberals believe that women suffer a variety of forms of discrimination. The most obvious form is legislation that provides different responsibilities, obligations, and opportunities for women and for men. Both Britain and the United States, for example, have so-called 'protective' labor legislation that applies to women only and may establish maximum hours of work, minimum wages, mandatory rest periods, or may restrict certain types of nighttime work.
Liberal feminist complain that these laws are used to exclude women from better-paying jobs and to deny them promotion...

...In spite of these sorts of legal discrimination, liberal feminists believe that most discrimination against women is not mandated by the legal system but is rather informal or based on custom. An extremely significant form of customary discrimination consists in reluctance to appoint qualified women to certain jobs, particularly prestigious, well-paying or supervisory positions, and in reluctance to allow women to gain necessary qualifications for those positions, perhaps by refusing them entrance into professional schools or other job-training programs. Such discrimination begins in the nursery, where male and female infants are perceived and handled differently, and continues in the educational system, where boys are encouraged to train for prestigious or well-paying “masculine” occupations while girls are channeled into preparing for the lower—paying but more “feminine” service occupations. Women also suffer discrimination in obtaining credit to buy a house or to start a business and they may have more difficulty than men in renting accommodation. Liberals view all these sorts of discrimination as unjust because they deprive women of equal opportunities for pursuing their own self-interest, as they define that interest.

Informal discrimination is manifested not only in assumptions that women are not suited to certain sorts of work; it can also be expressed through assumptions that women are particularly well-suited for other sorts of work. Within contemporary society, there are strong expectations, often shared even by women themselves, that women should take primary responsibility for the work involved in raising children and in running a home. Women are also expected to provide sexual satisfaction for their husbands or their male partners. Within the paid labor force, they are expected to perform similar sorts of work; providing sexual titillation if not satisfaction to men and other sorts of nurturing services to men, women and children.

If this sexual division of labor were freely chosen, liberal feminists would have no grounds for challenging it. In fact, however, they assume that it is not freely chosen, that women congregate in these occupations because discrimination denies them access to the prestigious, powerful, and well-paying positions that are held predominantly by men. Behind this assumption, one can see the characteristic liberal values about what constitutes desirable or fulfilling work. The work that women typically perform is not well-paying and has little conventional prestige and liberal feminists show little inclination to challenge the conventional valuation of that work. Liberal feminists view childcare and housework as forms of unskilled labor, servicing the despised body and requiring little exercise of the respected mind....

Women’s relegation to certain kinds of work degrades them not only while they are performing that work. According to liberal feminism, the conditions of women’s work also diminish their liberty and autonomy in the rest of their lives. Women are paid so little that they figure disproportionately among the poor and most contemporary liberals
recognize that poverty makes it difficult or impossible for individuals to exercise their formal or legal rights. For instance, poor people cannot exercise their right to travel when they cannot afford the fares; their right of free expression is diminished by their lack of control over the media; and their right to stand for public office is worth little when they cannot afford to finance an electoral campaign. Instead of saying that poorer individuals have less liberty or fewer rights than wealthier ones. Rawls prefers to say that “the worth of liberty” is less for poor people. However one expresses the point, liberal feminists complain that poverty makes most women unequal to most men.


**Questions on Excerpt**

1. How is the liberal feminist commitment to equality as a human rights issue reflected in their political strategies?

2. Explain why liberal feminists have been accused of focusing on “getting ahead,” rather than ending the oppression of all women.

**General Discussion Questions**

1. Is there a government women’s bureau in your country? What kinds of issues does it address?

2. What obstacles and barriers to participation in various spheres of economic, political and social life are experienced by women in your country? What would it take to remove them?

3. Have changes in legislation which were intended to promote equality achieved their goal? Why not?

**FRAMEWORK D: MARXIST FEMINISM**

Classical Marxism argues that throughout history people have found many different means of feeding, sheltering, clothing and reproducing themselves, that is, of producing their material life. In producing their material life, people work together; they enter into social relations with one another. The means of production and social relations of production constitute the modes of production. Marxists argue that human nature is the result of specific modes of production. People are shaped by the general form of society (the mode of production) and by an individual’s specific place or class in that society (the relations of production). People, however, are capable of radically transforming their society and thus ultimately changing their own natures.
The subordination of women came into existence with the mode of production that introduced private property. In his 1884 classic, *The Origin of the Family: Private Property and the State*, Frederick Engels argued that hunting and gathering was replaced by agriculture which was a more efficient and productive mode of production. At that point in time, a few men got control of the productive resources and transformed them into private property. The social relations of production were that some men owned property and others did not. This was the first class society. Engels then speculated that women were subordinated in order to guarantee that those who owned the property were able to pass it on to their own biological offspring thereby maintaining the class structure.

Contemporary Marxist feminists continue this line of argument by asserting that it is capitalism, the current form of class society, which perpetuates the subordination of women by enforcing their economic dependence on men. They argue that keeping women subordinate is functional to the capitalist system in a number of ways. Women produce the new labour force and continue to do unpaid domestic labour. Women also form a reserve army of labour, that is, they provide a cheap and available labour force that compete for existing jobs thereby creating a downward pressure on wages. As housewives and mothers, women support the process of profit making both as consumers of goods and services for the household and as unpaid caregivers who subsidise and disguise the real costs of reproducing and maintaining the work force.

**Questions Raised for Research**

1. What is the relationship of the family household to the economy?
2. Does domestic labour create value?
3. Do women form a reserve army of labour?
4. How do class and gender interact to create women’s subordination?

**Implications for Policy and Action**

1. To the extent that they concern themselves with policies, Marxist feminists argue for those that deal with issues such as occupational segregation, low pay, poverty and discrimination. They feel that fighting for such policies will expose the fact that it is not possible to remedy these problems under capitalism. Capitalism may extend privileges to a few token women but it cannot afford to permit most women to be the economic and social equals of men.

2. Marxist feminists argue that since the subordination of women is maintained by the capitalist system, then that system should be the primary target of women’s political activism. Women must organise not with other women from the capitalist class who with their husbands have an interest in maintaining the status quo. They must organise with the male working class to abolish the capitalist system and establish a
new mode of production, a socialist system. Only socialism will classes disappear and the true basis of gender equality be established.

**Box 9 WOMEN IN CLASS STRUGGLE**

...Therefore, it is fundamentally the institution of the nuclear family as it exists under capitalism and the consequent limitations of a woman's "proper" function in the production and reproduction of the proletariat (motherhood) that facilitates capital's super-exploitation of female labor in capitalist commodity production. The labor theory of value holds that wages at real value comprise the costs of the production and reproduction of labor power. Inflation, unemployment and undervalued labor power (depressed wages) exert a constant pressure to force women out of the home and into the labor force. This has always been characteristic of capitalism, as Marx pointed out long ago, but today the employment of women is steadily increasing. Furthermore, working-class women are constantly circulating through the labor force: 1) women work before marriage and during early marriage; 2) women leave the labor force when their children are in infancy and early childhood; and then 3) they return to the labor market when their children reach late childhood or are grown. This rhythm is upset anytime there are contractions and expansions of employment and wage levels. Contraction and expansion of wage levels operate to regulate the utilization of female labor as a part of the industrial reserve army. Women tend to be forced into the labor market: 1) when there is a demand for greater masses of labor power, and/or 2) when demands for cheap labor power can be met by women's undervalued wages or women's part-time work. Conversely, women are forced out of the labor market in periods of glut on the market simply because they can be reabsorbed into the nuclear family.

The circulation of women through the waged labor force, women's principal identification of themselves as wives and mothers and thus only "temporary workers" (which produces negative or very weak class consciousness), and institutionalized discrimination against women all serve to facilitate the super-exploitation is expressed by: 1) the denial by capital of compensation for labor consumed in production and reproduction of labor power; 2) the systematic undervaluation of waged female labor; 3) forcing women disproportionately into the worst and most degrading jobs; and 4) forcing women into part-time or full-time work in addition to full responsibility for domestic labor (thus married working women hold down two full-time jobs, but are paid wages for only one).

Upon investigation, working-class women are clearly the most oppressed, super-exploited sector of the entire proletariat. The greatest burdens are carried by racial and national minority women. The root of women's subjugation and exploitation is not the human family as such, but the nuclear family as it is organized and exploited under advanced capitalism....
The conflict between men and women, husbands and wives, is not some “petty bourgeois feminist plot” to divide the working class, but a real product of the cruel and exploitative social relations of capitalism. In fact, no sphere of a working-class woman’s life is free from exploitation facilitated by institutionalized male supremacy.


**Questions on Excerpt**

1. What does it mean to say that women form a reserve army of labour?
2. How are women super-exploited by the capitalist system?

**General Discussion Questions**

1. Are women economically dependent on men in your country and if so, in what way are they economically dependent?
2. Does the family household function to support the capitalist system in your country?
3. Do women form a reserve army of labour for the capitalist system in your country? Explain.
4. Do rich women experience gender inequality in the same way that poor women do?
5. Do women always belong to the same class as their husbands/fathers?

**FRAMEWORK E: RADICAL FEMINISM**

Radical feminism emerged in the 1960s in the United States. It was a response to the sexism experienced by women working within the Civil Rights movement and the anti-war movement of the time. Many of the activists in these movements were inspired by Marxist theory which was also felt to be sexist. Traditional Marxism stated that class was the prime factor in the oppression of working people and that gender equality would follow upon the abolition of class society. Radical feminists argued that making gender equality secondary to class equality diminished the importance of and deferred action on women’s concerns.

Radical feminists insist that women’s subordination does not depend on other forms of domination such as class. In fact, they argue, that patriarchy or the domination of women by men is primary since it existed in virtually every known society even those without classes. Women’s subordination is also more difficult to change than class since it is deeply embedded in individual psyches and social practices.
Although radical feminists all agree on the primacy of women’s subordination they have various views of the origins and nature of this subordination. In 1970, Shulamith Firestone in the *Dialectic of Sex*, argued that women’s subordination was rooted in their biology, that is, their reproductive physiology. She argued that only with advanced technology, such as “test-tube babies” will women achieve sex equality and no longer be dependent on men. Other radical feminists argue that women are biologically superior to men because of their capacity to give birth. Still others argue that it is not the nature of sex differences that should concern feminists; rather it is the social norms that devalue female biology. Many radical feminists argue that women’s subordination is rooted in male control of women’s fertility and women’s sexuality; that is, male control of women’s bodies.

Radical feminists are concerned with sexuality. They start from the view that humans are sexual beings and that sex makes a difference from the very beginning. They are also concerned about the relationship between human biology and human social arrangements. Radical feminists argue that procreation and sexuality, which have been seen as private issues, are in fact political issues in as much as they are fundamentally organised by male power. Relegating these practices to the private realm delegitimates women’s struggle to change them. Radical feminists have declared that the “personal is political.”

**Questions Raised for Research**

1. How are women made to feel they must become mothers?
2. How can women achieve control over conception and abortion?
3. What are the institutions through which men control women’s sexuality?

**Implications for Policy and Action**

1. In their daily lives, radical feminists attempt to create alternative social institutions within which women can fulfill their needs. Some of these alternatives are women’s health centres, women’s educational projects, women’s businesses, and services to women in crises.
2. Radical feminists pursue policies that focus on women’s right to make choices about motherhood, conception, abortion, and sexual orientation.
3. Radical feminists argue that social activists should be concerned with challenging women’s subordination and should work towards transforming society so as to abolish patriarchy and achieve equality for women.
Among the most pressing items on the agenda for research on adult development is the need to delineate in women’s own terms the experience of their adult life. My own work in that direction indicates that the inclusion of women’s experience brings to developmental understanding a new perspective on relationships that changes the basic constructs of interpretation. The concept of identity expands to include the experience of interconnection. The moral domain is similarly enlarged by the inclusion of responsibility and care in relationships. And the underlying epistemology correspondingly shifts from the Greek ideal of knowledge as a correspondence between mind and form to the Biblical conception of knowing as a process of human relationship.

