SURVIVAL AND EXPERIMENTATION: THE CHANGING CONDITIONS OF WOMEN IN THE THIRD WORLD

by BRITT-MARIE THURÉN

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Foreword

The Swedish Agency for Research Cooperation with Developing Countries, SAREC, has the mandate to strengthen the research capacity of developing countries. This includes assisting developing countries to build up their own research capacity, creating and supporting viable research environments and supporting research which can help to solve important problems in the Third World. The efforts towards this end also include support for research to make the conditions of women visible and to analyse the mechanisms that structure the different participation of men and women in the development process.

Since its inception in 1976, SAREC has allocated funds in support for research on women in line with these policies. Apart from support within some bilateral programmes funds have gone to conference grants, regional programmes in Africa and Asia and to a special programme for research on women. In the first phase of this special programme twenty grants to individual researchers were allocated which in the second phase were replaced by support to broader networks and institutions. This report is a presentation of the results of the studies from the earlier part of the scheme and is part of a publication series called "Women in Development". The report is written on SAREC's commission by Dr Britt-Marie Thurén, Department of Social Anthropology, Stockholm University.

The opinions expressed by the authors are not necessarily those of SAREC. It is our belief that an open and flexible approach to research is of vital importance to the development process in the Third World and we hope that this contribution to the dialogue on women's issues will play a small part in this process.

Please do not hesitate to give us your views on the issues discussed in this report. In that way, you may contribute to maintaining an active dialogue on development research.

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Director General

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The changing conditions of women in the Third World

A. Background

This document presents summaries of and a discussion around seventeen reports concerning the changing conditions of women in the Third World.

It is often said that the world is continually changing, and perhaps the rate of change is accelerating. Whether this supposition is true depends above all on how change is defined. Let us for the moment, however, just take it for granted that there **is** change, of some kind, not easily described as a whole but evident in many measurable facts - demographic, nutritional, environmental, etc - in such a way that the circumstances of human life are becoming more difficult to predict.

If this is so, it is so for women as well as for men, of course. Why then speak of specific "changes in women's conditions"? What is usually meant with such phrases is "changes in the relationships between men and women" or "changes in social facts where gender is part of the definition of the situation". This is somewhat abstract, so let me give an example. In East Africa, governments have for some time been of the opinion that pastoralism should not be encouraged as a mode of production. The reasons are environmental, developmental and perhaps ethnic. The consequences are clear: pastoralist peoples find it more and more difficult to survive without changing their life style. Nomads settle, money is invested in land instead of cattle, children are sent to school, and so on. These changes in turn lead to others, such as increased economic differentiation between households, new kinds of household compositions, changing ages at and strategies of marriage (Dahl 1979; Talle 1988).

All of these changes affect the pastoralist population as a whole. But the population is internally differentiated. The changes do not affect rich and poor alike, for example. And women and men are not affected in the same way. For example, women and men in these societies used to participate in communal decisions in different ways. Now, it seems as if men's ways are defined as being more appropriate for decision-making in crucial areas. Women were in charge of tasks that now are defined as unremunerated housework, whereas men used to be in charge of tasks that are now taken over by women or converted into remunerated work. Thus, as money enters ever more transactions, men's and women's economic possibilities grow apart. Women cannot take advantage of new opportunities, because their usual work load has increased. One reason for this is that the children, who used to help, are now going to school. (This example is mostly based on Kipury's study of the Maasai, see pp. 38-41)

Let us return to a more abstract level to explain this. We can say that in every

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society there is a gender system or gender structure. [1] This system includes any social or cultural construction based on the fact that mankind is a species with sexual reproduction. This is a biological fact, but the constructions built on it are not biological. It must therefore be the task of social science to explore these constructions and their consequences. Women and men are defined as different in one way or another and this difference is used as a principle for organising, for example, work and decision-making.

Gender systems vary widely from one society to another. Women and men are defined variously as very different or a little different or hardly different at all; as the two kinds of people that exist, or as two among several possible kinds. The criteria for distinguishing the two or more genders a society recognises also vary. In Europe, for example, genitalia are the main criterion, not reproductive capacity. That this is so can be seen in the case of transsexuals. When genitalia have been surgically transformed, the legal gender is changed, even though the person cannot reproduce either as man or as woman. In many societies in Papua New Guinea, body fluids are the crucial criteria. Since small girls do not menstruate and small boys do not produce semen, they are seen as rather female. As a girl begins to menstruate, she gradually rids her body of female blood, and through years of marriage she receives male semen, so in old age she will stop menstruating and become more like a man (Kulick 1987). In several native North American societies, tasks determined gender: If a person switched to performing mainly the tasks of the opposite gender, his or her gender identity was also changed in the eyes of all, either to the opposite gender or to a third one (Whitehead 1981).

Not only do the criteria vary - they can also be more or less rigidly defined. In some societies, eg around the Mediterranean, it is very important to demarcate the genders unequivocally and unremediably. In other places, eg Bali, gender identity is played down and/or allowed to be ambivalent.
In all known human societies, however, gender plays some role. This means that in all human societies, any change will affect men and women in different ways. What the difference will be cannot be generally predicted - it depends on the local gender system.

This makes it necessary to study gender systems for any project of planned or directed change, such as aid to developing countries. The disastrous effects of not taking gender into account have been well documented. For example,

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[1] These are the terms generally used. Connell (1987) prefers "gender order" for what permeates the whole society and "gender regime" for what is found in each institution in a given society. The field awaits terminological clarification, and Connell's work is a step in that direction. The person usually credited with introducing the term "gender" in its present meaning in women's studies is Ann Oakley (1972).

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agricultural programmes are directed at men, based on the conventional assumption that men are farmers and women are housewives. If the local gender system in fact makes the women responsible for food production, the result may be that too much land is used for cash cropping while too little is reserved for food (see especially Rogers 1980 and Brydon and Chant 1989).

Recognising such problems, SAREC has initiated a special programme for "women's studies". This publication offers summaries of the seventeen reports produced within this programme. In this introduction, the background of the programme is outlined, as well as the recent history of women's studies in general and in the Third World in particular. There is a discussion on what is meant by "women's studies". Finally, I will highlight some of the issues that the women researchers have emphasised and a few similarities that can be discerned in spite of the differences in methods and needs across the three continents that are represented in the reports.

B. SAREC's programme in support of individual studies on women in development*

The studies around which this publication is centred emerged out of the first phase of SARECs Special Programme on Women's Research. The idea of boosting women's research by a special programme was discussed in SAREC 1981. It was followed by an inquiry sent to sixty researchers in Africa, Asia and Latin-America, concerning their research needs and priorities. The information acquired was used when formulating the terms of the programme in 1983.

Applications were invited for projects from individual researchers. After external review procedures, 20 projects were granted a maximum of USD 15 000 each in 1985 and 1986. The general aim of the programme was to stimulate research on women's roles and on the specific conditions that face women in development situations and processes.

In the information sent out, it was also stated that, "SAREC has created this programme as a small contribution to the establishment of this area of research (women in development) as legitimate and important."

Women's studies were defined loosely as the analysis of aspects of women's special conditions as well as the analysis of aspects of general problems from a female perspective. No specific requirements as to type or area of research were dictated other than a stipulated relationship to (1) women and (2) development. However, programme information did encourage research in a number of particularly neglected areas, as shown in the answers to the previous inquiry. These areas were: women in productive processes, women in rural areas, health, reproduction, women in historical perspective, women and cultural ideology and the articulation of gender and class ideas and relations in development processes.

The following criteria for receiving funds from the programme were defined: (1) Less experienced researchers were to be given priority, to contribute to the build-up of research skills, but more qualified applicants were not excluded. (2) The applicant should be from a developing country and have an institutional affiliation in the country where the research was to be conducted, normally the applicant's own country. (3) The topic should be of relevance for a better understanding of the role of women in development in some specific area. The sex of the applicant was not specified, but most of them turned out to be women as are all the authors of the reports presented in this publication.

The first phase of the programme is now concluded and most of the reports have come in. This publication presents summaries of them. Together, they give a picture both of women's conditions in the Third World and of the issues Third World women researchers find important to study. Of course, the picture

is not representative in any strict sense of the word. But it is broad enough and interesting enough to warrant a presentation.

The character of the submitted reports varies from publishable and sometimes already published articles or book-length manuscripts to summary research reports. In a few cases, they are still in a preliminary form, to be expanded later. Two recipients have not yet reported and one project did not materialise at all. The versions of reports submitted by June 1989 have been used for the present summary and review. In the cases where reports have later been published this has been indicated in connection with the summary below.

˙ This section was written in cooperation with SAREC.

C. Defining women's studies

What are "women's studies"? Why have they proliferated since the late 1960s? Are they an invention of the European and North American women's movement, not applicable elsewhere? Is any study where women are a major part of the studied population a "women's study"? In order to understand the significance of study called "women's research", and of the reports presented here especially, we need to clarify these issues.

If we take as a point of departure the fact that gender is a pervasive principle of social organisation in all known human societies - and anthropological evidence is very strong on this point - then women's and men's experiences should not always be lumped together as "human experience" but studied separately. This does not mean that all social science must disintegrate into "women's studies" and "men's studies". It means only that the social scientist must always be aware that the object of study might sometimes profitably be divided according to gender and that the dividing principle itself merits attention.

The Western women's movement of the 1960s, however, was a political movement. It was not content to discover that women and men were treated differently - it wanted to change this, either in the direction of a more favourable treatment of women or in the direction of a more gender-neutral society. It is perfectly possible for a social scientist to recognise the existence of gender and even specialise in its study and yet not share the political goals of the women's movement. Further, a political movement is always shaped by the conditions of its own society. The goals, strategies, priorities, terminologies and emotional subtleties of the various women's movements cannot be universal. Not even if gender were such a strong principle of social organisation that it overruled all others would these women's movements do everything in the same way, since they would still have different local problems to deal with. For all these reasons, the relationship between "women's studies" and the women's movement as a whole is far from straightforward.

At least two principles of social organisation are universal - gender and age, and perhaps there are more. But since other principles (eg race, class, caste) are not universal, and since all principles combine in different ways to form different social configurations, gender can hardly be assumed to play the same role everywhere. What role it plays, and what consequences this has for each of the locally recognised genders, is an empirical question.

Two areas of possible confusion now become visible and possible to disentangle. One is the confusion of study object and political purpose, the other is the confusion of women's issues with gender issues.

The first confusion has clear historical reasons. The Western women's

movement is based on the discovery that women have something in common across other social dividing lines, and that women as a category are disadvantaged. The political movement is thus based on a social science discovery, and the social science of gender has been linked to the political movement. In other words, the scientific treatment of gender could not be politically neutral, and the political women's movement could make use of the science of gender. For political purposes it may seem inconvenient to disentangle such a combination of thoughts. A political discourse always has more force if it can claim that it is "true". Analytically, however, politics is one thing - the discourse of "what ought to be" - and science another - the discourse of "what is".