Given the evidence of different perspectives in the representation of adulthood by women and men, there is a need for research that elucidates the effects of these differences in marriage, family, and work relationships. My research suggests that men and women may speak different languages that they assume are the same, using similar words to encode disparate experiences of self and social relationships. Because these languages share an overlapping moral vocabulary, they contain a propensity for systematic mistranslation, creating misunderstandings which impede communication and limit the potential for cooperation and care in relationships. At the same time, however, these languages articulate with one another in critical ways. Just as the language of responsibilities provides a weblike imagery of relationships to replace a hierarchical ordering that dissolves with the coming of equality, so the language of rights underlines the importance of including in the network of care not only the other by also the self.

As we have listened for centuries to the voices of men and the theories of development that their experience informs, so we have come more recently to notice not only the silence of women but the difficulty in hearing what they say when they speak. Yet in the different voice of women lies the truth of an ethic of care, the tie between relationship and responsibility, and the origins of aggression in the failure of connection. The failure to see the different reality of women’s lives and to hear the differences in their voices stems in part from the assumption that there is a single mode of social experience and interpretation. By positing instead two different modes, we arrive at a more complex rendition of human experience which sees the truth of separation and attachment in the lives of women and men and recognizes how these truths are carried by different modes of language and thought.


Questions on Excerpt

1. What is the male argument about women’s place in the social relations of reproduction?
2. What is the radical feminist version of this argument?

General Discussion Questions

1. Do men dominate women in your country? If so, what form does this domination take? Is “tradition” used to legitimate male authority over women?

2. Do women have reproductive freedom in your country? If not, why not?

3. Are women subject to male violence in your country? If so, what form does this violence take?

4. What are the formal and informal mechanisms through which women assert power in your society?

5. How have these changed over time?

6. Does the feminist concept, “The Personal is Political” have relevance for women of all backgrounds?

FRAMEWORK F: SOCIALIST FEMINISM

Socialist feminist activities emerged in the second half of the 1970s. Many feminists were dissatisfied with traditional Marxism which saw women’s subordination as secondary to class subordination. They also felt discomfort with the new radical feminism which ignored class and saw patriarchy or women’s subordination as the primary subordination. Socialist feminists argued that both class and women’s subordination were of equal importance and had to be challenged simultaneously.

In attempts to develop a theory and practice that would achieve this end, socialist feminists drew on the historical materialist method used by Marxism. Their aim was to revise Marxism by incorporating radical feminist insights. In so doing, they felt they would provide a new basis for analysis and a new strategy for political action that would challenge both male dominance and capitalism.

Socialist feminists redefined the radical feminist conception of patriarchy to mean a set of hierarchical relations that has a material base and that material base is men’s control over women’s sexuality, procreation, and labour power. They added an historical dimension to the concept of patriarchy arguing that it takes different forms in different historical periods and in different racial, cultural, political, economic, and religious contexts. They also argued that the Marxist definition of economic activity had to be expanded to include both productive and reproductive work. The socialist feminists insisted on the equal importance of the reproduction of children and the production of commodities. Socialist feminists were concerned with the relationship between reproduction and production and the capitalist and male dominated structure of both.
Juliet Mitchell in her very early classic essay *Women: The Longest Revolution*, argued that there were four interlocking structures that must be considered in women's subordination. These structures were production, reproduction, sexuality, and child rearing. In order to understand women's subordination, she stated, it was necessary to understand not only how the needs of food, clothing, and shelter are met but also how the need for sexuality, children, and emotional nurturance are met. Socialist feminists continue to be concerned about these issues.

By the mid 1980s, many socialist feminists were arguing that we should begin the analysis of subordination from the experience of women. They also incorporated the social construction of gender into their analysis. They argued that an examination of the processes by which gender characteristics are defined and gender relations are constructed is essential to understanding and abolishing women's subordination. Socialist feminists also expanded their analysis to incorporate issues of difference, to include a consideration of race, ethnicity, religion, sexual preference as well as colonialism and imperialism. By the late 1980s, Kate Young and others were arguing the need for a holistic approach to analysing women's situation. In making this argument, she examined three overlapping areas of concern. The psychosocial area focuses on the processes of acquiring masculine and feminine identities and the content of these identities. The socio-biological area focuses not on whether there are biological, psychological, or physiological differences between women and men but on why differences between women and men result in a higher value being placed on what men do. The socio-political area focuses on how subjectivity or the way people feel about themselves as members of a particular race or class contributes to structuring gender relations. The socio-political also focuses on how gender contributes to the structuring of the political and economic system.

**Questions Raised for Research**

1. What is the relationship between production and reproduction?
2. Has economic restructuring and structural adjustment had a differential impact on women and men?
3. What effect have the changing class relations had on women and men of different races and ethnic groups?
4. How has sexuality, procreation, and motherhood been constructed at different points in time and in different cultures?

**Implications for Policy and Action**

1. Socialist feminists are concerned about policies to do with eliminating gender segregation in domestic and wage labour, eliminating sexual harassment in the workplace, achieving equal pay for work of equal value, increasing women’s control
over their conditions of work, transforming the conditions in which women can make reproductive choices, and increasing public responsibility for childcare.

2. Socialist feminists consciously attempt to incorporate socialist feminist values of equality, cooperation, sharing, and political commitment into their living arrangements. They also believe that community based political activities are a necessary part of the socialist feminist transformation of society.

3. Socialist feminists activists have a vision of a society that excludes gender, class, and race structures and the ideologies that underlie them. They are interested in transforming current societies into societies consistent with this vision.

**Box 11**

**THE UNHAPPY MARRIAGE OF MARXISM AND FEMINISM**

The struggle against capital and patriarchy cannot be successful if the study and practice of the issues of feminism is abandoned. A struggle aimed only at capitalist relations of oppression will fail, since their underlying supports in patriarchal relations of oppression will be overlooked. And the analysis of patriarchy is essential to a definition of the kind of socialism useful to women. While men and women share a need to overthrow capitalism they retain interests particular to their gender group. It is not clear—from our sketch, from history, or from male socialists—that the socialism being struggled for is the same for both men and women. For a humane socialism would require not only consensus on what the new society should look like and what a healthy person should look like, but more concretely, it would require that men relinquish their privilege.

As women we must not allow ourselves to be talked out of the urgency and importance of our tasks, as we have so many times in the past. We must fight the attempted coercion, both subtle and not so subtle, to abandon feminist objectives.

This suggests two strategic considerations. First, a struggle to establish socialism must be a struggle in which groups with different interests form an alliance. Women should not trust men to liberate them after the revolution, in part, because there is no reason to think they would know how; in part, because there is no necessity for them to do so. In fact, their immediate self-interest lies in our continued oppression. Instead we must have our own organizations and our own power base. Second, we think the sexual division of labor within capitalism has given women a practice in which we have learned to understand what human interdependence and needs are. While men have long struggled against capital, women know what to struggle for. As a general rule, men’s position in patriarchy and capitalism prevents them from recognizing both human needs for nurturance, sharing, and growth, and the potential for meeting those needs in a nonhierarchical, nonpatriarchal society. But even if we raise their consciousness, men might assess the potential gains against the potential losses and choose the status quo. Men have more to lose than their chains.
As feminist socialists, we must organize a practice which addresses both the struggle against patriarchy and the struggle against capitalism. We must insist that the society we want to create is a society in which recognition of interdependence is liberation rather than shame, nurturance is a universal, not an oppressive practice, and in which women do not continue to support the false as well as the concrete freedoms of men.


Questions on Excerpt

1. What is the relationship between capitalism and patriarchy and why must both be struggled against?

2. Why must women develop their own power base for change?

General Discussion Questions

1. What are there women's organizations in your country? What vision of society do these women's organization have? For what kind of change are they struggling? Are they consistent with a socialist feminist analysis?

2. Has economic restructuring and structural adjustment taken place in your country? If so, has there been a differential impact on women and men?

3. Do any policies exist in your country that would support the more equal distribution of household work between women and men? If yes, what are they and how do they work? If no, why not?

4. What problems do you see in applying a socialist feminist analysis to the experience or condition of women in the South?

FRAMEWORK G: BLACK FEMINISM

Historians of the African diaspora have long recognised that Black people, including women, have had their own particular experiences of the New World and Europe. Black women in the diaspora have suffered a double jeopardy—being women and being black. Most have had to endure economic hardships as well. The history of black women's struggles against the multiple oppressions of race, sex, and class has been an inspiration to black women, and these struggles have inspired a growing body of literature and scholarship. For example, the life of Sojourner Truth, the mid-nineteenth century anti-slavery activist and women's rights advocate, highlights black women's long involvement in the fight for equality and justice and their historic challenge to white
feminists to see the debate for women’s rights as one that required the inclusion of all women, whatever their race or class.

And yet feminist scholars from North America and Europe have often ignored the specificities of black women’s experiences. They have focused for the most part on the experiences of white women, particularly white, middle class women. Black feminists have criticised white feminist scholars for confining their theories largely to their own history and culture and for ignoring the impact of asymmetrical race relations on gender experiences and relations, our understanding of the self, and on theory. As Audre Lorde warned the radical feminist, Mary Daly, in 1979—women’s oppression knows no ethnic or racial boundaries, and feminist theorising that ignores the experiences of black women encourages its own demise (1984). Faced with a white feminism that (until challenged) insisted on defining a feminism largely hostile to the realities of black women, twentieth century black feminists have recognised the need to collect the earlier works of black women and to undertake black feminist theorising.

Feminists from the black community have sought alternative explanations for black women’s lives in the history of their own people. They have discovered important differences. During the Middle Ages, for example, western women had almost no civil rights while African women had important civil rights and considerable status. In the United States and Britain, black women have generally experienced the family as a site of resistance against racism more than as a site of gender oppression. Black patriarchal structures and authority has been affected by colonial and racist structures as well. Black feminist theorising has emerged from this analysis of the concrete experiences and cultures of black people. Scholars working within this perspective do not reject theorising by white feminists; rather, they call for feminisms that acknowledge the importance of race for women’s lives, particularly the way race compounds the experience of class and gender relations. The writings of black feminist scholars have contributed important insights to feminist theorising. The experience of the multiple jeopardies of race, class, and gender has led black feminists such as Deborah King (1988) and Fiona Williams (1989) to argue for a feminism that recognises the need to analyse the simultaneous impact of these factors on the lives of women of colour. As Fiona Williams points out, “the simultaneous experience of racism and sexism [and classism] not only compounds those oppressions, but reconstitutes them in specific ways” (1989: 69). The multiple oppressions facing black women are not simply additive, they interact in complex ways, leading to multiple consciousness and actions. This interactive, multilayered approach to the study of women’s lives has influenced feminist theorising and put the analysis of multiple jeopardies and consciousness on the feminist agenda.

Black feminist scholarship has also contributed to feminist epistemology. Black feminists have emphasised the importance of concrete experiences as a criterion of meaning, the need to use dialogue in assessing knowledge claims, and the importance of developing an ethic of caring and personal accountability in one’s research (Collins, 1989). They have also stressed the historical, specific nature of black women’s experiences and the need to develop an approach to the study of women that is embedded in the concrete specificities
of women’s lives rather than generalised from the experiences of a small group of often privileged women. While these themes have been raised by feminists of various persuasions, black feminist scholarship has underscored the crucial nature of these debates and added a powerful voice to those advocating a more experiential, grounded approach to the study of women.

Black feminist scholarship has developed a political agenda, a Black Feminist Manifesto, which calls for the development of a feminist politics that is both anti-racist and anti-sexist. The Manifesto argues for the need to struggle with white women against sexism, whether by white or black men. At the same time, black feminists call for solidarity with black men around the issue of race. This approach has found considerable support in developing countries, where women have often joined men in their struggles against global inequalities while at the same time challenging sexist behaviour at home. The Black Feminist Manifesto thus offers a potential solution to the long-standing reluctance of many black women to engage in white dominated feminist politics, while providing a theoretical critique of radical and socialist feminist political agendas (Combahee River Collective, 1982).

Black feminism thus asserts the primacy of race for women’s lives and experiences, particularly the struggles of black women against slavery, colonialism, imperialism, and racism. Black feminism, with its sister perspective, third world or indigenous feminism, holds out the hope that different feminisms, grounded in the specificities of women’s multifarious experiences, may provide the basis for a comparative global feminist movement that celebrates difference without abandoning the search for common political and intellectual agendas. As Audre Lorde wrote in 1979, “Difference must be not merely tolerated, but seen as a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialectic (1984).”

**Questions Raised for Research**

1. What are the specific historical conditions under which black women have experienced their lives: in Africa and the diaspora?

2. How do sexism and racism intersect? Discuss the consequences of this intersection for black women (and men); for white women (and men)?

3. How have global economic inequalities, including colonialism and imperialism, affected black women’s experience of the multiple jeopardies of sex, race, and class?

4. How do black women’s experiences and knowledge(s) challenge the assumptions of other feminist theories?

5. How has African culture affected the lives and experiences of black women in the diaspora?
6. Are there divisions and hierarchies (particularly along class lines) within the black community in the diaspora? If so, have they influenced black women’s lives? What are the theoretical implications of these divisions?

Implications for Policy and Action

1. Policies and programs for women should acknowledge and take into account the impact of race on gender experiences and relations.

2. Policy makers should investigate the needs and socio-economic conditions of black women, so they can design policies that are relevant to those needs.

3. Programs for women should address the impact of multiple jeopardies of race, sex, and class for many women and program design should reflect the complexities of this multilevel reality for many women.

Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black

Towards the end of 1987 I spoke at Tufts University at an annual dinner for black women. My topic was “Black Women in Predominantly White Institutions.” I was excited by the idea of talking with so many young black women but surprised when these women suggested that sexism was not a political issue of concern to black women, that the serious issue was racism. I’ve heard this response many times, yet somehow I did not expect that I would need to prove over and over that sexism ensures that many black females will be exploited and victimized. Confronted by these young black women to whom sexism was not important, I felt that feminism had failed to develop a politics that addresses black women. Particularly, I felt that black women active in black liberation struggles in the 1960s and early 1970s, who had spoken and written on sexism (remember the anthology The Black Woman, edited by Toni Cade Bambara?) had let our younger sisters down by not making more of a sustained political effort so that black women (and black people) would have greater understanding of the impact of sexist oppression on our lives.

When I began to share my own experiences of racism and sexism, pointing to incidents (particularly in relationships with black men), a veil was lifted. Suddenly the group acknowledged what had been previously denied—the ways sexism wounds us as black women. I had talked earlier about the way many black women students in predominantly white institutions keep silent in classes, stating emphatically that our progress in such places requires us to have a voice, to not remain silent. In the ensuing discussion, women commented on black fathers who had told their daughters “nobody wants a loud-talking black woman.” The group expressed ambivalent feelings about speaking, particularly on political issues in classroom settings where they were often attacked or unsupported by other black women students.
Many black women insist that they do not join the feminist movement because they cannot bond with white women who are racist. If one argues that there really are some white women who are resisting and challenging racism, who are genuinely committed to ending white supremacy, one is accused of being naive, of not acknowledging history. Most black women, rich and poor, have contact with white women, usually in work settings. In such settings black women cooperate with white women despite racism. Yet black women are reluctant to express solidarity with white feminists. Black women’s consciousness is shaped by internalized racism and by reactionary white women’s concerns as they are expressed in popular culture, such as daytime soap operas or in the world of white fashion and cosmetic products, which masses of black women consume without rejecting this racist propaganda and devaluing of black women.

It is our collective responsibility as individual black women committed to feminist movement to work at making space where black women who are just beginning to explore feminist issues can do so without fear of hostile treatment, quick judgements, dismissals, etc.

Black women need to construct a model of feminist theorising and scholarship that is inclusive, that widens our options, that enhances our understanding of black experience and gender. Significantly, the most basic task confronting black feminists (irrespective of the terms we use to identify ourselves) is to educate one another and black people about sexism, about the ways resisting sexism can empower black women, a process which makes sharing feminist vision more difficult. Radford-Hill identifies “the crisis of black womanhood” as a serious problem that must be considered politically, asserting that “the extent to which black feminists can articulate and solve the crisis of black womanhood is the extent to which black women will undergo feminist transformation.” Black women must identify ways feminist thought and practice can aid in our process of self-recovery and share that knowledge with our sisters. This is the base on which to build political solidarity. When that grounding exists black women will be fully engaged in feminist movement that transforms self, community, and society.


Questions on Excerpt

1. Why is it important to recover the history of black women’s resistance to racism?

2. How do black women’s acts of resistance challenge the two prevailing approaches to the consciousness of oppressed groups?

3. Do black women have a self-defined standpoint on their own oppression?

4. Has feminism failed to develop a politics that addresses the concerns of black women?
5. How does sexism affect black women; white women? How can resisting sexism empower black women; white women?

**General Discussion Questions**

1. Why do so many black women feel they have little to gain from the feminist movement in North America and Britain?

2. Have you experienced sexism from men of your own race, ethnic group?

3. Do you think it is possible to be feminist without being racist? Can feminist thought and practice incorporate the experiences and standpoint of black women?

4. What has black feminist theorising contributed to feminist theories?

5. Is there a black women's reality? Is it affected by factors such as class, regional ties, culture, and ethnicity?

6. Does the feminist concept, “The Personal is Political” have relevance for black women?

**FRAMEWORK H: POST-MODERN FEMINISM**

In the last few decades post-modernist critiques have increasingly dominated scholarship in the humanities and social sciences. Post-modernism is not easily encapsulated in one phrase or idea as it is actually an amalgam of often purposely ambiguous and fluid ideas. But, above all, post-modernists question the metatheories that “explain” the modern age, particularly the belief that rational thought and technological innovation can guarantee progress and enlightenment to humanity. These theories, whether in the Marxist or Liberal traditions, are no longer seen as “truth”, but simply as privileged discourses that deny and silence competing dissident voices. The struggle for universalist knowledge has been abandoned. A search has begun for previously silenced voices, for the specificity and power of language(s) and their relation to knowledge, context and locality. The concern with discourse and language has spawned an interest in the construction of identity and the concept of difference(s), particularly the tendency for people to define those they see as different (“other”) in opposition to their own perceived strengths. European and North American scholarship, benefiting from its hegemonic position in world discourse, has dominated the construction of such definitions.

Feminists have reacted to post-modernism in various ways. Some reject it because it undermines feminism’s political goals (Bodribb, 1992). Others believe feminist standpoint theory offers much the same insights, but from a female rather than a largely white male perspective (Harding, 1992). However, a number of feminists have sought a middle ground. They emphasise the similarities and compatabilities between feminism
and post-modernism—both, after all, call for the development of new paradigms of social criticism which do not rely on traditional philosophical underpinnings. They believe feminist theorising and action can be strengthened by post-modernism’s sophisticated and persuasive criticisms of foundationalism and essentialism, its focus on difference, and its analysis of the relationship between language, power and knowledge. At the same time, they believe post-modernism has much to learn from the social-critical power of feminism. Some feminists believe this “marriage” can be achieved with little difficulty (Butler and Scott, 1992) others expect it to alter both perspectives (Nicholson, 1990; Flax, 1990; Canning, 1994).

Post-modern feminist thought has attracted considerable attention among third world and minority feminists, who have found it useful in their critiques of western feminism, particularly its tendency to conflate the experiences of western women with women everywhere, thus ignoring important differences and undermining the possibility of global feminist cooperation based on the multiple realities of the world’s women. Indeed, post-colonial critiques from the South, along with writings on identity, difference and indigenous knowledge (Ong, 1988; Agarwal, 1991; Barrireau, 1992), have contributed much to post-modernist feminist theorising. The encounter between feminism and postmodemism is clearly ongoing, indeterminate, and fluid. It has drawn on feminist scholarship in the North and South, and holds the possibility of a feminism that recognises the importance of difference(s) and local complexities without abandoning attention to political and economic structures. A post-modern feminism that adopts feminism’s political agenda, while recognising the relationship between language and subjectivity and their connection to other aspects of material life, can provide a perspective where difference and ambiguities can be celebrated without sacrificing the search for a “broader, richer, more complex and multilayered feminist solidarity” (Fraser and Nicholson, 1990:35; see also Hennessy, 1993; Sylvester, 1994).

Questions Raised for Research

1. How can women’s voices and knowledge(s), particularly those that have been hidden from history or silenced altogether, be revealed and heard?

2. How do the words people use in describing one another and themselves influence action?

3. How are groups represented and categorised by other groups, and what impact do these constructions/representations have on action?

Implications for Policy and Action

1. The post-modern feminist approach reminds policy makers that knowledge exists on many levels, and that the voices and opinions of the less powerful may offer more solutions to developmental problems than all the “experts” in the North.
2. This approach reminds policy makers that language is important and that phrases and labels influence the way policies are perceived and acted upon.

3. This approach calls for policies that acknowledge difference(s), that try to understand the needs of different groups, particularly those based on racial and cultural identities, and the importance of formulating policies designed to address these differences.

Box 13

THE CONSTRUCT OF A POST–MODERNIST FEMINIST THEORY
FOR CARIBBEAN SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

Social science research on Caribbean women represents a significant development for feminist theory building. This body of work has established the realities shaping the lives of Caribbean women. It has initiated the groundwork for critiquing the gendered epistemologies derived uncritically from Enlightenment political discourses and which inform Caribbean social science research. For research on Caribbean women to transcend the mere addition of women to the literature, the need to expose the gendered nature of Enlightenment theories becomes in itself both an epistemological and political project. Without confronting and deconstructing these theories, research on women produce findings which do not challenge the concept and practice of patriarchy, and can often unwittingly reinforce it.

Post-modernist feminists oppose the notion of a singular privileged, knowable, universal truth, a God’s eye view as the fundamental principle in social science epistemologies. The epistemologies of the Enlightenment claim to have the key to what constitutes knowledge. They claim, therefore, to have the only authority to adjudicate between truth and falsehood. That claim in turn rests on the assumption of supra rational mind. This claim to a supra rational mind is exceedingly powerful. All discourses derived from the Enlightenment tradition are able to marginalize and deem irrelevant social groups, localized knowledges and areas of knowledge having no interest for Enlightenment philosophy. They had the authority to do so because the claim to a supra rational mind allows a privileged access to truth.

Post-modernist feminists reject the binary opposites and dichotomies created by the artificial separation of the mind from the body, truth from falsehood, and subject from object. Post-modernist feminists posit that these dualisms were created when Enlightenment philosophy adopted rationality as the key to knowledge.

The challenge to post-modernist feminists in theory building is greater and more encompassing. Where post-modernists locate all Enlightenment claims in their historic and cultural contexts, post-modernist feminists posit that existing social sciences epistemologies exclude the experience of women because of the gendered reality of all social relations. Post-modernist feminist theorizing argues that not only are the Enlightenment perspectives the perspectives of particularly privileged groups and societies, but they are the perspectives of
androcentric, European societies. Enlightenment theorizing represents the epistemologies of the European worldview. It denies the visibility and relevance of the approaches to knowledge from the third world and the Caribbean as part of it. It is what Jayawardina has referred to as “hidden from history” and to which can be added deemed irrelevant as a source of knowledge (Jayawardina, 1986: 3)


General Discussion Questions

1. How do post-modernist feminists view the claims of Enlightenment theorists, particularly liberal and Marxist theories? Is it engendered?

2. How can post-modernist feminist theory assist the development of theory grounded in the realities of Caribbean women’s lives? How can this theory influence post-modernist feminist theorising?

3. What can the study of binary opposites and representation tell us about the impact of colonialism and developmentalism on women in the South?