For the sake of clarity, then, let us distinguish object of study from reasons for selecting an object of study. The label "women's studies" confuses the two. If we choose to call the political motivation "feminist" and posit three kinds of study objects, we can draw a six-field figure:

political perspective **object of study**	feminist	non-feminist
women	a	b
men	c	d
society as **a whole**	e	f

Western feminists will contend that most social science research belongs in slot **f** or perhaps **d**. Much of what has been called women's studies has belonged in slot **a**. The figure shows possibilities for new politically interesting studies (**c** and **e**). It also shows that slot **b** exists.

As SAREC's programme was defined, there was some hesitation as to whether the focus should be **a**, **b** or **e**. This has consequences for the project reports. Most of them belong in slot **a** but some tend towards **b**. And some might belong under **e**, but this brings us to the second confusion.

Is the object of women's studies really "women"? A great majority of feminist studies have actually focused neither on "women" nor "men" nor "society as a whole" but on a special aspect of society as a whole, a special principle of social organisation, namely gender. If we are to criticise the present pattern of power and privileges as it relates to women and men, we cannot focus on one gender only. The pattern is **that of the relationship between the gender categories**. The study object, then, can be called the gender system (or similar terms, cf note 1). Let us make a new figure:

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political perspective object of study	feminist	non-feminist
gender	1	2
women	3	4

In this figure, slot **3** might have a doubtful status. Is it politically advantageous, is it feminist at all, to concentrate on women only? The answer is yes - in certain contexts or at certain times. For example, in the Western world of science in the 1960s and 1970s, it was necessary to point out that women existed, that a part of reality had not been much studied at all. It was necessary to fill a gap. And this was necessary for both feminist and scientific reasons. In order to change women's position in society, however, it is precisely that which one must understand, women's position *in society*, and then the object of study becomes gender. Slot **4** coincides with slot **b** in the previous figure. Is slot **2** empty? Probably not. Sociobiology may belong there, for instance.

Most of the reports presented in this book use the term "gender" but actually concentrate on women as the main study object. This is common all over the world, for the historical reasons just outlined - the concern for gender questions grew out of studies of and by women.

We can now see that while "women's studies" may be an ambiguous term, it has, in fact, been applied to a certain kind of knowledge about society that is universally relevant. This area of knowledge and the terminology related to it, especially the term gender itself, grew out of the Western women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s, and much work will be needed to differentiate between universal and local historical aspects of the growing body of knowledge and practice. But historical roots and reasons for continued existence are two different things. "Women's studies" - by whatever name - is an important area of interest for any society where "women" and "men" are recognised categories of human beings, ie as far as we know, everywhere. What is important is for non-Western women to define their own interests in this field.

D. Women cross-culturally - a brief history of problems posed

That gender systems are not all the same is evident from existing knowledge, but exactly what the differences are, is difficult to describe. Possible causes of differences and similarities is a still more difficult question.[2]

The comparative effort is the domain of the anthropology of women (now beginning to be called the anthropology of gender). During its history of barely twenty years, it has posed and outgrown a series of questions that are of interest as background to the reports presented in this book, only a few of which are anthropological, but all of which have a relationship to anthropological questions.

In the early years, ie around 1970-1975, it was taken for granted that there was such a phenomenon as "women's status" that could be described for each society. Another common hypothesis was that this phenomenon was similar, at some deep level and in spite of superficial variations, in all societies, and that there must therefore be some universally valid cause. The hypothesis that this cause might be a biological mandate for men's rule was, of course, rejected. Because such an idea was not acceptable, a replacement had to be found.

Interesting suggestions were offered, some of which are still being discussed. Could it be, for instance, that there is a dichotomy between a private and a public sphere, in all societies, and that women, everywhere associated with the private one, are therefore less powerful, since the public sphere encompasses it? Could it be that women are everywhere thought to be closer to nature and men closer to culture - perhaps because of women's more visible and dramatic reproductive functions - and that women are therefore valued less than men, since society must value itself more than the resources on which it depends to survive? Could it be that the universal subordination of women that we see is really the spreading, through colonialism and capitalism, of Western patriarchy, and that non-Western societies before contact with the West had had gender equality and perhaps, in some places, even matriarchy? Could the explanation reside in what seems to be the universal gender pattern of childcare? Women take care of children, men do not, so both girls and boys

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[2] For a geographic overview of the issue, see Brydon and Chant 1989. For an overview of case studies from all parts of the world, see More 1988. For brief considerations of casual theories proposed, see Quinn 1977 and Mukhopadhyay and Higgins 1988. For theoretical groundwork, to make gender systems comparable, see Rubin 1975, Jaggar 1983, Connell 1987.

learn to see women as simultaneously threatening and uninteresting.[3]

The idea was to find a universal explanation for what was taken to be a universal phenomenon, and a high level of generality then had to be maintained. Variations had to be abstracted out. This can be a valid procedure. But there is a limit to it. At a certain point the hypothesis becomes empty of substance.

The counter-evidence soon piled up. In many societies it is difficult or impossible to discern a private-public dichotomy, so if women are oppressed there, the oppression must have some other cause. In many other societies the dichotomy exists but has a form that does not seem to be relevant to gender. Many societies do not consider the dichotomy nature/culture as basic for understanding reality. Instead perhaps they see the wild versus the cultivated, or the periphery versus the centre, or they have no such dichotomies at all. And those dichotomies that could be interpreted as being somehow parallel to the nature-culture one, do not necessarily include women on the "nature" side. As to Engels' paradigm, that gender subordination is an effect of society's division into classes,this does not seem universally applicable either, since so far it has not been finally demonstrated that matriarchy exists or has existed anywhere, whereas it **has** been demonstrated that women are or were dominated in some pre-colonial societies.[4]

There were also theories that focused on the reasons for cross-cultural variations in women's status rather than on its relative universality. These approaches were more "sociological", while the search for universal explanations tended to look to culture as the ultimate cause. Boserup (1970) argued that women's status varies with the nature of productive activity and their involvement in it. Sacks (1979) distinguished two modes of production in non-capitalist societies, namely the communal mode where all are "owners" and therefore equal, and the kin corporate mode, where women's status

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[3] The private-public hypothesis was suggested by Michelle Rosaldo, 1974. The nature-culture:women-men analogy was elaborated by Sherry Ortner, 1974 and inspired by Lévi-Strauss and de Beauvoir. Eleanor Leacock (1972 and 1981) has most consistently interpreted Engels' view of the historical evolution of gender systems to mean that the subordination of women must be a product of Western capitalism and colonialism. Nancy Chodorow (1974 and 1978) has combined psychoanalysis with anthropology to develop the hypothesis about the political effects of mothering. The psychologist Dorothy Dinnerstein (1976) has elaborated a similar hypothesis.

[4] The list of criticisms of these theories is long. For Ortner, see MacCormack and Strathern 1980, above all. Dubish 1986 and Sciama 1981 argue against Rosaldo's thesis. See also Reiter 1975, Moore 1988, Quinn 1977, and Mukhopadhyay and Higgins 1988.

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depends on whether they are primarily considered as sisters or wives. Sanday (1981) tried to relate variations to the different ways societies have of handling severe stress. And there were other suggestions.

But in the 1980s this type of reasoning was also seen as too monolithic. What is power? What is domination? Is it possible to say that women are dominated in an objective sense even where they themselves do not think they are? Western feminists believe this is possible because they have discovered that it has been Western women's own experience. But to suggest that this is so in other societies may come dangerously close to ethnocentrism. Soon not only the "one-cause-explanations" were under attack but also the very notion of the object of study: "women's status".

More and more work came to centre on elaborating concepts that enable more sophisticated descriptions of gender systems. For example, women might take a more or less equal part in production and distribution and consumption in a given society and still not have equal rights in decision-making, perhaps not even control over their own destinies. Such concepts as "production" and "reproduction" are also in need of redefinition if they are to fit women's realities. In any given society, women and men can have different spheres of power, areas of prestige activities, privileges and restrictions and access to different kinds of resources. All of these circumstances can be more or less coherent or more or less in contradiction with each other. Any gender system has to be described in a complex way before valid generalisations can be made. And these diverse patterns vary in complex ways over time. Diversity and complexity have become the key words (Moore 1988, Mukhopadhyay and Higgins 1988).

If it turns out to be true that **most** women in **most** places are underprivileged in **some** way in comparison with men in the same place and time and social category according to non-gender criteria, this still has to be explained. But it is no longer thought probable that there may be only one cause. The "result" is so complex that the "cause" must be so too. Perhaps most of the suggested hypotheses have some truth value, in specified times and places and for parts of the gender system. The "key determinants" must be seen as interacting with each other.

In an overview article from 1988, Mukhopadhyay and Higgins found a great diversity of approaches in the current anthropology of women, but also three underlying themes:
"First, gender must be studied with reference to historical, economic, social and conceptual context; understanding gender requires more than exploring its relationship to biology and economics. In addition, gender theorists must be alert to how androcentric and Eurocentric folk views influence scholarship. Finally, the concept of homogeneous "woman" must give way to the diversity of "women" (Mukhopadhyay and Higgins 1988:486).

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That is where we are, and where the reports presented here come in. Most of the authors have focused mainly or solely on the conditions of women in their own countries, and this was also a semi-explicit requirement in SAREC's offer of grants. But their data speak to a variety of theories about what aspects of social life influence women's lives differently from men's lives. Because they do this, and because they contribute empirical data, their reports provide building material for further research into the big questions: does gender have to be a principle for social organisation everywhere and always, and if so, does it have to have hierarchical implications? If this is usually so, do we want to change it and if so, how? The experience of the anthropology of women over the last twenty years shows that abstract theories can be very suggestive and indirectly fruitful, thanks to the abundance of counter-evidence they tend to produce, but what we need most at the moment are empirical data, collected with the specific purpose of illuminating similarities and differences between gender systems.

E. Women and change - seventeen examples

Let us now take a look at the substantial issues touched upon in the reports. The summaries can be read as examples of what is going on in the field of international women's studies.

The special women's programme was rooted in SAREC's more general aim of contributing to the development of research in the Third World. The women's studies it supported should preferably, it was stated, be concerned with "women and development".

This raises the question of how to define development. What is the difference between "change" and "development"? Both concepts are difficult to apply uncontroversially to empirical reality. One way of defining them is to say that the difference is qualitative. "Change" refers to any difference between time a and time b. "Development" is a kind of change that brings improvement between times a and b.

When it comes to "women and development", then, it becomes necessary for the women of Third World countries to study their own conditions in order to evaluate them. They must decide what is "better" for them.

This may be a revolutionary proposition in many contexts. Some of the authors of the seventeen reports have clearly planned their work from such a starting point, while others seem more concerned with development in its currently predominant meaning of "modernisation" and "growth" (Dahl and Hjort 1984: p 171).