SECTION 4

Feminist Development Theories: Applying WID And GAD

This section provides a set of tools and exercises to help you become familiar with and operationalise two of the major feminist development theories. The tools are drawn from Two Halves Make a Whole: Balancing Gender Relations in Development (Moffat, et al., 1991) but are somewhat revised. It also provides three case studies that highlight the significance of the frameworks. They show that when you approach a problem from a particular framework you identify a certain set of problems and arrive at different types of strategies and solutions.
## WID AND GAD COMPARISON

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women In Development (WID)</th>
<th>Gender And Development (GAD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Approach</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• An approach which views the absence of women in development plans and policies as the problem.</td>
<td>• An approach to development that focuses on global and gender inequalities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Focus</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Women</td>
<td>• Socially constructed relations between women and men with special focus on the subordination of women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Problem</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The exclusion of women (half of productive resources) from the development process.</td>
<td>• Unequal relations of power (rich and poor, women and men) that prevents equitable development and women’s full participation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Goal</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• More efficient, effective development that includes women.</td>
<td>• Equitable, sustainable development with women and men as decision makers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Solution</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Integrate women into the existing development process.</td>
<td>• Empower the disadvantaged and women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Transform unequal relations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Strategies</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Women’s projects.</td>
<td>• Reconceptualize the development process taking gender and global inequalities into account.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Women’s components.</td>
<td>• Identify/address practical needs determined by women and men to improve their condition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Integrated projects.</td>
<td>• At the same time, address women’s strategic interests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increase women’s productivity.</td>
<td>• Address strategic interests of the poor through people-centred development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increase women’s income.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increase women’s ability to look after the household.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Practical Needs and Strategic Interests

WID tends to focus on practical needs while GAD focuses on both practical and strategic needs. In addition to focusing on everyday problems, GAD is concerned with addressing the root inequalities (of both gender and class) which create many of the practical problems that women experience in their daily lives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRACTICAL NEEDS</th>
<th>STRATEGIC NEEDS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Tend to be immediate, short-term.</td>
<td>• Tend to be long-term.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Unique to particular women, according to the roles assigned to them in the gender division of labour in their society.</td>
<td>• All women experience some inequality relative to men. This varies by such factors as class, race, religion, and age.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Relate to daily needs: food, housing, income, health, children, safety.</td>
<td>• Relate to disadvantaged position: subordination, lack of resources and education, vulnerability to poverty and violence, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Easily identifiable by women.</td>
<td>• Basis of disadvantage and potential for change not always identifiable by women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Can be addressed by provision of specific inputs: food, handpumps, and clinics, etc.</td>
<td>• Can be addressed by: consciousness-raising, increasing self-confidence, education, strengthening women’s organizations, political mobilization, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Addressing Practical Needs

- Tend to involve women as beneficiaries and perhaps as participants.
- Can improve the condition of women’s lives.
- Generally does not alter traditional roles and relationships.

### Addressing Strategic Interests

- Involves women as agents or enables women to become agents.
- Can improve the position of women in society.
- Can empower women and transform gender relations and attitudes.

THEO RETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON F EMINISM AND DEVELOPMENT

TOOLS OF GAD ANALYSIS

Tool #1: The gender division of labour

Most societies allocate different roles, responsibilities, and activities to women and men according to what is considered appropriate in that particular culture. This is called the gender division of labour. An examination of the gender division of labour usually shows that while both women and men work to maintain themselves and their household, this work tends to be different in nature and in the way it is valued. These differences are a central aspect of gender relations.

Tool #2: Types of work

Women, men, boys, and girls are likely to be involved in three main areas of work: productive work; reproductive work; and community work. In many societies, however, women do almost all of the reproductive and much of the productive work. Any intervention in one area will affect the other areas.

Tool #3: Access to and control over resources and benefits

Women’s subordinate position can limit their access to and control over resources and benefits. In some cases women may have ACCESS (the opportunity to make use of something) to resources and benefits, but no CONTROL (the ability to define its use and impose that definition on others). For example, women may have access to land, but no control over its long-term use or ownership.

Tool #4: Influencing factors

Gender relations (including the division of labour, the type of work women and men do, and their different levels of access and control), change to some degree over time in any society. Many factors shape, influence, and change these relations. For example, gender relations are affected by factors such as changes in the economy, environment, religion, culture, and political situation.

Tool #5: Condition and position

A distinction can be drawn between the day-to-day condition of women’s lives and their position relative to men in society. Condition refers to women’s material state—their immediate sphere of experience. A woman would describe her condition in terms of the work she does, where she lives, what she needs for herself and her children (clean water, food, education), etc. Position refers to women’s social and economic standing relative to men. It is measured, for example, by male/female disparities in wages and employment opportunities, participation in legislative bodies, vulnerability to poverty and violence, etc. Development activities have tended to focus on women’s condition, aiming to improve their ability to carry out traditional roles and responsibilities. Little attention has
been paid to enhancing women's position relative to men and promoting their ability to participate fully with men as agents of development and change.

**Tool #6: Practical needs and strategic interests**

Practical needs are linked to women's condition. They can be readily identified and usually relate to unsatisfactory living conditions and lack of resources. For example, practical needs are usually related to immediate needs such as food and water, the health and education of children, and increased income. Strategic interests for women arise from their disadvantaged position relative to men in society. Strategic interests are long-term and related to improving women's position. For example, empowering women to have more opportunities, greater access to resources and more equal participation with men in decision making is in the long-term strategic interest of the majority of the world's men and women alike.

Practical needs and family survival are always priorities and their satisfaction is a prerequisite to women's ability to deal with strategic interests.

**Tool #7: Levels of participation**

The formulation of more gender-aware policies, requires women's (and men's) involvement as participants, beneficiaries, and agents. Women benefit significantly if their decision-making capacity and status are increased through a consultation process. They move from passive recipients of assistance to agents of change, when they organise themselves to address their needs and plan solutions and when their voices are heard and taken into account.

**Tool #8: Potential for transformation**

Women's subordinate position is not a static state nor is it experienced the same way by all women. Throughout history and around the world, women have challenged gender inequality and the limitations it imposes on their potential as human beings. Significant gains have been and will continue to be made everywhere through the struggle of women, sometimes with men's support.

In all societies, transformatory processes which create a better life, address inequalities, and improve the position of women are taking place. Women's movements have a long history in most countries and being aware of these movements should be part of our gender analysis.

EXERCISE
Applying WID And GAD Frameworks

The adequacy of theoretical frameworks is best tested through their application to real world situations. A framework provides a particular line of questioning. It helps the analyst identify where to start, what to focus on, and how to relate one issue to another. The objective is to generate a full understanding of the nature of the problem, in order to be able to propose effective solutions. Different frameworks highlight different issues, and suggest different courses of action.

The following questions may be used to guide discussion of the case study scenarios outlined below.

1. Using a WID perspective, what questions would you ask, and what types of information would you need to obtain, in order to understand the causes of this problem and propose solutions?

2. Using a GAD perspective, what questions would you ask, and what types of information would you need to obtain, in order to understand the causes of this problem and propose solutions?

3. Apply the tools for GAD analysis outlined beginning on page 140. Comment on their usefulness in relation to this case.

4. Are there other questions not related to either a WID or GAD framework that should be posed in this context?

Case Study 1
Violence against women is an increasingly serious problem in country X. Domestic violence is a major component. Sexual jealousies and suspicions, caused by women leaving the home to work, are a factor. So, too, is the management of domestic finances. Men expect women to be able to stretch the household’s income to cover all necessities, and leave some over for entertainment. Women are also routinely harassed by strangers on the street, and by their supervisors at their places of work.

[I]nstructor’s notes: a sample answer for Case 1 is provided for reference. It should not be given to the trainees. Once everyone is familiar with the case approach, new cases can be developed around local situations and needs.

Case Study 2
Small scale trade is a significant source of income for women in country X, but their earnings remain low, and opportunities for occupational mobility are limited. The government provides little support to this sector. Poverty among women is widespread.
Case Study 3

Women in X are the major users of forest resources, such as fuel wood, fodder, and raw materials for the manufacture of baskets for home use and sale. Women's productive activities are not recognised by the forestry service, and their use of the forest tends to be viewed as harmful to the environment.

Sample Answer: Case Study #1

WID Perspective

Women may need to modify their behaviour to reduce their exposure to violence. This might involve developing more home-based work opportunities to meet income requirements without the need to go to an outside workplace; improving their financial management skills to make cash stretch further and reduce tensions over money; training in violence-avoidance on the streets through tactics such as walking in groups, refusing night shift work, not wearing sexually provocative clothing, and asking men from their household to accompany them at all times. Shelters should also be provided to assist women in urgent need. While in the shelter, the above types of training and counselling should be provided. It should be the task of a government or non-government agency to provide this training and other services for women. Laws should be passed to strengthen penalties regarding violence against women.

GAD Perspective

Women may need to modify their behaviour in the short-term to avoid further injury, but in the long-term the major modification required is in men, since they are the perpetrators of this violence. The cultural values and social institutions which give men power over women in their households, on the streets, and in the workplace need to be changed. This will require massive and long-term public education. It will probably involve new legislation or the enforcement of existing legislation to ensure zero tolerance of domestic violence so that assaults in the home are prosecuted in the same way as assaults between strangers would be; sexual harassment regulations actively implemented through workplace committees; and the effective maintenance of safe streets as a public priority shared by women and men. Occupational segregation should also be eliminated, so that women have economic power and can, if necessary, be financially independent; and women are no longer seen as inferior workers doing inferior jobs.

Applying GAD Tools To Case Study #1

Tool #1: Gender division of labour

Definitely part of the problem here, as women's and men's work in different spheres allocates them differential financial and social power.
Tool #2: Types of work

Women’s involvement in productive work seems to be little recognised, since they are punished by their husbands for leaving the home; as part of their reproductive work they shoulder the burden of domestic budgeting, leaving them vulnerable to accusations of mismanaging income. To make up the shortfall of cash from an inadequate income, they seek paid productive work outside. The demands placed on women in these two spheres are contradictory. This probably lowers their self-esteem as they feel they are failing to meet expectations. All this contributes, directly and indirectly, to the cycle of violence in which they are trapped.

Tool #3: Access to and control over resources and benefits

Relative to women, men have access to the better jobs, although some men may be unemployed or low paid, possibly increasing domestic stress. Women have access to household income, but do not really control it in the sense that they are not free to decide spending priorities. It seems they must meet their husband’s expectations and requirements above all else.

Tool #4: Influencing factors

Violence in this case is increasing, not static, so something must be changing in the environment in which it is occurring. Research should check into factors such as changing patterns of work; increased prices; changing ideas about appropriate behaviour for women and men.

Tool #5: Condition and position

Women’s condition is a problem—they are experiencing violence in their daily lives. Their position relative to men seems to be the cause of the problem.

Tool #6: Practical needs and strategic interests

Immediate practical needs include shelters, jobs, housing, medical care, and counselling. Strategic interests include measures to improve women’s position relative to men, and should focus on both empowering women and bringing about long-term societal changes in men’s attitudes and behaviour.

Tool #7: Levels of participation

Women need to organise to empower themselves and to bring about long-term changes. They should participate in providing many of the practical services needed by women experiencing violence, but they should not take sole responsibility for these—getting male dominated government and non-government agencies to acknowledge these problems and take some responsibility for solving them is an essential part of long-term change. Women who have been the victims of violence should be involved in solving the
short- and long- term problems, thereby moving from the status of passive victim to active decision maker.

**Tool #8: Potential for transformation**

A mixed strategy of meeting practical needs while bringing about long-term changes has a good potential for transformation. Since the particular problem addressed here has ramifications in the areas of law, policing, economy, welfare, health, education, and media there is the potential for involving a great number of agencies and individuals and thereby transforming both institutions and personal styles of life.