In all the reports, however, "change" is a pervasive theme. A few of the authors (Owoh, Kipury, Yih, Argenti) have taken the point of view that something called development is going on and that it has consequences for women that must be described, since they may not mean improvement:. Some - especially Rembe and Rutabanzibwa-Ngaiza - are more interested in general improvement than in the connections between any one problem and women's conditions. In the rest of the reports, change is a constant theme, the backdrop of the specific aspects of the gender system studied. Change is perhaps best seen as the framework or base for all the reports, rather than as one of the themes.

The discussion here will not repeat information that is given in the summaries themselves. The reader might be well advised to read the summaries (Part II) first. They have been grouped in four categories according to the main theme of each report: (a) economic change; (b) political participation; (c) health and housing; (d) gender consciousness. In each category there are reports from different countries. The summaries contain the problems addressed in each project, a few words about methods used and the most important findings.

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In this chapter, the focus will be on what themes stand out in the reports and what their significance is for the whole field of women's studies. The aim is to discuss that field rather than the merits of any individual study.

1. Methods used

The methods used in each study are briefly described in the summaries. They vary widely. The African authors stay close to positivist sociology, using surveys and standardised questionnaires. Owoh is the only one to include a thorough discussion of theoretical frameworks, both her own, which is Marxist, and alternative ones that she finds inadequate.

The paradigm of a value-free "objective" social science has been under attack for some time now. There is a growing dissatisfaction with the sharp dichotomies of that paradigm: subjective versus objective, materialist versus idealist, structure versus action, etc.[5]

This dissatisfaction is general, but it has become especially unavoidable in women's studies, and it is visible in most of the reports here. The reasons are several. First, the traditional paradigm defined its object of study in such a way that women's realities were included only as something peripheral if at all. Second, researchers studying women are usually women themselves and are therefore less committed to paradigms that have excluded them. Finally, as mentionend above, women's studies often have a political motivation, and for this reason they are as critical as are,for example, Marxists of a paradigm that views a political intention as something that contaminates science.

The Latin Americans experiment creatively with qualitative methods, but this seems to be an unorthodox decision for them. Several of them are careful to stress that their studies are "tentative" or "illustrative" and that the methods used cannot give "verifiable results". Sometimes the questions they ask are actually more appropriate for quantitative methods. One gets the impression that a dissatisfaction with positivist empiricism is gaining ground, but that a paradigmatic shift has not quite occurred.
Sapriza and Rodríguez Villamil experiment with life histories. This method does give very rich subjective material, and it is popular among researchers interested in such things as class consciousness, mentalities, ideology (Bertaux 198l). But the method awaits its genius. The rich material is very difficult to summarise, let alone analyse, and these authors have done what most others do, namely present long excerpts (Sapriza) or one selected whole story

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[5] The discussion has been too broad, deep and long-lasting for me to be able to give anything like complete references here, but one good example is Bourdieu, 1979.

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(Rodríguez Villamil). While this gives the reader the opportunity to interpret for her- or himself, the door to cultural misunderstandings is left wide open. Pineda-Ofreneo has a similar problem with her in-depth interviews.

Some of the authors work on elaborating methods appropriate for feminist issues. Chéjter and Hercovich, for example, take a deliberately relativist stand, but that does not prevent them from being committed to a feminist cause. They experiment with ways of communicating their results directly to women's groups and other concerned parties.[6]

Two comments on terminology are necessary here. First, several reports use the term "patriarchy." In general, in women's studies, the word means approximately "male domination" or "female subordination", and from the context it is quite clear that this is what it means in these reports, too. Etymologically, however, it means "father rule" and this is the technical meaning it has in anthropology. There are societies where fathers, or older men, rule over both women and younger men. For societies where this is not the case but where women in general are subordinated to men in general, "androarchy" might be a better word, but this has not become established usage.

The other term that needs clarification is "traditional." It can mean many things, for example "a phenomenon that used to exist until recently but no longer". Or "a phenomenon that belongs to the culture of a certain minority and is not accepted by the majority population". Or "a phenomenon that awakens feelings of nostalgia or festivity but is not considered practical or scientific". Or "a phenomenon that still exists but has an unknown origin supposed to lie far back in time". Or "a native non-imported phenomenon in a country where such phenomena are no longer common". Often "traditional" is a handy term precisely because a writer wants to express a hazy mixture of several such meanings. The African authors here generally use it to mean the opposite of "Western" or "European" or "imposed". In this sense, "tradition" is something positive, but what is traditional can also be negatively valued in contrast with what is thought "modern" or "rational" or "scientific" or "developed". It is a measure of the wounds of colonialism that colonised or formerly colonised people themselves tend to be blind to the contradictions inherent in the word "traditional". On a theoretical level, the word is also inconvenient, since in a sense any social fact is "traditional" as soon as it is a social fact and not an individual idiosyncrasy or a totally fresh invention.

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[6] For reflections of the need to develop methods for women's studies, see Roberts 1981.

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2. Principal issues

The principal issues addressed in the reports are women's wage work, gender consciousness and class consciousness, women in politics, women's health and different kinds of planned change and its consequences.

In most societies, wage work has different meanings for women and men, depending on the previous division of labour, cultural ideas about the gender categories and organisation of the wage work. Women who are not engaged in wage work are not necessarily "housewives", for example; and whether women are considered fit for wage work, or vice versa, depends on such things as ideas about women's contact with men outside the kin group or ideas about the supposedly natural talents of each gender category.

In Latin America, the problems around women's wage work seem to centre on two issues that have also been controversial in North America and Europe: men's resistance and women's double burden. Men do not want women as competitors and resist their entry into the labour market. If men and women work in the same place, men try to make sure that some tasks are defined as male and more valuable and difficult and therefore better paid. Argenti and Roldán give examples from Argentina and Uruguay, and Guzmán Barcos et al show the resulting hierarchy according to gender in Peruvian industry. Housework is defined as female, and this does not change if a woman goes to work outside the home. Many of Lovesio's and Rodríguez Villamil's informants complain about the resulting burden, and the authors also touch on its consequences for women's political participation. Arteaga, too, shows how women tend to participate more easily in political work if they can do familiar housewife-like tasks there, and Sanchís and Bianchi recall how Peronism built a whole political party for women on women's identification with domestic duties.

Kipury shows how old and new modes of production clash to the disadvantage of women. In the case of the Maasai, for a variety of reasons, it is becoming ever more difficult to survive as a pastoralist. They therefore have to find alternative sources of income. Men, who have always been more mobile in space and have combined various activities, can do this, while women cannot.

In societies where women are not mobile enough to be able to go to work in a factory, an alternative kind of wage work is what is known as the putting-out system. The factory contracts the workers and gives them all the material needed for the product. The women then work in their homes, usually combining this work with domestic work and childcare. The factory picks up the finished products and pays the women on a piece rate basis. Lovesio's study compares women doing the same kind of work - knitting sweaters - in factories and in their homes. She wanted to find out whether factory work as such or wage work in general affects women's ideas about their position in society, ie their gender consciousness.

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Many studies of women's wage work concentrate on issues of personal autonomy. This is an implicit theme for both Lovesio and Guzmán Barcos et al. Roldán's study from Buenos Aires concentrates on the effects of the gender system inside the factory. Both men and women are shown to defend the established division of labour according to gender, even when it works to their material disadvantage. This is a well-known phenomenon: the cultural definition of femininity and masculinity is often so central and value-laden that it overrides all other considerations. But none of the reports here take up the issue of the effects of wage work as such on the gender system as a whole.

Pineda-Ofreneo mainly asked questions about women's participation in union activities, but her study was carried out in a kind of industry that makes it interesting for the wage work issue too, namely the so-called world market factories. Companies from the First World open subsidiaries or buy parts in the Third World, where they can obtain labour at low cost and risk little labour unrest. Labour research is usually concentrated on men's issues, but in newly industrialised countries women, especially young women, often represent a large proportion of the labour force. The textile and electronics industries - the ones chosen by Pineda-Ofreneo - are representative examples of manufacturing where young women are appreciated because of their docility, nimble fingers and few family responsibilities. As Lovesio points out, this work is often skilled but defined as unskilled because the skills needed are usually learnt by the women as part of their gender role socialisation. Obviously the women are exploited with the help of gender ideology. But the women who say their wage work gives them new autonomy may not be wholly wrong. If their income is needed by the family, they may find that their bargaining power in family affairs has increased.[7]

Wage work is one aspect of a more general issue: that of participation in production (cf above on Boserup etc). Few students of women's circumstances, however, now subscribe to a rigid dichotomy of production-reproduction. The term "production" is perhaps not very appropriate in women's studies at all. A more fruitful approach is to begin with the division of labour: What categories of people do what kinds of tasks in a given society? With what criteria are the tasks and the people defined (cf Harris and Young 1981)?

For Marxists, the issue of class consciousness is crucial. Similarly, for feminists it is necessary to define gender consciousness and study what factors further it and what forms it can take. Sapriza goes back into recent history to find its roots; Rodríguez Villamil interviews politically active women about how   strong their gender consciousness is and what it looks like;

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[7] The literature on women and wage work is quite large. For an overview and examples of case studies, see More 1988, chapter 4. A good discussion of the consequences of world market factories for local gender systems is Elson and Pearson 1981.

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Lovesio compares the gender consciousness of women who work in factories with those on the putting-out system. For all three, an equally important question is how class consciousness articulates with gender consciousness: do they hinder each other or further each other, or do they have nothing to do with each other? Like Pineda-Ofreneo, on another continent, they find that class consciousness is easier to attain, that it does not guarantee that a woman will then develop gender consciousness, but that a woman with class consciousness is more likely than one without to reach gender consciousness.

Chéjter and Hercovich also study gender consciousness, but they do not see it as being analogous to class consciousness and they are not interested in articulations. Their concern with what is hidden between the lines of what people say rather reminds one of Bourdieu's concept **doxa**. He defines doxa as that area of self-evidence that surrounds the universe of discourse in every culture, that which is so omnipresent that it becomes invisible, that which goes without saying because it comes without saying (1979:pp 159-171). If one strives to change a social structure that is often strongly naturalised, as gender is (cf below), describing doxa is a necessary first step. Chéjter and Hercovich try to describe gender doxa by analysing various discourses on rape.

In most parts of the world, the political sphere is strongly dominated by men, which means that women's special viewpoints and interests do not receive their due. Tancangco sketches the historical background of this state of affairs in the Philippines and concludes that it has to do with the way the political field has been defined and with the fact that men monopolise violence at all levels of society. Pineda-Ofreneo implies that women may simply be unaware of the importance of political life. Her study shows that women who have already participated in a strike tend to be more interested in further political participation than are other women.