**Other Questions for Case Study #1**

- Is the violence concentrated in particular social classes or ethnic groups?
- What economic, cultural, historical, or political factors could account for this?
- How do approaches need to be modified when issues of violence are compounded by questions of race or class oppression?
- Are there different opinions on the nature and causes of violence, or is there a broad consensus?
- How could different voices be better heard?
- What kind of strategies do women already use to avoid, resist, or survive violence?
- Can these strategies be shared and built up into a larger force for change based on women’s knowledge and experience?

**KEY CONCEPTS**

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**Agents:** Ordinary people who create historical change through the activities and struggles of their everyday lives—a definition which contrasts with the idea of a “change agent” as an especially knowledgeable person or organisation that brings change to others.

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

**Class:** Defined 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.
Deconstruction: Analysing the derivations, contexts, and uses of language or discourse in order to unpack the power relations and hidden agendas implicit in them.

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

Efficiency: Preoccupation with technological and economic efficiency, using standard economic measurement of output/input (ignoring non-market inputs and outputs).

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

Essentialise: To lump a variety of categories into one; to ignore difference and emphasise similarities despite little evidence for such a generalisation.

Export Processing Zones (EPZs): Areas set up by countries where transnational corporations can produce for export free from the normal tariff and tax regulations and often free also from labour and environmental regulations.

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 through subcontracting and 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 standardised 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 due to changes in technology and international competition. In post-Fordism, production is characterised as more decentralised, specialised, and flexible and requires new institutional arrangements in response to the pressures of globalisation.

Gender Relations: The socially constructed relations between women and men which are held in a particular society.

Global Feminism: This will not occur until women from all racial groups believe feminism recognises their particular realities and incorporates these realities into feminist theories.

Globalisation: The idea that the world economy has reached a new level of integration; heightened capital mobility means that companies operate worldwide, creating a "global assembly line"; goods, capital, and, to a lesser extent, people move around the globe.

Grand theory or metanarratives: Grand theories, such as liberal and Marxist frameworks, claim universal validity and thus the capacity to explain global realities, particularly modernity.
**Growth:** Measured by market output—GNP, per capita income. This is the objective of development.

**Identity:** A cluster of ideas and language/discourse that defines the way most people behave and think about a particular subject and that increasingly form the bases of major cleavages among people.

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

**Labelling:** 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:** Grand theories, such as liberal and Marxist analysis, which purport to explain global realities and thus to be universally applicable.

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

**Mode of production:** The organisation 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.

**Multiple Jeopardies:** Black women experience the multiple jeopardies of racism, sexism, and classism simultaneously, and this simultaneous experience not only compounds these oppressions, but reconstitutes them in specific ways.

**Obstacles to growth:** There is an assumption that growth is natural, and if it is not occurring then the obstacles or barriers must be identified and removed.

**Patriarchal ideology:** A set of ideas that define women as natural mothers or as sexual objects.

**Patriarchy:** A universal system of male domination.

**Periphery:** The third world countries characterised by underdeveloped economies and dependent relations with the metropole.

**Personal is political:** The view that male domination and women’s resistance to male domination occurs both in the so called public and private spheres.

**Positivism:** A philosophical doctrine contending that sense perceptions are the only admissible basis of human knowledge and precise thought. This doctrine became the basis of a hierarchy of knowledge which emphasised the sciences over theological or metaphysical inquiry.

**Power:** The post-modernists do not see power as something held only by the ruling class, but rather as something diffused through society, exercised in many different ways by many different people, and closely tied to control over knowledge and discourse, attitudinally, and in perceptions and behaviour.
Production: Producing commodities for the capitalist system and producing the commodity labour power on a generational basis.

Public and private spheres: This distinction defines the limits of governmental authority, to preserve individual liberty.

Race: Race is socially constructed, and plays a crucial role in women’s experiences and opportunities.

Racial Bias: This is often unconscious, and it leads to ignorance of racial differences and a tendency to assume that the dominant race’s experiences can be generalised for all women.

Representation: A term commonly used to refer to an aspect of democratic processes which 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: Refers to 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 which reproduce class and gender relations and the political and economic status quo.

Reserve army of labour: Labour which is cheap and available for capitalist expansion and which acts to keep downward pressure on wages. This includes unemployed workers as well as potential wage workers now doing domestic and agricultural work.

Resistance: Action or inaction, talk or silence, often hidden or covert, through which oppressed groups indicate to themselves, to each other, and, more rarely, to 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 are shaping the restructuring.

Take-off: Overcoming barriers to development and achieving self-sustaining growth (Rostow).

The Social Construction of Gender: The view that people do socially define, and socially determine and therefore can change the ideas and practices related to feminine and masculine characteristics; feminine and masculine activities; and feminine and masculine ways of relating to one another.
Transnational Corporations (TNCs): Corporations which operate in many countries and plan production, investment, and distribution strategies across nation states.

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THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON FEMINISM AND DEVELOPMENT


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**SUGGESTED READING**


Wollstonecraft, Mary. *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*. 1792.


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CHAPTER 4
THE IMPLICATIONS OF FEMINIST THEORY FOR DEVELOPMENT POLICY, RESEARCH, AND ACTION

OVERVIEW

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 interrogate and expose the contradictions and complications in development theory and practice.
- It provides the analytical tools that reveal how the 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 analyse the policies of international development and finance institutions, and agencies such as the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (The World Bank), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).
- Regarding development issues, it indicates the factors that should be considered to create just, gender-sensitive, development policies.
- It indicates alternative approaches and practices to destabilise the traditional models of development which are inimical to the well-being of women.

Feminist theorising, the experiences of women in developing countries, and feminist critiques of development policies have had different effects on creating new policies, shaping 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.

The development policies of international institutions and national governments continue to reflect the influences of the Liberal Feminist framework. These policies maintain an incremental, reformist approach to working within the modernisation paradigm. They still
focus on bringing women “into” development. As these policies are explored, the assumptions of liberal feminism and the modernisation paradigm are easily detected.

The influence of feminist theorising on current research on women and development is far more wide-ranging. (Moser) There have been substantive changes in the nature and scope of this research. Many more feminist researchers and activists in the South are undertaking research. They are attempting to redefine the “women in development” and “gender in development” discourse. They are also committed to ensuring that the historical perspective of women’s movements and women’s organisations 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 correct and challenge the assumptions that women’s movements and organisations in the South began with the United Nations focus on the first decade of development.

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, activitists and policy makers which was formed in Bangalore, India in 1984 and formalised at workshops undertaken at the NGO Forum in Nairobi in 1985. DAWN has questioned the impact of development on poor peoples, especially women, in light of the global economic and political crises. The group’s current agenda focuses on the themes of environment, reproductive rights, and population, and on alternative economic frameworks.

On the question of human development and economic growth, DAWN has now inverted the traditional question, “What kind of human development would promote economic competitiveness and growth?” Gita Sen, on behalf of DAWN, asks instead, “What kind of economic development can best promote human development?” Sen, who is DAWN’s Research Co-ordinator on Alternative Economic Frameworks, argues that when this becomes the central question of development, different answers are sought and different policies have to be designed and implemented. (Sen, 1987)

On the issues of nationalistic or economic wars, the emergence of competitive trading blocs, and the changing role of multi-lateral institutions, DAWN poses three central questions to the research agenda for feminists from the South.

1. What role can and should we play in bringing about internal peace?
2. How will our employment and responsibilities for livelihoods be affected by trading blocs?
3. How can we improve consciousness about development in co-operation with Northern Groups?

Women’s non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and feminist researchers and activists in the North are synthesising their research concerns with feminists in the South. Alternative Women In Development (ALT-WID), is a network of Northern feminists based in Washington, D.C. They published a study of the impact on women of
Reaganomics in the United States entitled *Reagonomics and Women*. The study identifies Reaganomics in the United States as having the same impact on women in the U.S. as structural adjustment policies in the South. This link is an important analytical contribution. Both Reaganomics and structural adjustment policies are nurtured by and have the same ideological roots in neo-classical economics.

In another publication, *Breaking Boundaries: Women, Free Trade and Economic Integration*, ALT-WID explains why free trade is a women’s issue. They note market policies are not gender blind and point 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.” ALT-WID also collaborates with feminist networks in the North and South for projects, conferences, and developing political strategies.

Other feminist researchers in the North recognise the significance of contextualising the discourse on development to show its effect on women and development. This is an application of the analytical strategies they used to critique the metanarratives of social theory to show its gendered and exclusionary nature. This work complements the research and activism of indigenous feminisms. The current feminist research on development issues is now much more engaged and covers all issues of development. This research now incorporates the insights gained from gender analysis to investigate the environmental debate and issues of sustainable development.

The women’s movement and women’s activism have exploded with vibrant programmes and scholarship in both the North and the South. In the last two decades, women’s non-governmental organisations have grown and diversified, and the nature of their activism has changed in many cases. Many NGOs set up in the last century or early in the twentieth century often attempted to supplement the welfare activities of the state or experimented with reformist policies. More recently, women-centred NGOs in the South have more frequently been at the frontiers of pushing alternative development practices. An example of this is a coalition of women NGOs in the Phillipines who, 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 organisations and networks are discussed in more detail in chapter 5 of this manual.)

New women-related research institutes and the institutionalisation of women studies programmes have also emerged in several countries. Sierra Leone, Uganda, Zambia, Sudan, China, India, and Zimbabwe have all started women-centred research institutions. At the University of the West Indies in the Commonwealth Caribbean, the Women and Development Studies Program was institutionalised as the Centre for Gender and Development Studies. What distinguishes these networks, institutes, and centres from earlier women-related organisations is that they seek to prioritise women, children, and men first in discussions of development. They actively pursue alternative approaches to women and development, and their very existence serves as a reminder of the failures of development policy for women.
EXERCISE

1. Identify and discuss the kinds of feminist research being undertaken in your country or region in the area of women and development.
2. Who is doing this research? Women’s bureau, universities or women-centred NGOs?
3. Is this research contributing to changing the information on women and development? How will it influence development policy and planning?

THE SHIFT IN THE DISCOURSE ON DEVELOPMENT

Feminist development critiques and feminist activisms have contributed to radically altering the discourse on development. It is no longer possible to deal with development issues by focusing on how to improve savings and investment functions, or identifying the most efficient industrialisation strategies to pursue to increase exports. The fallacy and misrepresentation of assessing the attainment of goals through sterile measures of economic growth have been exposed.

The initial Women-in-Development (WID) policy statement (Percy Amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1973, U.S.) 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 neo-classical economics and liberal, political ideology. Combined as the doctrine of Liberalism, they pose particular problems for women.

The main problem is the public/private dichotomy. This devalues women’s reproductive work while maintaining they can gain equality by expanded participation in the public sphere of the state and formal economic production. (For a fuller discussion, see the section in chapter 2, Liberal Feminism). WID maintained a consensus on accepting the rationale of markets as expounded in the modernisation paradigm. You will recall these centre on the efficiency of resource allocation, organising production and distribution, and liberalisation of trade and investment while remaining oblivious to the concerns of gender relations. WID’s main thrust was to make the ideology of market economics more human; 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 the development discourse. Most of the South experienced severe economic crises in the 1970s and 1980s, while a small group (notably the Asian NICS) forged ahead. Women, children, and men lived (and still live) the contradictions of development policies that promote mass consumption even as it leads to increasing conditions of poverty and marginalisation. People in the South in their daily lives experience the policies of development as modernisation that can produce:

- increases in economic growth but weak employment generation (India);
- increases in economic growth but environmental and human degradation (Brazil); and
• no increase and, in some cases, declines in economic growth accompanied by declines in human and physical infrastructure (the Caribbean).