Women sometimes participate in politics in a way that would seem to go against their own interests. Non-feminist and even anti-feminist political organisations can sometimes count on strong female support. Sanchís and Bianchi study this sensitive issue in connection with the Argentine Peronist Women's Party, which managed to attract women into politics even though it defined women as pure beings who should stay out of dirty politics. The authors find that this was possible because the Peronists appealed to women's true interests and combined this with a flattering but passivising symbolism that kept them at a safe distance from real decision-making. This conclusion is relevant for much more than a short period in the history of one country. Similar organisations have existed in many countries.[8] It is important to understand why they do appeal to women, instead of just accusing women of being foolish, and also to understand why they do not really promote a change in the gender system.

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[8] See for example the study of the women's section of the Falangist party in Spain by Gallego Méndez 1983.

It is also a common experience in many parts of the world that women are very active in periods of crisis. Tancangco says this has been a constant theme in Filipino history. Arteaga's study concerns women's participation in public life in Chile. Such participation increased during the dictatorship, but as democracy moves back in, women are on their way out. Her conclusion is that the women did not have time enough to consolidate their organisations, and that many of these confused class and gender issues.

Rembe is interested in women's participation in development activities in Lesotho, especially at the village level. A limitation on her approach, however, is that her questionnaire included no questions about gender other than number of male and female participants in various activities. The proportion of women participants is high, but the significance of this fact is not clear. As she herself points out, women are a majority of village residents, since many men are working abroad.

Her main interest is actually health, and this is an important feminist issue. The reports on studies of health here, however, do not take up specific problems of women's health, with the exception of Owoh, who discusses the range of choices Nigerian women have and what the determining criteria are when they choose obstetric care. Obstetrics is an area of health care that obviously concerns women more than men, but this in itself would not place her report in the category of women's studies. It does belong there, however, since she takes the women's perspective, ie, in terms of the diagramme on page 9, her report is feminist and belongs in slot **1** or **3**. This is not clear in the cases of Rembe and Rutabanzibwa-Ngaiza. It is of course just as possible to ask gender-relevant questions concerning health problems that have nothing to do with female anatomy as it is to ask non-feminist questions about female anatomy. Simplifying somewhat, we can say that a health study can be considered a gender study (slots **1** or **2**) if, but only if, its interest in health derives from an interest in how health issues connect with the relationship between women and men, and it is a study of women from a feminist perspective (slot **3**) if its interest in health derives from an interest in improving women's conditions for their own sake (not just as **mothers**, for example).

What happens to women in processes of planned change? This broad heading would include questions about development, development assistance, revolutionary processes, technological change, etc. Nimpuno-Parente shows how well-intentioned projects, in her case a housing project for the poor in Nairobi, can go wrong if gender is not taken into account or if the intricacies of the gender system are misunderstood. Yih takes up the delicate question of whether a country can be too poor for gender justice. It can, indeed, she says, if the only way to relieve women of their double burden is to socialise domestic tasks: it costs money to build daycare centres, communal kitchens, old people's homes, etc. But another solution would be to stop defining the inescapable tasks of daily reproduction as female. Men can do half of the work and no country is too poor for that, says Yih; it might even be that there is

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economic gain in not overworking half of the population.

Argenti contributes to the study of the consequences for women of new technologies, in her case computerisation. This has been an important area recently for women's studies in developed countries. They have usually shown that in the process of computerisation, women's work becomes more mechanical and less autonomous; the distinction between the work of the head (planning, decision-making) and that of the hand becomes more marked and more gender-specific, to the disadvantage of women. Argenti shows this to be the case in Uruguay, too, but her hypothesis is that this is not related to anything inherent in micro-electronic technology but rather to the fact that technology is defined as male in most gender systems. When what is seen as male gains in importance, so do men.

3. Pervasive themes

Apart from the explicit issues which structure the reports, all the studies also contain information and sometimes discussions of other aspects of the gender systems described. For reasons of space it is impossible even to mention them all here, but just a few of those that occur most often can be pointed out.

One is the discord between colonial and local gender systems. The colonial administrators, usually Europeans, naturally and inevitably brought with them their own conceptions of what gender is and how it should be organised. Gender is a cultural and social construction, but since it is based on sex, which is a biological fact, it is often confused with biology or nature and thus seen as unchangeable. Even persons who understand that for instance religion or kinship systems are not everywhere alike may have no inkling that gender is also variable. And even persons who understand this intellectually may oppose it emotionally. It is a very difficult lesson. Gender may plausibly be the aspect of culture that is most profoundly a part of our personalities as well as of our social structures and therefore the most unsettling to try to see as relative.

No wonder then that colonial administrators or agents of development assistance do not usually understand the foreign gender systems they meet. But this has dire consequences for women in the Third World, as shown here by Kipury, Yih and Nimpuno-Parente, especially (cf above, p 38, 35 and 55). Women may become impoverished, unable to feed their children, unable to find employment, etc or they may be given new tasks without being relieved of old ones, if new laws or regulations or opportunities are formulated in ways that take for granted certain concepts that do not actually apply, such as the existence of a nuclear family or the existence of the duty of mutual economic support between spouses.

Gender and class are two principles of social organisation that are often seen as similar in their pervasiveness and near-universality. If that is so, it becomes necessary to study how they relate to each other. Many of the studies address this issue explicitly while most of the others touch on it indirectly. Classical Marxism postulates class as the basic principle which organises everything else, including gender. Radical feminist theory is the mirror image: it postulates gender as the original form of oppression in human society and sees all other hierarchies as imitations. Socialist feminists do not think that either class or gender determines the other but that they are both basic principles that interact with each other. This is the so-called dual systems theory.[9] Most of the Latin American authors represented here seem to subscribe tacitly to the dual systems theory. Owoh takes an explicit stand against it. She thinks that there is only one oppressive system, and that it has patriarchal, capitalist and colonial characteristics that cannot be separated from each other. Kipury has similar thoughts but stresses class exploitation more. She believes in the paradigm formulated by Engels and Leacock (cf above p 39), so she strives to show that the pre-capitalist Maasai society was not patriarchal.

A related problem is whether gender is a principle of social organisation at all or just "culture" or "ideology". Marxist feminist theorists struggled with this problem for a time. The point of view put forward here, namely that gender is not only a question of ideas, is now widely accepted in the world of social science but not so in the world of politics. A refusal on the part of political parties and unions and even women's organisations to consider gender as being as basic as class may be a principal reason why women are being pushed out of politics in Chile now, according to Arteaga. Several of the other reports from Latin America offer examples of how this view of gender makes it difficult for women to reach gender consciousness. The detailed descriptions of Guzmán Barcos et al may not be theoretically innovative, but they show, once more and for yet another country, how gender organises even such class-related matters as factory work. Many of the other reports, too, are primarily about gender as a social fact. It has material effects even where it supposedly does not exist as a cultural idea, eg in relation to computers (Argenti). Judging from Lovesio's report, in Uruguay it is easier to see structural reasons for class oppression than for gender oppression. This is true for most industrialised countries, and it is a major reason why gender is relegated to "ideology".

Another important theme in women's studies is sexuality, but Chéjter and Hercovich are the only authors here to discuss ideas related to it. Facts of sexual life come in indirectly in Rutabanzibwa-Ngaiza's and Owoh's reports because of their concern with childbirth. Pineda-Ofreneo mentions that one drawback young Filipino women workers experience with industrial work is the

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[9] For outlines of the history of these theories, see Barrett 1980, Connell 1987, Eisenstein 1979, Jaggar 1983.

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fact that the long hours and uni-sex work-places make it difficult for them to meet men. Both the Filipino and most of the Latin American authors touch obliquely on the importance of femininity for the women of their countries. What is considered feminine varies, but it often has to do with sexual attractiveness and sexual desire. But sexuality as such is not the focus of direct attention in any of the studies, not even in Chéjter's and Hercovich's, since they do not seem to share with their informants the definition of rape as a sexual fact.

Sexuality has been a central concern in gender theory. Rubin (1975) coined the term "sex/gender system" to propose that sexuality, kinship, marriage and reproduction form the base of any gender system. Theorists like Mitchell (1974) and Foreman (1977) tried to fuse Marxism and psychoanalysis into something like a theory of sexuality as a material base for gender systems. In Western women's studies there are, to be sure, plenty of studies on sexual harassment at work or inside political organisations. (Several of the factory studies here hint at this problem but do not make an issue of it.) Love as an ideology is beginning to attract attention (Sarsby 1983, Barrett and McIntosh 1982) and there are studies of sexuality as a cultural construction (Caplan 1987, Rosenthal 1977).

In spite of these elaborations on sexual themes, the emphasis lately has been on economic and decision-making structures. But the fact that sexuality nevertheless crops up in asides and between the lines - in these studies and many others not directly focusing on it - may be a sign that it should be brought back to central attention. Connell (1987) suggests that any gender system can be analysed as consisting of three major structures: labour, power and sexuality. All three can be found in all institutions from families to states. If we take this perspective, all aspects of life that seem relevant for gender could be placed in a coherent theoretical framework, and sexuality would be one third of that frame.

Who performs the so-called domestic tasks, and what are they, and why are they usually defined according to gender? How does the sexual division of labour in the household translate to similar gender specifications of tasks outside the household? Such questions are important in women's studies, since domestic tasks are almost universally mainly the women's responsibility, and they are almost always - even though they may be defined in various ways and even though their material conditions also vary - heavy and time-consuming enough to make it very difficult for women to combine them with other tasks when necessary. Again, as with sexuality, this is not a major issue in any of the reports here, but it is an issue that inevitably comes up in one way or another when women's conditions are discussed. For Maasai women, the nature of the domestic tasks is one of the major reasons for their impoverishment relative to men. In Latin American societies a married man is defined as economically responsible for his family, and this fact is used to excuse him from domestic tasks even when his wife also brings home a wage.

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Yih reports that Nicaraguan women do not appreciate their greater economic autonomy in collective agriculture, because they have a much heavier workload than they used to have. Argenti gives an example of how women's domestic responsibilities can be used as an excuse not to promote them.

Women and property is another important issue in women's studies (cf Hirschon 1984), represented here only by Nimpuno-Parente, who points out that owning a house is more important for women than for men in Nairobi, because it is difficult for women to obtain other kinds of housing in the city. But in the case of married women the husband is legally the owner even if he does not live in the house, which of course may tempt him to sell it.

Naturally there are many other well-established areas of study that are relevant for women's conditions that are not represented in these few reports, for example, household structure, family forms, kinship systems and marriage alliances.

What all these reports show indirectly is that gender is almost never seen as a social fact, not in any society. It is taken as given - by nature, God or some similar authority. It is this characteristic of gender, above all, that makes it so difficult to influence a gender system in a desired direction and so necessary to study and describe gender as a social fact. Gender as a cultural construction is not, however, the main problem studied in any of the reports. Instead many focus on the more clearly political problem of gender consciousness. It is easier to formulate. But there is the danger of taking too much for granted - consciousness of what? - if the general problem of culture and conceptualisation is not also tackled.

All the reports are also about change, as was said at the beginning - not only changing conditions in the world around women and men, but changes that affect what women and men do, changes in how women and men see themselves, changes in how gender organises life and changes in what women and men do about it. A gender system is a process. And since it is distinct from, even though related to, other social processes, its rhythm can sometimes be out of step with the others.[10] These reports also exemplify how a gender system can be out of step with the rest of a society and how this can sometimes make it look less natural.

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[10] Thurén 1988 is a case study of such a historical moment in a Spanish city.

F. How these reports contribute to the field of gender studies

In practical terms, many of the reports summarised in this book point to specific aspects of gender that must be taken into account if planned change is to be effective. Much more work of this kind needs to be done by women in Third World countries themselves, because they are the only ones who can judge what needs to be changed and how it can be changed in their own lives. Those of the authors who take up development-related problems significantly analyse planned change more as something to defend oneself against than as something to benefit from. This makes sense in the light of what outsiders studying Third World women have found, but until Third World women are heard from directly to a greater extent than now, it is impossible to know how planners should take them into account - or, better, how the women themselves should have more of a voice in the planning processes.

More empirical work is needed, especially on women's relation to such broad structural changes as urbanisation and industrialisation in the Third World. There are many indications that they lead to new household forms, varied patterns of migration and new divisions of labour both inside and outside households. An optimistic view of this is that it leads to a breakdown of roles attributed to gender and thus paves the way for female emancipation. There are also pessimists, who think that it rather increases the polarisation of men's and women's work and status.

The reports in this book include enough qualitative material to show that such generalisations are too simple. Complex changes interacting with complex social structures can hardly be interpreted as linear causes and effects. We need empirical studies that do not rush to conclusions but probe deeply into the details of everyday life of both women and men, describing all instances where gender enters as a factor. What emerging patterns will look like depends on what the old patterns were as well as on the characteristics of the process of change.

Women have often been left out both of social studies and of planning. The male point of view has been presented as the human point of view. In the current movement away from this state of affairs, new issues crop up and old terms and concepts turn out to be inadequate. The reports here are examples of how various local gender systems function in relation to various problems that may or may not look like "women's problems" at first sight.

Most of these reports do not emphasise theory, but they contribute plenty of empirical data that show **that** and **in what ways** conclusions about social reality go wrong when women's special circumstances are not taken into account. They also contribute to the accumulating mass of world-wide evidence that gender is a basic principle of social organisation in all human societies.

The wide range of problems studied shows that we are far from a complete inventory of what women's studies or gender studies should cover. Many of the pervasive themes recall pervasive themes in women's studies in developed countries. That does not prove that all of us have similar problems but rather that women researchers in developing countries are just beginning to formulate their own priorities. Only when women from all countries of the world, women of all cultures and conditions, have an opportunity to analyse their own gender systems, can we begin to construct universally valid gender theories. It is not enough for women of some countries to study those of other countries, just as it is not enough for men to study women.

Seventeen reports

A. Economic change

1. Gisela Argenti, Uruguay:

New Technology and Women's Wage Work in the Public Sector:
An Introduction to the Study of Banks

In Uruguay there is still no research about the new technology, especially computerisation, not even reliable statistics on the sizeable importation between 1975 and 1980. During precisely these years the proportion of women in the labour market also increased. What were the consequences of the technological change for women's work?

To answer this question, Argenti chose to interview women employed by a large state bank, women occupying positions that had been created or reshaped mainly as a consequence of computer technology. Her hypothesis was that the growing hierarchisation between men and women at the work place depends less on micro-electronic technology as such than on the models for socio-economic decision-making that have guided the technological development.

In accordance with the "neoliberal" model dominant in Uruguay in the middle 1970s, the government took steps to facilitate the importation of foreign technology, and this resulted in dynamic renewal especially in the financial sector. The resulting drop in employment could be explained away as a result of the world recession. Ever since the late 1960s, Uruguay had suffered unemployment, considerable emigration and a restructuring of industries which led to more unemployment. The combined effects of these processes led to a massive entry of women in the labour market.

The bank studied, BROU, is the largest state-owned bank with many subsidiaries outside the capital. To be employed by the bank, a person has to pass a competitive examination. Not until 1971 did any women obtain administrative positions. The only ones employed by the bank before this date were librarians, cleaners and nurses. Despite the existence of an examination, personal contacts are often decisive and this works against women. Even so, from 1977 the proportion of women employees has steadily increased. By 1986 17 per cent of the bank employees were women and 91 per cent of these had been hired after 1975. Of the persons taking the examinations in Montevideo now, 55 per cent are women; in the countryside the proportion is much lower.

There is little movement between positions and advancement in general, so it is too early to know whether female employees will have different career

patterns than do their male counterparts. But so far there are no women at the level of junior executive or higher.

In the computer department there are 160 employees, 25 of whom are women. To enter this department one has to be accepted into and then pass courses organised by the bank. External training is not taken into account. The department executives interviewed thought that female employees mean extra problems, for example, they get married and have children, people are not used to them, there are no special facilities for women such as separate toilets... The women themselves also said that the bosses do not like women employees. While they gave many examples of unfair treatment, they also said that the system is just as unfair to men as to women. What they suffer most from is not gender discrimination but a rigid hierarchical system, where it is certainly a disadvantage to be a woman, especially if you have children, but where both men and women "vegetate". There is total job security, but few incentives. University education, for example, does not count. In fact, it can even be a disadvantage.

Argenti's conclusion is that women's undeniable vulnerability in the face of new technology is not due to that technology as such but to deeply rooted "prejudices". Technology may not be gender-neutral in social practice, but this is a social and not a technological fact. It is not even mainly due to women's lack of interest in technology - a social fact, too - but can be explained only by taking into consideration the whole gender and class system, its conditions and conditionings. Therefore the common strategies to "integrate" women into technological development will have little effect as long as other social and cultural factors are left as they are.

2. Virginia Guzman Barcos, Patricia Portocarrero Suarez and Eliana Villar Marquez, Peru:

The Woman Worker in Metropolitan Lima[11]

This predominantly empirical study gives rich information on the conditions at a number of industrial workplaces in Lima where a varying proportion of women are employed. The material is divided according to type of industry - food processing, textiles, chemical, glass and ceramics, machinery and metal - and for each sector such aspects as proportion of women, women's position in the hierarchy and type of task are described. The authors have also visited many factories and observed the organisation of work, the control workers have over their own work process, their opportunities to communicate with

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[11]The summarized report is an empirically oriented account of the study, while a final analysis is still envisaged.

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workmates and such material conditions as the aesthetics of the workplace, lighting, noise, temperature, degree of physical mobility, and so on. For all factors, a comparison between men and women is made.

Some of the conclusions - modestly labelled "preliminary" by the authors - are the following:

Women work more often in traditionally female industries, where small companies dominate, and among these, women are more numerous in industries where the production is work-intensive rather than capital-intensive. The labour market is distinctly segregated by gender, and there are sectors where no women work. Most women work, however, in medium or large companies. One striking finding is that the same kind of tasks are considered fitting for women in all sectors; these are the tasks that are not very specialised, do not require much mobility or physical effort, require few and simple movements, are repetitive and fast, depend on the rhythm of other phases of the manufacturing process, ie have little autonomy and are located at a low level of responsibility.

The authors' ambition is to continue to probe these questions with more qualitative and holistic methods. The bulk of this report is purely descriptive. Some aspects of life inside the factory are, however, given an interpretative treatment under the headings "space", "time" and "organisation of work".
Each enterprise appeared to be more than a mere place of production. It constituted a social micro-cosm with its own rules, values and meanings, where both domination and resistance and change are reproduced, according to the authors. The separation of factory space from the outside world is very clear-cut, especially as a consequence of the violent situation in Peru. "For employers, security systems are a source of tranquillity while, for workers, these are a source of unsafety (sic!) and permanent control over them" (summary, p 7). Location and type of surroundings are much more significant for female than for male workers. Having to travel a great distance between home and work is more of an obstacle for a woman, and if the factory is located in a desolate place, women face greater risks than do men.

The polarity between inside and outside is reproduced inside the factory in the separation of production areas from management spaces. This also carries different meanings for women: their sections are often located closer to management spaces, so the differentiation between the two kinds of spaces may be less clear cut to them. "This could have an influence on their self-perception and on the others' representation of them" (summary, p 9).

Women and men control factory space in different ways. Women remain less mobile in more crowded spaces. The authors suggest that this may be one reason why managers often refer to them as "ladies" or "misses", whereas male workers are usually referred to by the function they fulfil: "cutters", "millers", etc. The women are seen as an undifferentiated category to be found in one given space.

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Time has different meanings according to type of factory. "In old enterprises, time symbolises experience and acknowledged know-how for male workers. This differs in the case of female workers. Time generally marks the passage of years, their wearing out as workers and the loss of their social charm as women" (summary, p 10). Men's employment is also more permanent and women's more cyclical in nature.

There are differences among the factories according to style of management and organisation of work. In one kind, the employer is also the owner, the company is small or medium-sized, and usually the workers are skilled and could start working individually, which would mean new competition for the company. The male workers in this type of enterprise feel free to adjust working rhythm and other conditions, to establish solidarity networks and negotiate. A female worker cannot do likewise, "...because of the considerable effect of ideological elements which assert her lack of interest in technology and her poor talent for leadership, and which endow many trades with a masculine gender. Further, as we already stated, her location in overcrowded sections, her excessive dependence on the work of others, the fact that she is usually on piecework, make human relations permanently fragile and conflictive for her. As these levels of conflict are usually not attributed to the particular organisation of work but to the female workers as women, they contribute to their undervaluation" (p 107).

In large and technologically sophisticated companies, on the other hand, the dependence on technology results in a discontinuity in promotions, since they depend more on training available only outside the company. In other words, a person with no outside training can be promoted only up to a certain point. There is a ceiling. This has stronger effects the further down in the hierarchy a worker stands, and thus women are further distanced from male workers.
"In summary, the organisation of work is based on a sexual division of tasks which leaves the simplest and most unqualified tasks to women. These functions are prejudicial to the development of women's initiative and personal creativity and constitutes a culture medium for the reproduction of sexual stereotypes and for the depreciation of women as workers" (summary, p 15).

The women's working conditions make it more difficult for them to form groups, and this lessens the probability that they will become aware of the conditions they share as women. They are interchangeable elements within an internally undifferentiated mass.
"In order to assert themselves as female workers, they must deny their belonging to this group. In many cases, they make great efforts to distinguish themselves from the rest of the female workers with the aim of avoiding to reflect (sic!) the general social image of women as workers" (summary, pp 18-19).

3. Katherine Yih, Nicaragua:

Accumulation and Women's Work in the Socialist Transformation of Agriculture - Development and Equality in Conflict?

When poor and mostly agricultural countries start out on the road towards socialism, there often seems to be a conflict between economic development and elimination of gender inequality. Why is this? Is there really an inherent conflict? In other words, can a country be too poor to afford gender justice? Is women's subordination perhaps even functional in a socialist economy?