Gita Sen of DAWN observes that for the first time in two decades, feminist development critiques bring together people and their needs in the dialogue on development. In the 1970s, the dialogue was dominated by the dependency critique. The debate surrounded the creation of dependency and the requirements of a basic needs program. There was no gender analysis and the women in development framework had not yet emerged. (Sen, 1987)

The 1980s introduced a reversal in the experiences of the South. As with other situations of crises it became an excellent time to consider and put on the agenda issues previously ignored. The 1980s also marked the beginning of the gender and development critique. This has 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 has made unequal gender relations a central concern of all issues 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: 2)

The indigenous feminist theorising informing DAWN’s definition stress economic and social changes, empowerment of women, and progressive changes in public/private relations to benefit women. This is quite opposite, conceptually, 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: 49)

This definition locates development in the sphere of production and seeks changes in economic relations only. To these theorists, economic development consists of introducing new combinations of factors of production which increase labour productivity. It is easy to recognise the bias against women in this definition. By emphasising production factors, they are focusing on formal economic activity; for example, waged labour and large scale production. These are all areas where women’s contributions are under-represented and devalued. More significant, 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 marginalised at the core of development theory.

Where structuralists stress the impact of the international economic system as a constraint to economic growth in the South, the neo-classical school identified the dominant constraint as internal rather than external factors. The work of Walter Rostow and Arthur Lewis capture the range of arguments of the neo-classical development theories (see
Framework A in chapter 3). They argue that constraints to development partly lie in indigenous institutions and attitudes and also in the low rate of savings characteristic of poor countries. Built into the basic assumptions of this theorising is the rejection of indigenous attitudes and institutions. Women in the South are largely responsible for maintaining cultural traditions. As black, post-modernist and indigenous/third world feminist theorising show, 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, neo-classical theorists place women’s ways of knowing outside their concept of development.

Socialist feminists theories have contributed to the extensive examination of the way women’s labour is exploited in factories and export processing zones. They have also documented how women receive less wages for comparable work. They have revealed the feminisation of certain occupations as women entered the labour force in increasing numbers. As men moved out of certain occupations these became “ghettoised” as women’s work. There was an accompanying loss of status and lower wages. In the South, teaching at primary and secondary schools is a good example.

Liberal feminist analysis discloses the public/private dichotomy at the heart of modernisation theorising 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 has to be built into all issues of development. It is another way of posing the question raised earlier by Gita Sen. In this context, 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 is the recognition that women straddle the crossroads of reproduction and production. They are the link between human development and economic development; the primary workers in both the private sphere and the public sphere.

A goal of gender analysis has to be a reorganisation of the private sphere to free women of carrying all the responsibilities of sustaining households and family forms. However, a reality now is that these are seen by many women and men as women’s responsibilities, although this is being increasingly challenged. This continues to be an era of the most difficult and intractable aspects of gender relationships and change. The gender ideologies that maintain this exploitation of women in the private sphere of the household contribute to producing development policy that integrates them in economic production in specific, exploitative or marginal ways. Women suffer most when development policy does not comprehend this. But children and men, households, and families also suffer because of the multiple burdens and responsibilities women in the South carry.

Feminist theories and feminist critiques of development are instrumental in revealing the South are not culturally, politically or economically homogenous. Neither are the relations of gender experienced in the same manner by all third world women. Black
feminist Audre Lorde has theorised on the danger of implying that all women suffer the same oppression because they are women.

As explained in chapter 3, black feminists argue this ignores the various forms and degrees women’s subordination takes. It also marginalises how these experiences change based on the woman’s race, class, and cultural setting. There is more inter-country variation among countries in the South than among industrialised societies of the North.

The tendency to homogenise the concept of the third world woman, and the assumption of universal applicability of these approaches to development create specific problems for women in the South. Programmes and policies designed to integrate women into development, or that are critical of the relations between women and development are a reaction to the modernisation paradigm. Black, Socialist, Post-modernist, and Indigenous Feminist theorising isolate and expose the intellectual and ideological climate at the time the modernisation paradigm emerged. The dominance of the United States (US) in the post-war era extended to include intellectual hegemony which was played out in scholarship, research, and policy making on the South. Just as the US had devised the Marshall Plan and the Northern Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as the economic and military support and security plans for Western Europe, it began to devote attention to producing a similar plan for the South. As mentioned in chapter 2, this group of theories and prescriptions became core elements of the modernisation paradigm.

It is not accidental that the United States was the first industrialised country to establish a policy initiative that reorganised women’s roles in the development process. The Percy Amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1973 required that U.S. foreign assistance be administered:

...so as to give particular attention to those programmes, projects and activities which tend to integrate women into the national economies of foreign countries.

This led to the integration of women in development (WID) policy approach. It also meant that early WID policy implicitly inherited the problems of prioritising capitalist production and western values and institutions.

Feminist analysis of the WID approach shows that WID specialists relied on the capacity of neo-classical, liberal, and economic models to achieve the goals of development. They assumed women were ignored in development planning, arguing the allocation of financial and natural resources should be extended to include women. However, they did not investigate whether the concept of economic efficiency may be premised on excluding the particular, gendered constraints women face as producers. They also did not consider how responsibilities generally regarded as women’s are viewed as creating conditions of economic inefficiency.
The WID Policies of International Development Institutions

The World Bank

The policies of the World Bank, one of the major Bretton Woods financial institutions discussed in chapter 1, is heavily influenced by the WID approach. In a 1990 publication, *Women in Development: A Progress Report on the World Bank Initiative*, the institution sets out its policy for women. It states:

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.

The Bank then advocates governmental policy that would best realise women’s economic potential while being sensitive to the role of culture. It recommends consulting with women’s groups and non-governmental organisations in setting priorities and designing programmes. It identifies four priority areas that should assist women realise their economic potential. These are:

- Education
- Health and family planning
- Agricultural extension
- Credit

The publication notes women in the South spend several hours each day in reproductive work. It thus recommends measures to free more of women’s time for other activities.

These recommendations call for developing alternative fuels and local woodlots, promoting more efficient stoves, and providing child care. This policy does not mention changing prevailing gender ideologies that construct all reproductive work as women’s work. These measures are intended to help women complete reproductive work more efficiently so that they would have more time to increase their participation in labour force activities. The Bank concludes its policy review with six areas of emphasis, under the head “Future Directions”:

- expansion of policy work and research, with priority given to the development of guidelines on cost-effective interventions in specific fields, reflecting the best available operational experience.
- setting an agenda for research to support policy formulation, including efforts to collect data disaggregated by gender, 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 women in development 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 Bank’s operations to test, monitor, and
evaluate promising programs for women, especially in the high-priority areas.

• increased training of staff on the role of women in development.

EXERCISE
1. Refer to Chapter 3. Discuss the policy and future directions of the World
Bank applying the six parts of the WID and GAD analysis.
2. Is there an overlap? That is, are the Bank’s policies strictly WID, strictly
GAD?
3. Select a policy statement on women and development from your country.
(For example, those released by women’s bureaux 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 that would satisfy the needs of women in
your country?
(d) what are the core assumptions of the World Bank Policy? Refer to Chapter 2
for a discussion of an assumption.

International Labour Office (ILO)

The International Labour Office (ILO) states that its commitment to equal opportunity
and treatment of women and men in all its activities is part of its mandate. This
commitment is translated into policy within the 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.
In a publication entitled *The Window of Opportunity: Strategies for Enhancing Women’s Participation in Technical Cooperation Projects*, the ILO provides ideas and guidelines for enhancing women’s visibility and active role in planning and monitoring development projects and programmes. It examines some of the factors to consider when planning, monitoring, and evaluating different types of projects. It presents advantages and possible disadvantages of launching so-called “women-specific” projects, as opposed to general projects that, in principle, are open for women and men on an equal basis. Finally, the publication recommends a change of attitudes and assumptions made on women’s participation in the labour force. The ILO, like the World Bank, emphasises concerns of equality and fully integrating women into development. There is no suggestion that women are already fully integrated into development in policies and experiences that are gendered or premised on their subordination and exploitation.

**United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)**

The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) is a major advocate for women within the United Nations system and throughout the South. UNIFEM provides direct support for women’s projects and promotes including women in the decision-making processes of mainstream development programmes. UNIFEM’s mission is to support efforts of women in the South to achieve their objectives of economic and social development and of equality. It believes that by so doing, it improves the quality of life for all.

The activities UNIFEM supports falls within four key areas:

- agriculture and food security
- trade and industry
- human resource development
- emerging issues

UNIFEM states that its intention in all aspects of its programming is to link grassroots activities to national planning and policy decision making. Women, Environment and Development, the new addition to the women and development discourse, provides glimpses of the kinds of development policy on women UNIFEM endorses. In *Agenda 21: An Easy Reference to the Specific Recommendations of Women*, UNIFEM states that when interpreting the recommendations in the text of *Agenda 21*, the reader should note that all collective terminology, including references to communities, urban and rural dwellers, indigenous people, trade unions, professionals in business and industry and NGOs, is intended to apply equally to women and men. Indeed, in both rural and urban settings, women as heads of households, government officers, farmers, entrepreneurs, and
professionals (including scientists and technicians) form a critical and substantial part of all major groups.

UNIFEM, like the ILO and the World Bank, is firmly committed to the Liberal Feminist WID approach of integrating women into development. (UNIFEM does, however, have some unique characteristics. It was set up specifically to fund "innovative and catalytic projects" and from its beginnings had a mandate to support the work of women's non-government activities in addition to the activities of government institutions and departments.)

These international institutions and agencies are committed to assisting women and in Africa, Asia, the Pacific, Latin America, and the Caribbean, their programmes and funding have helped women. However, they operate squarely within the modernization as development paradigm. They are unwilling to pursue a critique of the contradictions of this model of development and its implications for women. Women-centred NGOs and other development organisations operate on the fundamental principle that existing models of development are detrimental to women. They therefore explore and implement alternative development strategies.

**Exercise**

National development policies share the approaches of the international development institutions to women in development. They also attempt to "integrate" women into development using Liberal Feminist assumptions. National policies frequently reproduce gender ideologies. The following quotes are taken from two separate five-year development plans:

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 seeks. Thus rising participation among females in the younger age groups is a major contributor to the continued unemployment of human resources in the economy. (Barbados, 1973-1977: 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. (Barbados, 1979-83: ix)

These quotations expose several issues about the nature of the development policy and its implications for women in the South. They introduce key features which are critical in delineating the interconnections among feminist and development theories, and development policies and their outcomes. In the first quotation, a 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 did not seek work before marriage.
- Marriages occur in large enough percentages to make a difference to women’s employment or economic well-being.
- 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, 54.3% of the women who headed households in Barbados had never been married, 2% were divorced or separated, 19.4% had been widowed, and 19.3% were married (Massiah, 1982: 105). The illegitimacy ratio, calculated as total illegitimate births as a percentage of total live births, climbed steadily from 62% in 1961 to 74.2% in 1974. Although the percentage increase appears marginal, the primary statistic is 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 (Barbados, National Commission Report: 272). Between 1945 and 1974 the marriage ratio has never exceed 8% (Barbados, National Commission Report: 272).

There is hardly any statistical or historical evidence to suggest that marriage ever represented or represents a viable option for the majority of women to postpone employment either before or after.

Questions:
1. Why have development planners posed women’s desire for paid, productive work as problematic?
2. How is that view likely to influence employment policies?
3. What is the particular development paradigm informing the planners’ view of women’s work?
4. What are its underlying assumptions?
5. How is a development process perceived in which women’s desire for work is viewed as burdensome to development planning?

The second quotation 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 neo-classical/modernisation paradigm.

Questions:
1. What is development? (Refer to chapters 1 and 2.)
2. How does the definition change according to the major paradigm
3. Write your own definition of development informed by any of the feminist theories introduced in chapter 2.
4. What assumptions have you prioritised?
5. Given your definition, how would a development approach to health change in your country?

REFERENCES


RECOMMENDED READING

DAWN INFORMS 2/93


BIOGRAPHY

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CHAPTER 5

ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT

WOMEN’S NGOs

Internationally, the women’s movement has given birth to a number of non-governmental groups (NGOs) and organisations that continue to challenge many of the assumptions, implied and stated, of the traditional feminist movement and offer indigenous approaches to solving women’s problems in their particular environments. The focus of many NGOs has action; developing programmes and institutions geared towards improving the daily lives of women in their respective communities.