Yih has studied this issue in four countries: Nicaragua, Cuba, Vietnam and Mozambique. In all of them the economy is based on agricultural exports and all of them have large peasant sectors and few wage workers. All of them have also set out on the road towards collectivisation of agriculture. It is believed that economic pooling will lead to greater efficiency in agricultural production and this in turn to a larger surplus and more capital for investment. But this process must be compatible with social justice in order to be considered socialist. A redifferentiation of rural classes must be prevented. Social services are improved, and poverty and inequality are alleviated, including the inequality between regions. It is taken for granted that political participation will encourage social and political awareness.

What then about women? Official theory is that they will be liberated automatically when they are included in production. Therefore reproduction must be socialised, to give women time and energy for other productive activities. How this is to be accomplished is usually glossed over, and the shortfalls are well-known. Some of the causes for this are: lack of attention to women's domestic roles, a reductionist theory that sees gender equality as deriving automatically from a socialist organisation of the economy, and lack of interest among male revolutionaries.

In the case of Nicaragua, most of the old Somoza family farms became state farms, but in 1981 it was decided to give priority to production cooperatives. Of the cultivated land that is now collectively owned, a little over half belongs to cooperatives. Women have the same rights as men, and it is an explicit official objective to incorporate them into the cooperatives. Women are no longer paid less for the same work. There is, however, little socialisation of domestic work.

Yih's field study of some oil farm cooperatives on the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua showed that more women worked in cooperative agriculture than they had done previously, but all domestic work was still done by women and girls, except that men and boys helped with fetching water and collecting firewood. Most of the cooperatives' officials were men. Women were "too shy" or embarrassed to participate in meetings, it was said, but they talked freely

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when brought together for interviews in groups. They complained a lot. To work in the fields meant extra work for them rather than an opportunity to become more autonomous.

Yih says that Third World states cannot afford socialisation of domestic work. Therefore individual households - in practice, women - must provide a large share of necessary goods and services for themselves. Thus women either forego the advantages of participating in social production or they must work twice as much as men. And when they do work, they cannot do so on equal terms because of their domestic responsibilities. (The details and the material level is different but the pattern is similar in most countries of the richer parts of the world.)

The risk is thus great for a trade-off between the goals of development and women's equality. And this is of course much greater in poor countries, where economic growth is not just desired but an immediate and pressing priority. As a result feminists fear that what is explained as a short-term goal may become a long term policy.

But, says Yih, there is a simple fallacy here. This reasoning takes for granted that domestic work is women's work. And that is not necessarily so. "If it cannot be socialised, it should be equalised between men and women" (p 23). Of course there are formidable ideological obstacles. Women have to organise politically to articulate their special interests and take part in how the (hopefully) increasing surplus pie is divided. Women may even have a great revolutionary potential in the collectivisation process, Yih concludes optimistically. "Survival is the issue, experimentation the mode" (p 25).

4. Martha Roldán, Argentina:

Industrial Working Class, Domestic Workers and Gender Subordination in Argentina (1976-1985). (A case study in factories and homes in metropolitan Buenos Aires)

The metal factory "Argfilsa" was selected for a case study to illuminate the relationship between class and gender subordination in Argentina today, especially the consciousness and reactions of women and men workers in the process of industrial restructuring through changes in the labour process (without the incorporation of new technologies).

During the early history of the company, ie the years 1950 to 1960, it had a good proportion of women workers. All types of machines were gender specific. There was hardly any sexual harassment, and the workers were controlled by the company with impersonal and legal means. From 1962 to

1980, there was a "golden age" of production of imitations of foreign machinery, on licence. Large stocks were kept, "just-in-case", and work organisation was rigid and efficient. In 1974 there were twenty-two women and eleven men workers. Machines were still gender specific, and the "male" machines were those that gave their operators more job security, more promotions and higher salaries. Even so, women as well as men helped to maintain the sexual division of tasks.

But in 1981 the company had to reorganise itself because of the economic and political crisis. Control became more personal and paternalistic. Argfilsa, or rather its workers, had to pay a price for survival. The number of employees was drastically reduced. In 1984 there were only five male and five female workers. There were only small stocks and production was "just-in-time". Whereas formerly it had been necessary to avoid periods without work, what had to be avoided now was unnecessary outlays of money. The workers had to be trained to control quality better. There were "multi-jobs" and "multi-skills". There were fewer intermediate hierarchies, meaning that management had come closer to the workers. Women did not participate much in the extra training and there was much less unskilled work. In spite of all these changes, the sexual division of work remained unchanged.

When asked about issues that worried them, the workers spoke of the economic situation in Argentina and of their fear of losing their jobs. The restructuring of the company and the changes in the work process and its consequences for their skills were not mentioned as issues. They did say that work was now less monotonous, but they did not make comprehensive comparisons. If anything, they preferred the older system for its stability and higher earnings.

When interviewed in their homes, all said that they saw themselves as working class in a country divided into three strata; rich, intermediate and poor people. But only the qualified male workers saw themselves as part of the whole working class, including the very poor. The others hesitated on this issue. Roldán explains that it is necessary to differentiate yourself from the dispossessed if you risk falling down among them.

There were clearly differentiated opinions on gender questions according to gender and type of work.

Specialised male workers saw themselves as breadwinners for their families. The discontinuous production process had reinforced the old division of labour according to skill, and thus also gender identity. These men could comply better than before with the norm that a true man earns what his family needs. But their wives, even so, sometimes wondered if they should not try to earn some money, too. This was not a threat to these men who felt securely masculine in relation both to women and to unskilled male workers.
For the latter, the process worked in the opposite direction. They were

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distanced from the skilled workers and their tasks and their earnings were becoming ever more similar to those of the women workers. In their families they could not always maintain the role of the exclusive provider. This gave them a feeling of diminished masculinity.

The women workers reacted in different ways according to their family situation. The unmarried women complained that they had less money with which to buy things. The one separated woman was worried because she could not help her family of origin economically as she used to. The married women made constant references to the economic crisis in the country, to the education and health of their children, and so on. But all the women defended their femininity, as they interpreted it: they refused to perform dirty, heavy or dangerous tasks. Most of them had come from the countryside, where this ideal of femininity is impossible to uphold. They felt that they had attained it thanks to their industrial work in the city and they were afraid of losing it if the company had to close down.

The solutions that the workers suggested for their problems were heterogeneous, but they agreed on certain points. No one gets rich by honest work, they thought. But they did not search for individual solutions. They trusted the trade union. In the long run justice must be the final goal, but it is a distant one. More "realistic" and short-term is the dream of a "dignified" life. Neither men nor women thought a change in the sexual division of labour would be a part of that, even though the women talked about their hope for more equality in conjugal relationships.

5. Naomi Kipury, Kenya:

Maasai Women in Transition: Class and Gender in the Transformation of a Pastoral Society

Can the concepts of class and gender be fruitfully applied to the study of so called simple or traditional societies? This has been a matter for debate in social anthropology, and Kipury addresses that debate here. Her position is that these concepts are necessary if we are to understand the transformation of such societies under outside influence.

She begins by affirming that "prior to major transformations", Maasai society essentially lacked social classes. Women were guaranteed access to resources in their kinship roles - as daughters, wives or mothers. The organisation was patrilineal, but women participated in political activities, and they had a high degree of autonomy in production and distribution. The economy was based on cattle.

Now, gender equality has waned, and there is little communal use of

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productive resources. Women's rights are limited, and the individual nuclear family is emerging as the economic unit. "Women's activities are gradually being restricted to private service, while men's are being directed toward the wider public community of the modern state" (p 2). How can this change be theoretically conceptualised?

Prior to colonialism, there were some social categories, such as diviners, which Kipury thinks can be considered incipient classes. They were not very successful in becoming dominant classes, but they presented themselves to the colonial administration as a channel for indirect rule. Later, the Maasai territory was split between two countries (Kenya and Tanzania) and became peripheral within these peripheral states. The Maasai were impoverished.

The colonial administration had no place for group solidarity and no way of accommodating dispersed and shared political authority. Since these were the types of structures within which Maasai women had had what power they had, they were now left out. What new political and economic opportunities opened up were allocated systematically to men. Kipury affirms that it was with colonialism that age and gender hierarchies were introduced. Livestock and land are the basic resources, and traditionally they had been collectively owned, while the elders had supervisory rights. Now these rights were transformed into outright ownership. As modern education was introduced, it became defined as a concern for men.

The advent of the modern state did not mean a decisive break; rather, Kipury says, underdevelopment is a gradual process. In this process pastoralism is becoming ever less viable. She gives examples of how this influences women's lives, from an increase in bride price to an increase in women's workload, both because more work is required in order to safeguard scarce resources and meet the demands of the market, and because the children, who used to help, now cannot do so because they go to school. Men's lives are disrupted, too, but women's more so.

Some of the old institutions that guaranteed egalitarian relations have themselves become the basis for differentiation and exploitation. For example, labour could earlier be mobilised without pay for large projects. It was usually men who called together these teams and women who did much of the work, but all participants benefitted from this arrangement. Now, men can call on women's labour for their own economic gain without paying the women. "In this way, the strategic nature of women's structural position as reproductive labourers both subsidised capitalist production and ensured the continuity of those pre-capitalist social relations on which the edifice of exploitation became operational. The separation of social and domestic labour has also significantly altered the status of women, making them producers of products they do not control, while men are still in control over the products of their labour" (p 7).
Kipury believes these trends are likely to continue, and that they are likely to

generate conflicts within households. But she wants to stress that such conflicts must not be understood as resulting from cultural aberrations or from an imagined universal notion of male dominance. Her paradigm is that of Engels. She does not, as Engels does, maintain that women and men everywhere were equals before the advent of capitalism. But she does stress that a gender system is a historical product, and she shows that even in this society, which would seem an unlikely candidate for an analysis of class relationships, such relationships do exist and do intertwine with the gender system in complex dialectics.

Kipury's conclusion is that gender exploitation cannot be separated from class exploitation, and the latter in a peripheral capitalist system cannot be separated from the worldwide capitalism that determines its functioning. Therefore the world system of exploitation has to be confronted.

B. Political participation

1. Rosalinda Pineda-Ofreneo, the Philippines:

Documenting the Struggle of Filipino Women Workers in Export-Oriented Industries

The purpose of this study was to document the experiences Filipino women workers have of industrial work in general and of strikes in particular, and also to compare such experiences according to type of industry and the women's civil status. The study was limited to export-oriented industries and to women who belonged to labour unions. Two types of industry were chosen, textiles and electronics, and within each type one company with and one without a recent strike.

The questions Pineda-Ofreneo wanted to answer were primarily these: What factors contribute to women's participation in union activities? What differences are there between married and unmarried women in this respect? The methods were participant observation and in-depth interviews of a life story type. Group discussions were also arranged. The idea was also to return some benefits of the research to the informants, so the study was planned in collaboration with the unions, and some of the informants participated in elaborating some of the results.

In a self-searching chapter, Pineda-Ofreneo offers reflections on the difficulties with qualitative methods. The data themselves led her on to more complex problems than those originally posed and which the original theoretical framework could not handle. Perhaps for this reason, she has chosen to present the transcripts of the interviews in sixteen long appendixes. Thus an intrerested reader can compare the data with the conclusions.

For each kind of worker - in garments or electronics, with or without strike experience, married or unmarried - generalisations are proposed about such matters as are usually connected to gender and class consciousness: civil status, sexual division of labour inside the home and outside, level of education, wages, family background, work process and conditions, etc.

The firmest result is that strike experience strongly enhances awareness of both class and gender issues.

In the end, the author chooses to ask more questions about feminist consciousness (her term) than about class consciousness or motivations for participation in a union. The data are of course spotty, both because of the

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change of purpose and because, she says, the feminist movement has barely started in the Philippines, so it has not had time to formulate locally valid questions and criteria. In general, she finds gender consciousness quite low. "The determining factors in this respect, as can be gleaned from the case studies, are exposure to feminist ideas, individuals and organisations, experience of struggle with husband/parents/co-workers to assert equality, individuality/leadership, participation in strikes and other forms of concerted action with other women, and recognition of economic role (especially if breadwinner) within the family" (p 77). "Facilitating/restraining factors identified are degree of religiosity, experience of male cooperation or non-cooperation (especially during strikes), and presence/absence of husband (in the case of the married workers)" (pp 77-78).

What is clear, however, is that class consciousness strengthens gender consciousness and vice versa.   The factors that contribute to class consciousness are experience of strike activities, union participation and contact with so-called progressive ideas. All of these also increase awareness that women's class problems are not identical to men's. Some women start at the other end and think first of their problems as women and then discover that they depend to no small degree on their class situation.

The political recommendation of this study, then, is that unions should encourage a gender point of view in various ways, and not, as so often happens, combat it. Special courses for women and on women's questions could be one example of appropriate activities. The unions should also think about the needs of their members outside the place of work, says Pineda-Ofreneo. The women cannot separate their work problems from their family problems, the fact that they work long hours in a nearly totally female environment from the fact that they are young and want to meet men, or their salaries from the cost and availability of living quarters.

2. Luzviminda G. Tangangco, the Philippines:

Women and Politics in Contemporary Philippines

In the Philippines as in other parts of Asia, this study affirms, women play an active role in society. They are not oppressed in the sense of lacking responsible professional posts or of having less education than men. Within family life, women's authority is also recognised, especially over economic matters and the socialisation of children. But they are less visible in politics than in other areas.

Tancangco therefore proposes to study this fact in relation to the history of political development of the Philippines. Her primary sources are statistics and records of the Commission on Election (COMELEC), interviews with women

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candidates and an opinion poll survey by the elections research team at the College of Public Administration of the University of the Philippines.

In the colonial period, women took part in anti-colonial movements and some were even in the army. The Filipina Feminist Association was founded in 1905 to seek labour and educational reforms. Later other groups fought for suffrage. Women got the vote in 1937 and in 1939 a League of Women Voters was founded. In 1951 there was even an effort to consolidate women's votes through a party called the National Political Party of Women. Later the attention shifted towards fund raising and moral regeneration campaigns.

The first movement to develop women's consciousness as women emerged in the late 1960s, but then martial law was declared and this organisation, Makibaka, was forced underground. Since then all sorts of problems have led to increased suffering and degradation for women, Tancangco asserts, and this has made it possible for the women's movement to become more militant and feminist. There are now many women's organisations in the country, but most are professional and church groups. There are also associations having to do with youth and schools and a few groups of housewives. Many offer economic or health or education services. Tancangco considers that about one-fifth of the women's organisations are blind to the oppression of women.

Throughout Filipino history, women's organisations have been especially active in times of increased tension. Therefore it was not surprising that this should be the case after the death of Benigno Aquino in 1981. But it did surprise observers that even affluent women joined "the parliament of the street" after 1983. Women's organisations now mushroomed. Most of them were urban, however, even though 70 per cent of the population is rural. The issues most commonly raised were: the militarisation of the countryside and the consequent sexual harassment of peasant women; the rise of prostitution and sex tourism, mail order brides and pornography; the relegation of women to the lowest types of jobs; low wages and inhuman working conditions; sexual harassment in the labour market, such as virginity tests; and the legal precedence of husbands over wives (pp 17-18).

Women have always taken part in political campaigns, but usually to add glamour, song and dance. They have voted somewhat more often than men, but few candidates have been women. Beliefs shared by both sexes are that women do not make good politicians because they are weak, easy to manipulate, and not used to public life. Surveys show that most women give top priority to their family. It is also common knowledge that a man can often dictate to the women of his family how they should vote. For all of these reasons, most Filipinos say they cannot accept a woman president. They explain Cory Aquino's election as based on the people's anger at Marcos and their sympathy for a widow.

In the 1987 elections, women's groups actually campaigned for the candidates

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they expected to support women's causes. There were also some outstanding individual women campaigners. Tancangco relates several illustrative and sometimes tragic cases. Most of the women candidates were housewives from the upper and middle classes, none had a vocational background. Most of them chose to run as independents, since the established parties paid little attention to women and women's issues. The issues raised by female candidates are those usual in political campaigns generally, although the order of priority may not be the same.

Tancangco says that politics in the Philippines is a men's game for many reasons other than gender prejudices. There is above all a prevalence of what is called the three G's: guns, goons and gold. Women candidates do not have much of any of these.

In the end perhaps it is a question of access to force, says Tancangco. Filipino women have an exceptional status perhaps, at least inside the family, but the one area where men have a clear monopoly is the use of force at all levels. And the clear dominance of males in politics institutionalises male control over women. Having a woman president does not change such basic patterns.

Yet this dominance is usually not seen as such, because it is softened by an ideology of love and motherhood, which is strongly inculcated. Women are now achieving many new things, but they are not enough to break the male dominance. Like all other processes of liberation, this one is much more complex than it seems at first sight.

After presenting these arguments and problems, which would sound familiar to any Western feminist, Tancangco ends by declaring that Filipino feminism must be of a different kind. It must stress partnership between men and women. "This is because dominance per se is objectionable and the substitution of female dominance over male dominance can be equally oppressive" (p 51).

The concept of partnership is especially appropriate in the Filipino context, according to the author, because it is a country where women have contributed on a relatively advanced level in many fields. Non-antagonistic terms encourage a less passionate discussion of facts, and the relational meaning of the term "partnership" enables us to capture concerns beyond attainment of mere political equality. Finally, as partners men and women can recognise their basic differences without assuming unequal valuation, Tancangco concludes on an optimistic note.

3. Norma Sanchis and Susana Bianchi, Argentina:

The Organisations of Women in Latin America: the Peronist Women's Party in Argentina (1946-1955)[12]

In the 1930s and 1940s, Argentina changed economically and socially in a way that also changed women's position. Women entered the labour market to a much greater extent and family structure changed. Nevertheless the cultural concept of women remained largely unchanged, and most women were limited to the private sphere of unremunerated household tasks and childcare. This led to conflicts. There was fear that traditional values and the traditional family would be undermined; on the other hand there grew a new consensus on women's rights, especially their political rights.

When Juan Perón took power in 1945, the time was ripe for a meeting of interests. The women needed Perón, because they needed a new kind of politics. And Perón needed the women because he needed the support of new social forces to counterbalance the old ones that opposed him. The women responded massively to his appeals, and according to Sanchís and Bianchi this cannot be explained away as mere manipulation.

The Peronist message was hardly a feminist one, however, at least as seen from the vantage point of today. What then, ask Sanchis and Bianchi, did the women get out of Peronism? Did it undermine or strengthen the traditional Argentine gender system? The authors set out to write the history of women's participation in Peronist politics, especially through interviewing women who occupied leading positions in the Peronist Women's Party during its six years of legal existence.

Peronism had an outstanding symbol of feminine participation in politics in the general's wife, Eva Perón, known as Evita. Women could identify with her. She was active and powerful, while they were not but wanted to be, and she managed to combine this with what most Argentines cherished as true femininity. She was beautiful, maternal, dedicated in a self-sacrificing way to a great cause, and she was clearly subordinated to her husband.

The Partido Peronista Femenino was founded in 1949 as a separate political channel for that separate kind of beings, women, who also, as political neophytes, needed special protection and a separate training area. Two years earlier female suffrage had been established and a copy of the new law handed over by Perón in a public ceremony to Evita, who thanked him on

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[12]A similar version has been published as a two volume book with the title **El Partido Peronista Femenino**. Biblioteca Politica Argentina no 208, Centro Editor de America Latina. Buenos Aires 1988.

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behalf of all Argentine women. The new party was of course to be led by Evita and clearly subordinated to the Partido Peronista.

Inside her party, Eva Perón was utterly respected. Her leadership style was authoritarian but also maternal, or so it was interpreted. Her strict instructions were not taken as limitations or impositions but rather as the kind of well-meaning support a mother or teacher would give.

Sanchís and Bianchi defend the idea that the history of "values" has to be studied along with the history of events. The "social subjects" here are the Peronist women, with their needs, ambitions and sentiments. It is the **experience** of these women, in short, that has to be captured.

The women of the popular classes looked to Peronism to improve their social situation. Peronism gave them an identity, they could now say they "belonged to the people" instead of feeling despised as members of the lower class. Peronism also addressed women as such. It valued femininity, so it did not include women in "general" politics.
"For the Peronist discourse, a woman earns her citizenship through the most everyday aspects of domestic life: to defend the family becomes a cause that transcends the domestic-private and enters into an ardently upheld view of the common good. And this concept of the common good permits the dissolution of the dichotomy between the public and the private, between politics and family. (...) The same features that are associated with feminine nature - altruism, capacity for sacrifice - guarantee a spiritual superiority that permits a 'moralisation' of politics" (pp 263-264).

So far, the new ideas did not undermine the old gender system. But in order to be able to keep a moral watch, the women had to overcome their subordination. They had to have some autonomy. This was recognised and accepted, because there was after all a clear limit. Perón had ultimate control, and it was Perón who made the decisions.

The contradiction between the idea that a woman's place is in the home, especially as a mother, and the idea that women should now participate in public matters, was overcome through the image of Evita. Hers was a new kind of motherhood. Although she had no children of her own, she was still, or even more so, a self-sacrificing Mother-Goddess. She was the mother of a whole country, she took good care of her people. She sacrificed herself. She died. But she was active and capable.

The active women of the Peronist Women's Party certainly got out of their homes and made public careers. They felt they had a space of their own. This was so even at the grass-roots level. The ward or village party premises excluded men, and Evita was strict about the moral and feminine atmosphere that had to reign there. The women were taken out of their homes but into a feminine public place.

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There were of course women with previous political experience and/or intelligence or strength enough to challenge Evita's personality cult and authoritarianism. But they were promptly excluded. Because Evita wanted to rule, she surrounded herself with women who were grateful for the chance to participate. The women interviewed spoke unanimously of how much she gave them. Help and protection is what they wanted and what they got.