As chapter 3 indicates, there is the general belief among women’s NGOs and other development institutions that the concepts of modernization and development which underlie the policies of the primary international agencies have often lead to implementing development assistance programmes which ultimately ignore the plight of women in the societies targeted by these programmes, and in many instances made them worse off. The failure of these programmes has forced indigenous NGOs and other entities to develop their own solutions.

Initiatives to improve women’s economic situations are a good illustration of the extent of attempts to develop indigenous solutions to women’s problems. They are clear examples in the view of Nancy Barry, President of Women’s World Banking:

“what has become very clear is that what women need is access, not subsidies. They need opportunities, not paternalism.” (Howells, 1993:22)

RESEARCH AND ACTION

Both theorising and policy making should be informed by research to be credible. The need for and importance of research and data has been recognised by both the women’s movement and the various national and international institutions. This recognition is illustrated in the foreword of the United Nations publication, 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.

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At the NGO level, research is emphasised. The creation of DAWN and its stated objectives are evidence of this. Below are some of the NGOs in existence today. Research is a critical activity of each of them.

**Women’s World Banking (WWB)**

Women’s World Banking is a non-profit financial institution created in 1979 to provide access to finance, market information, and training to poor women entrepreneurs. It grew out of the 1975 UN Conference on Women held in Mexico to address the absence of global structures to fund women in micro-enterprises. It currently operates in over 50 countries and has provided assistance to over one million clients internationally. The goal of WWB is to assist poor women to create wealth.

Three basic principles inform policy formulation and operations of WWB:

1. “Local-Global” instead of “North-South” as the prevailing paradigm; a belief in local initiative and local institutions.
2. We believe in the power of women, through their local institutions, to transform the earth. (Nancy Barry in Howells, 1993:22)
3. Women are dynamic economic agents, rather than passive beneficiaries of social services.
4. The importance of lateral learning; a training methodology where women share their business knowledge with each other and thus learn from their peers.

**EXERCISE**

Identify the extent to which this organisation’s programme can be categorised as falling under one of the WID, WAD, or GAD frameworks.

**Self-employed Women’s Association (SEWA)**

This 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 classified as working in the informal sector, and who have been effectively marginalised 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: 16-170)

**EXERCISE**

To what extent can the criticisms of the women and development (WAD) perspective, discussed in Chapter 2, be applied to this project?

The WAD approach has been criticised for failing to challenge male-dominated power structures and, as a result, failing to transform existing social structures. SEWA appears to fall into this category. Further examination of the institution’s approach to organising women demonstrates they recognise 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, 1992:22-23)

**EXERCISE**

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

**Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA)**

CAFRA was launched in April 1985 as a vehicle for encouraging a gender perspective in action research, and as a means of networking among women’s organisations in the Caribbean. Its primary objectives include developing the feminist movement in the Caribbean, developing an approach to analysing relations between men and women, and promoting the integration of research and action. In the words of the organisation:

*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 Caribbean women living outside the region. Decision making is carried at four levels:

1. the general meeting of the membership of the association;
2. the Regional Committee of elected national representatives and members;
3. the Continuation Committee, a sub-committee of the Regional Committee; and
4. the Secretariat, comprising programme and administrative staff headed by the Coordinator.

CAFRA has identified several priority research/action areas, including:

1. population control policies in the Caribbean
2. history of women’s labour and struggle in the region
3. women’s culture; expression as an instrument for the building of power
4. sexual violence
5. women and trade
6. social and economic conditions of women

**EXERCISE**

Examine CAFRA’s mission and activities, as described above, and identify the theoretical framework(s), as discussed in Chapter 2, that inform these. In discussing this assignment, highlight the following:
1. The mission indicates a commitment to feminist politics.
2. The activities undertaken are not merely about “helping” women. This NGOs activities are grounded in a feminist consciousness.

**THE NATURE/FOCUS OF RESEARCH:**

**Implications For Action**

The types of research undertaken and the methodology used are a function of the context of that research and the ideological orientation of the researcher. Two broad ideological perspectives can be used to illustrate this point:

- a family-centred approach, and
- a woman-centred approach.

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 researchers and, consequently, the target of interventions to assist women. In a study, the unit analysed is the family rather than the woman.

In contrast, a woman-centred, or feminist, approach recognises both women’s productive and reproductive roles. Buvinic, quoting Tinker and Bransen (1976) states:

> 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. (Buvinic, 1984:7)

Within this approach, two variants guide research and action.
1. The “equity” variant focuses on inequality between men and women in all spheres, public and private. Qualitative research techniques are typically used and include participatory methods along with more standard analytical tools. Sociological, anthropological, and economic theoretical frameworks are used.

2. The “poverty” variant focuses on women’s roles as economic actors in low-income groups and links women’s economic equality with poverty in the third world. Research activity seeks to quantify the nature and extent of women’s poverty. Action is centred around eliminating this poverty through developing income-generating projects, for example.

Institutional Responses To The Limitations Of Traditional Approaches

Recognising the limitations of the traditional approaches has also come/should come from the various development institutions and national agencies charged with developing programmes to address women’s subordination, marginalisation, and oppression. Lycklama à Nijeholt (1992) posits that there has been some shift in development thinking. This is illustrated by examining a sample of policy documents and other related publications:


These four examples all present views on women in development, however the actual perceptions of women differ.

**EXERCISE**
Read these documents (one per small group of students) and answer the following questions:
1. How does the specific report perceive women?
2. Is power within gender relations a problem?
3. Which development approach is best exemplified by this document (Welfare Approach, Equity Approach, Anti-poverty Approach, Efficiency Approach)?

An analysis of the policy documents is undertaken in Lycklama à Nijeholt 1992: 16-23.

The United Nations, through its various agencies, has also exhibited obvious shifts in focus/development thinking as it continues to address women’s issues. Pietilä and Vickers 1990 have documented this shift. These shifts and the factors contributing to them follow.
**1950-1960s:** Women’s issues seen mainly within the context of Human Rights.

**1970s:** The key role of women becomes more recognised, particularly in relation to efforts to relieve or solve problems in the fields of population and food issues.

In the UN’s earlier decades they [women] had been seen as objects, for whose protection and rights recommendations were made and conventions enacted. In the 1970s the formula was to “integrate women into development”; characteristically they were seen as resources and their contributions were sought to enhance the development process and to make it more efficient.

For this purpose it was necessary to improve the status, nutrition, health and education of women. It was often claimed to be a “waste of human resources” if women were not fully integrated into development efforts. Their dignity and rights were not yet seen as a cause in its own right. The perennial nature of their contribution to the well-being of each country’s population was still unrecognised within the development context. (Pietila and Vickers 1990: vii-viii)

**1980s:** The United Nations’ Third Development Decade. There is 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: viii).

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**EXERCISE**


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**EXERCISE**

In a group discussion session, focus on highlighting the pitfalls of projects based on the stereotypes about women’s “proper” work using the following article as a base. “Women and Handicrafts: Myth and Reality” by Jasleen Dhamija in *SEEDS* supporting Women’s Work in the Third World, Ann Leonard (ed.) New York: The Feminist Press 1989.

This shift 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 (Charkiewicz, et al. 1991). Some organisations in the United Nations system have played a role in “the debate on sustainable development and in bringing women’s perspective...
into the analysis of the crisis and formulating proposals for sustainable solutions.”

INSTRAW is one of these agencies. The Food and Agricultural Organisation is also credited with a long involvement in women’s issues, and more recently with the issue of women and the environment.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), established in 1972 with headquarters in Nairobi, has been instrumental in putting the issue of women and the environment on the international agenda. Charkiewicz, et al. (1991) identified a number of activities undertaken by UNEP:

1. In 1984 they undertook an extensive programme for the enhancement of women’s participation in environmental management.
2. They established the Senior Women’s Advisory Group on Sustainable Development (SWAGSD).
3. They maintain a women’s network listing participants, location, and areas of special interest as they relate to conservation and management of the environment.

REFERENCES


**RECOMMENDED READING**


**BIOGRAPHY**

Maxine McClean is a lecturer in the Department of Management Studies at the Cave Hill Campus of the University of the West Indies, where she teaches marketing, strategic management and entrepreneurship. A former co-ordinator of the Women and Development Studies Group at Cave Hill, she has published in the area of Strategic Management in Small Businesses in Barbados and Credit Unions. She is currently completing a monograph on entrepreneurship in Barbados with Diane Cummins and is currently carrying a study on Women in Microenterprises in Barbados.
INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the women's movement and its role in development. Descriptions of the international, regional, national, and local development activities of women outline why women's activism and organising skills should be included in the overall development scenario.

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 women's groups and organisations, large and small, local, national, regional and international in character, connected and unconnected to each other, and involved in traditional and non-traditional activities.

What all of these women's groups and organisations making up the women's movement 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 reason for this is that very little has been recorded by women themselves about their activism and organising efforts on behalf of women's rights within their own communities and this is the case most especially with women's groups in the South.

International Women's Organisations and Networks

Recent efforts to record the history of international women's non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and networks have been undertaken by women historians, and much of this effort has encompassed the work of affiliated groups in the South.
As part of its centennial celebrations in 1994-1995, the World Young Women’s Christian Association (World YWCA) undertook to record the history of 100 years of women’s organising and activism around women’s issues and concerns. This particular organisation has been selected as an example because it does hold a unique position in the history of the women’s movement. Very early in its history, women set up autonomous national YWCA groups in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, and later in the Pacific. Then, with assistance and support from a world office, these groups planned and build permanent headquarters for their programmes. This has given women a kind of bastion or stronghold that they control in more than 80 countries. Each national YWCA is engaged in training, health, non-formal education, human rights, public affairs, energy and environment, and other community and social work activities with, for, and by women.

Women are trained for jobs in the community and as leaders in all facets of the organisation. This provides an ongoing core of women leaders within the community who often go on to be leaders in other parts of community life. Each national YWCA has complete control over management, programmes, and future directions. The world office provides a set of guiding principles, support with fund-raising and leadership training opportunities as requested.

Having a central building and a staff of trained leaders gives the YWCA a head start in the business of influencing the development of a community and in providing a place for other forms of activism and organising. Women are given the opportunity to be managers, trainers, decision makers, and planners in an atmosphere that is women-centred, non-threatening, and safe.

And out of this “safe” atmosphere, remarkable achievements have come:

- the beginnings of political movements towards more democratic societies
- the introduction of appropriate technologies for women in rural and semi-urban areas
- new and innovative training methods for women with little or no educational background
- participatory forms of group organising
- a host of other activities and that have moved women into the forefront of development activities both within their countries and regions as well as internationally.

For example, many women on country delegations to the UN have gained their training and experience in leadership activities as committee and/or board members of the YWCA in their respective countries.

Not much work has yet been undertaken to record the history of international women’s networks. Networks are a more recent phenomenon. More flexible than an organisation,
and much more reliant on each individual or groups to keep the web of contacts alive, a network arises to fill a need, then often disappears when the need is gone. In a true network, there are no headquarters, no main offices, no staff. Variations on this theme are more common, however, usually with a group that has taken on the responsibility of keeping the contacts alive, and some staff, either full- or part-time.

During and since the UN International Women’s Year (1975) and the subsequent UN Decade for Women (1976-1985), international women’s networks emerged to fill a need amongst women’s groups for better contact with other groups and for access to information and other resources. Best known amongst these are ISIS International (Manila and Santiago), ISIS Women’s International Cross Cultural Exchange (ISIS-WICCE), Women’s Features Service (India), and 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 (e.g., World Association of Girl Guides and Scouts (WAGGS), International Federation of Business and Professional Women (IFBPW), Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW), etc.). The Women’s Features Service came out of Inter Press Service and functions more 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 whom are not formally affiliated with any group, and who have previously functioned in relative isolation. The main channel of communication is through a journal or newsletter which keeps each group informed about issues and available resources around women and development activities, and about plans and preparations for upcoming events, conferences, etc.

In the case of IWTC, the mailing list also includes government women’s bureaux and ministries, UN departments and specialized agencies, donors, and other support groups for women 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/or regional groups in the development of manuals, guidebooks, bibliographies and other women and development resource materials. In recent years, there has been an emphasis on training in the use of computers, including desktop publishing, electronic networking, and the development of resource centres and databases for women involved in development activities.

Regional Women’s Organisations and Networks

As at the international level, very little has been written about the history of regional women’s organisations and networks. Perhaps an exception amongst regional women’s organisations is the Women and Development Unit (WAND) based at the University of the West Indies in Barbados. Several booklets and articles have been written about the history of WAND, and regular features are disseminated on various aspects of WAND’s development and work.
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 was for a central agency that could provide resources, technical assistance, and training for the women’s groups and projects in the region; one that could keep isolated women’s groups a little more in touch with what was happening in the women’s movement at large.

Situated at the University of the West Indies, WAND has forged a path that intersects with the development of women’s bureaux in the Caribbean, with the regionalisation of resources, and with the burgeoning of women’s human rights as a major focus amongst women activists and groups in the Caribbean. Providing women and development information from a central resource centre and database, assisting with the development of project proposals and the search for funds for projects, and leading the way in lobbying regional governments for legislation that moves women’s human rights issues and concerns ahead, WAND epitomises the work and dedication of regional women’s organisations.

Regional women’s networks, especially those concerned with the flow of information within regions, have grown in importance during and since the UN Decade for Women. There now exist regional women’s media networks in every world region (Asia/Pacific, Latin America/Caribbean, Africa, Middle East, North America and Europe), usually within the framework of alternative media that goes directly to women’s groups, but increasingly includes cross-over features into the world of mass media, or mainstream media channels.

FEMPRESS (a women’s alternative media network for Latin America) began in 1981 as a clipping service. Working out of the offices of the Institute for Studies of Transnationalists in Latin America (ILET), two women began collecting clippings about women’s activities in every country of Latin America and pasting them into a magazine format for distribution into every country in the region.

Now expanded into a regular monthly magazine of original articles and clippings, FEMPRESS is acknowledged as one of the leading networks linking the activism of women 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.

Organised around a simple but extremely effective logic, FEMPRESS 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 from the FEMPRESS headquarters in Santiago, Chile in a monthly journal or magazine.

FEMPRESS also prepares and distributes radio shows compiled of interviews and talks by various women in each country of the region, and puts out a quarterly compilation of clippings and writings on specific subject areas known as Mujer Especial.
National Women’s Organisations and Networks

Foremost amongst national women’s organisations have been National Councils of Women (NCWs). NCWs are made up of national women’s organisations (e.g., Maendeleo y Wanawake of Kenya affiliated with ACWW, national YWCAs affiliated with World YWCA, and national women’s groups with member groups within the country but not affiliated with an international organisation).

NCWs are usually set up to unite the efforts of national women’s groups to lobby government and/or to improve facilities and programmes for women in a country. NCWs have had mixed reviews over the years. Combining the efforts of national women’s groups who have sometimes had long histories in that country before the inception of an NCW is not always easy. But most of the member groups of NCWs come together when there is a common cause, such as the development of a national plan of action for women, or the need for legislation around issues of women’s human rights.

Maendeleo y Wanawake is the major national women’s organisation of Kenya. Set up with member groups in every town and village of Kenya, Maendeleo has an impressive headquarters in Nairobi and a full-time staff of administrators and trainers. Undertaking projects in a wide variety of areas, Maendeleo has been responsible for projects that have provided water pumps in villages, craft production and marketing schemes, leadership training workshops, and a multitude of other rural and urban development activities for, by, and with the women of Kenya.

Increasingly, Maendeleo y Wanawake has become involved in political and government activities in addition to its programmes that involve training and project implementation, and this has caused much discussion of the roles and responsibilities of women in Kenya. Maendeleo is a member group of the Kenya National Council of Women.

Friends of Women (FOW) in Thailand was set up as a project by women who were concerned about the rising numbers of young girls and women being brought from villages across Thailand to be prostitutes in Bangkok. Setting themselves up in a couple of rooms in the centre of Bangkok, these women began to make contact with groups and individuals across the country and region, eventually establishing contact with groups in other countries around the world. Their efforts and continuing concern for the welfare of young women in Bangkok has now become a national network of people fighting against violations of women’s human rights, and specifically against luring girls from poor country families into a life of virtual sexual slavery.

FOW is not just a lobbying group, however. The network provides counselling 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 published in both Thai and English. It is a network rather than an organisation because it does not require membership, and activities focus around needs as they arise, not any set programme. Anyone interested can take part.
Local Women’s Organisations and Networks

Because women’s groups function in so many different ways and because the definition of an organisation and a network becomes blurred, examples of local activities by women are given in place of examples of specific groups.

In Santiago, Chile, during the long years of dictatorship (1972-1989), women’s groups organised around the right to democratic elections and women’s equality in decision-making positions in government. Beginning with a few established women’s groups, marches of protest were organised for each March 8 (International Women’s Day). Momentum grew each year, with many thousands of women from every walk of life marching through the streets of Santiago and/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 in large part was given to the continuous actions of women’s groups, and women were appointed to positions of power and authority in the new government.

In Ahmedabad, India, there was little recognition of the informal women’s work sector and, therefore, there was little effort to make their lives more economically viable. This was particularly so within the trade union movement where, try as she might, Ela Bhatt had little success in pushing forward the needs of these women. She decided to form a breakaway union for self-employed women; women who work at home or within a women’s group, not in factories or other businesses, and who have a hard time making ends meet.

The resulting Self Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) is now many thousands of members strong. A type of revolving bank is maintained—all the members donate a small amount each month, and money is available when one or more members need it for purchasing equipment or setting up a small business. SEWA’s example is often given and emulated by women around the world.

In a small village at the foot of Mt. Meru, Kenya, for generations the women travelled to the foot of a large hill near the village to collect water and carry it back up the hill for use in the village. On 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, it was decided that enough was enough. The women did not want their daughters to suffer as they had done, with bent backs and endless pain in their old age. With 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 FAO expert was approached to assist with a simple pump at the foot of a waterfall in the river. Slowly, the pipes were laid by the women. Up the hill they went, with pipes branching off at each woman’s hut. Then large plugs were made of cork-like materials, and finally the pump was started.

Every woman in that village now has her own water supply. Not only has it increased the health and well-being of the village but 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 multi-racial kindergartens. At the time, all education in the country was segregated “by language”, with Fijian children attending Fijian-language schools, Indian children attending Hindi-language schools, and the children of expatriates (from Australia, New Zealand, and the U.K.) attending English-language schools. The standard of education and facilities was vastly different in each language category, the English-language schools having the most advanced facilities and teaching.

Although much could be said for maintaining the cultures and traditions of each language group, in reality, children were receiving different levels of education and were being handicapped for future career prospects.

In keeping with its long-time principle of equal opportunity for all, the YWCA began multi-racial kindergartens open to everyone. The effect was dramatic. Educationists 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 of the parents of Fijian and Indian children wanted their children to attend the better equipped and 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 language matter before, but now the authorities were faced with making a precedent-setting decision. Amidst 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 multi-racial, the official policy of the country. English, Fijian, and Hindi are the official languages of the land and all official documents and materials are printed in each language.
WOMEN'S ACTIVISM AND ITS ROLE IN DEVELOPMENT

As previously discussed in Chapter 2, anthropologists usually identify the stages of "modernisation" and "progress" 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 argued for adding the following:

- Organisation of social and production relations
- Patterns of social stratification
- Existence of the monogamous family
- Patterns of property ownership
- Forms of work and production

To this list should be added:

- Patterns of women's organising and activism

Perhaps organisation of social and production relations, as suggested by feminist anthropologists, would encompass some of the activities outlined in this section on the women's movement and its role in development. 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 organising and activism," perhaps a whole new chapter could be written concerning the roles and responsibilities of women in development theory.

It should be obvious by now that a great deal of what has happened in the history of the world, and more specifically in the area of development and "modernisation," has been brought about by the activism and continuing efforts of women's groups.

Each example of women's organisations and networks, whether international, regional, national, or local illustrates the extent to which women have been actively involved in major changes taking place in their country and in the world.

And yet it is not possible to conclude this section without giving further examples of actions and events that have changed the course of history, and that have occurred because of the activism and organising skills of women.
Women Activists at the International Level: Stage One

There were 17 women amongst the delegates to the founding meetings of the UN in San Francisco, U.S.A. in 1946. Initial discussions revolved around setting up a Commission on Human Rights. The 17 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 upon. Still the 17 women were not satisfied. At an introductory meeting of the Sub-Commission, they decided a full Commission on the Status of Women was required.

The Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) had its first meeting in January 1947. The Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW) had its first meeting in February 1947. Insufficiently funded and not provided with its own secretariat and centre in the same way as the UNCHR was, the UNCSW nevertheless placed women's rights firmly on the agenda of the UN.

Women Activists at the International Level: Stage Two

In the two years prior to the historic UN World Conference on Human Rights (UNCHR) in Vienna in 1993, women worldwide held hearings on violations of women's human rights and collected more than 500,000 signatures on a petition demanding that women's human rights (and particularly violence against women) be placed on the agenda of the UNCHR, and not just discussed by a small group during sessions of the UNCSW. The UNCSW was hampered by lack of resources and the lack of an official protocol to deal with violations against 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 UN World Conference on Human Rights were a testament to the organising 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 the progress of 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 that gave little or no regard to the equal rights of women to be decision makers in their own countries, a small group of feminist activists organised a Feminist Encounter (Encuentro) in Colombia in 1981.

About 200 women participated over a four-day period. Revelling in the freedom of the occasion, plans of action for the region emerged, and the decision was made 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 organisers. But creativity and goodwill prevailed, and major plans and decisions were crafted for strengthening the feminist movement of the region.

Two years later, in Sao Paulo, Brazil, emergency plans had to be made to cope with the crowds. Almost 10,000 women participated, with more clamouring to get in from the favelas and urban areas of Sao Paulo.

And so the feminist movement of 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) have consolidated the feminist cause with more and more women taking part in the political campaigns, more women assuming positions of responsibility in local and national councils, and more women becoming informed about women’s human rights and equality under the law.

Perhaps it is not a coincidence that in 1995, the region is now rid of military dictatorships.

Women Activists at the National Level

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

It was decided that a multi-faceted plan of action was needed. Information had to be placed before the country at large, giving everyone a clearer picture of just what the situation was 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.

At the same time, government had to be lobbied so that legislation could be passed that would give women some protection against the violence they were experiencing. And safe houses and refuges were needed for women to come to, with or without children, from the places where they were being beaten.

From this meeting of women in Tanzania, the group 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 to choose one over another seems almost impossible.

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 come who had been violated in some way whether by beating, rape, or in any other way.

Local women activists in Croatia, Bosnia/Herzegovina, and Serbia regularly hold peace vigils and march across front lines to face soldiers and take home sons and fathers involved in the battle. Women in Serbia are running rape crisis centres for women of Bosnia/Herzegovina and organising protest marches against the leaders of their country who perpetuate the war.

Local women activists protest against bride burning in India, and protect the women who have been threatened or hurt in domestic violence situations.

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

Summary

Very little has happened in any region of the world that has not been influenced by the activism of women. Yet almost no mention is made of these efforts when history and/or progress in any area of development is recorded. But there can be no serious discussion of gender and development without recognising the vital part played by the women's movement.

References

Biography

Anne S. Walker has been the Executive Director of the International Women’s Tribune Centre (IWTC) since its inception in 1976 following the two international Women’s Year meetings held in Mexico City the year before. A feminist, activist, educationist, artist and writer, Dr. Walker has spearheaded IWTC’s efforts to support initiatives of women with a programme of technical assistance and training, collaborative projects, skill-sharing, and the collecting, producing and disseminating of information on a wide range of women and development issues. Dr. Walker works collaboratively with women’s groups in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, the Middle East and the Pacific on behalf of advancing the status of women.