The women's party, then, was dedicated to women's politics, which should be a kind of amplified motherhood. Social work was high on the list, of course. The women's politics were sometimes defined as not-politics, because politics were bad, a power-game which women could not and should not take part in. At other times it was defined as the real and true good politics. Their ultimate mission was to clean up politics. And this was also the goal for Peronism as a whole, according to its official discourse. So, in a sense, women were the ultimate judges.

In conclusion, Sanchís and Bianchi state that Peronism certainly meant for many women that they recovered their right to speak. They were mobilised. But they were mobilised by the State. Their organisations were used to channel State policy to the women rather than collect their proposals and forward them to the government. The Peronist women's role was contradictory: it was based on the traditional female role, while attempting to transcend it. "So, even if the practice created a space that reformulated the traditional roles, no spaces were generated that permitted a confrontation between this practice and the cultural models on which the gender identity was based.(...) In this way, the inability to reformulate the essentialist concept of female nature limits the possibility to transcend the definition of women's action within the Peronist Women's Party" (pp 286-287).

4. Ana María Arteaga, Chile:[13]

Politicising the Private and Subverting Everyday Life

During the dictatorship period in Chile, women were active and militant, but in the current transition to democracy, it looks as if they will not be able to consolidate this experience "in dialogue, proposals, movement and strength" (p 566). Arteaga has studied women's organisations in recent Chilean history to try to find the reason.[14]

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[13]This summary is based on a published article.

[14] Arteaga does not elaborate on the methods of her study, except to say that it it "an experimental exercise in reflection and militant observation".

Certain practices during the dictatorship were historically new for Chilean women. They had protested under Frei and Allende, too, but not organised as women. The Allende government addressed citizens in an abstract undifferentiated way, and the opposition managed to capitalise on this blind spot and addressed the women specifically, mobilising them by appealing to their special interests, above all the family. During the dictatorship, organisations specifically for women proliferated. Arteaga arranges them in four categories.

The first kind are those with a territorial base, usually small but well-defined residential areas in non-affluent districts. Their purpose is to solve everyday problems of survival. They buy food and/or cook it collectively, they take care of small children, etc. Arteaga calls them organisations for the subversion of everyday life. The women active in them do not go beyond their traditionally assigned tasks. But they do gain more personal contacts and thus more "affective space", as Arteaga calls it, and a feeling of belonging to a group. Experiences are communicated, and there is a process of consciousness raising. Little by little the women begin to see their domestic relationships in a new light, and the organisations sometimes provide opportunities for reflection and personal growth.

The second category are "reactive" organisations that exist to denounce a disappearance. Already at the doors of the National Stadium, the "women of" met each other. They were there as the wife, sister or daughter or similar of someone who had disappeared, usually a man. Little by little they learnt technical legal terms and procedures, made lists of international organisations that might help, and so on. What was individual became collective, and what was personal became political. But the women stayed within the realm considered appropriate to their gender: kinship, affection, the defence of the family.

The third category is also reactive, ie these organisations also respond to imposed difficulties. But now they do so in order to question the legitimacy of the government. The women act as citizens, together with the men, fighting for democracy and against economic injustice. These organisations often had underground ties to political parties, for strategic reasons. This certainly helped the women to fear repression less and lose some of their traditional suspicion of parties and political work. As they practised collective decision-making and appeared in public, many began to question their secondary position inside the parties and in society as a whole. But the gender dimension as such was not discussed.

The fourth category Arteaga calls "civilisatorian", and "between being and doing". They are the expression of the private having become political. Their explicit purpose is to question androcentric society and analyse gender-specific conditions. Many different aspirations derived from gender meet here, and they cannot always be combined. While their heterogenous nature sometimes enriches, it is more often an obstacle. These organisations are

weak and conflict-ridden. The membership changes continually. There is no clear political project but mostly very general and abstract postulates. The members are extremely suspicious of anything that might look like interference from other organisations. In the middle class, gender is more relevant than in the working class, where social tensions make class the most visible problem.

Women have organised and obtained political training. Public opinion in Chile has become extremely sensitive to issues of human rights and of discrimination against women. It would seem to be a propitious moment for feminism. But with democracy, the political parties enter the stage again. They are well-organised, and the weaknesses of the women's organisations become evident. These have been too busy with the urgencies of the situation and with learning their new practice, says Arteaga, to have had time for the necessary reflection and analysis. She concludes that only when they manage to develop a political project that transcends the apparent contradiction between their class situation and their gender situation will they be able to consolidate their collective experience and transform it into historical action.

C. Health and housing

1. Kenna Owoh, Nigeria:

Privatisation of Obstetrical Care in Plateau State

The purpose of this study is to explore the consequences for women of the privatisation of health care, especially obstetrics, that is under way in Nigeria. Owoh's theoretical base is historical materialism, and the relationship between this body of thought and the concepts ordinarily used in health studies is discussed thoroughly as well as different theoretical perspectives on women's position. The productive and reproductive roles of women are seen as socially constructed and historically specific.

Traditionally, in Nigeria, a man's wealth consisted more of people than of goods, because what was scarce was labour. Women were central to both production and reproduction. With the introduction of capitalism, Nigeria was incorporated into the world economy and there was an interplay between the sexual and the international division of labour. Western medicine functions within the capitalist framework and paves the way for Western values. The inequalities inherent in capitalism are evident in contemporary obstetrical services in Nigeria, according to the author.

As an illustration of "traditional" obstetrics and its social context, Owoh describes the social structure, women's work and the social organisation of human reproduction in two ethnic groups, the Berom and the Hausa. The economic role of women in Nigerian cities today is then discussed in relationship to international economic dynamics. There is a process of complex change, and one result of it seems to be that women lose part of their autonomy and are restricted to what are considered tasks of lesser importance. Just as in so many other parts of the Third World, women's work here too is hidden behind terms like "economically inactive" and "domestic tasks". Owoh finds a link between colonialism and the ideal of the housewife.

After giving thorough background material, the study focuses on Nigerian health care today. Obstetric care is offered in three contexts: hospitals, midwife clinics and traditional birth attendants (TBAs). Several of each were visited and the personnel interviewed about practices, opinions and what sort of patients they get. Observations were also made about such matters as cleanliness, facilities and methods.

It is clear that women choose obstetric facilities according to their economic means. Those who can afford it choose Western care, even though it is often of low quality and ruled by profit interests. This is especially true of the private

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midwife clinics, whose results are not better than those achieved by the TBAs but where the women who give birth are robbed of their control over the birth process. In general, Western medicine is controlled by men. The traditional birth attendants are women working in complete autonomy, at least so far. They have their own association, but it has recently been included in a larger health care organisation run by men.

The trend towards privatisation joins with the economic structure as a whole to create new articulations between traditional and capitalist structures, where new opportunities for exploitation are born. This sounds abstract, and Owoh's text is rather abstract, but she also gives plenty of empirical data from her interviews. She gives examples of how preconceived ideas about both class and gender are imported from Western medicine to the traditional context. Since a fee was introduced at state hospitals, more people choose private hospitals, and they are profitable, but it is also true that more and more people cannot afford either private or state hospitals but are relegated to using traditional medicine. The urban working class suffers from a lack of access to any kind of care.

While doctors and midwives with Western training do not see the TBAs as competitors, some view the latter as harmful because of their ignorance and think they should be forbidden to practice. Others think the TBAs could be of great help if they got some further training. In practice, the TBAs are necessary to fill the gap in available care that the privatisation trend creates. They assist at 70 per cent of the childbirths in rural areas and in a growing proportion in the cities.

Owoh concludes that women in a patriarchal and capitalist society cannot choose the kind of health care they prefer. Instead their incomes determine what they can get. Thus the quality of health care cannot be measured just in terms of what methods are used but also by social factors.

Owoh finds that women do not suffer from double oppression but from one unified system of oppression and exploitation, namely "patriarchal capitalism", and her data show how this works in a specific instance, that of health care. Her practical conclusion is pessimistic: as long as patriarchy and capitalism cannot be abolished simultaneously, manipulating the system superficially will have little effect.

2. Jean Rutabanzibwa-Ngaiza, Swaziland:

Participation of Women in Primary Health Care in Swaziland[15]

The purpose of this study was to find the factors that determine women's decisions in health questions, in order to improve Maternal and Child Health (MCH) in Swaziland.

It was carried out at two places in the region with the highest proportion of malnourished children in the country. One of the places chosen was covered by a development program, the other was not, and comparisons between them are made in the report. 185 women were visited and interviewed about their knowledge of the health care services available, about family decision making on health questions, etc. Data are presented about the women's knowledge of health care, desired number of children, problems with reaching the clinics, knowledge of birth control methods and much more.

Among many bits of information that point to the kind of questions that are usually central in women's studies (cf Part 1), we learn that the organisation of women into groups at the grass-roots level is weak. The problem of reaching the clinics seems to indicate a gender hierarchy that influences health care negatively: because men control the money, a man can stop his wife from visiting a clinic, since the trip and the visit both cost money (p 49). But Rutabanzibwa-Ngaiza is not interested in describing the gender hierarchy as such.

The services of traditional birth attendants are described briefly. Four clinics were also visited, and sixty-three women and one man were interviewed there, as patients. Few had any complaints. The nurses were asked about the concept of patient participation. They did not know much about it but thought it sounded like a good idea. Various obstacles to effective communication between health care personnel and patients are discussed in the study.

Rutabanzibwa-Ngaiza concludes with a discussion about what needs to be done to improve MCH in Swaziland. If effective participation is to be achieved, she says, a common understanding about terms and concepts must be reached between providers and users. Such participation has to be informed, requiring new lines of communication, especially from the side of the health workers. Because the patients/clients should be viewed as concerned participants, communication should flow in both directions. Perhaps the health workers tend to organise from above.

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[15]A considerably expanded version of this report has later been submitted to SAREC

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"Their assessment and evaluation of the health system may bear little or no resemblance to how it is perceived from **below**. It is from **below** that the foundations for good and better health practices hope to be built, and it is there that more groundwork needs to be done" (p 80, R-N's emphasis).

3. Symphorosa W. Rembe, Lesotho:

Women Participation in Water Supply and Sanitation Activities in Lesotho

The questions addressed by Rembe concern water supply and sanitation in rural areas of Lesotho. This is a study of women only if one defines as such a study of a population that consists largely (but not exclusively) of women. Since many of the men of Lesotho are working abroad, the women certainly have to take on all kinds of responsibilities. Such a context is indeed interesting for a study on gender issues. The background chapter indicates some relevant questions, eg on changes in the sexual division of labour and on changes in political organisation when women become a majority of the participants.

"It has been documented that since women outnumber men in the country (...) women play a great role in rural development. How are women involved in water and sanitation as part of the rural development" (p 6)?

The methods, however, were adapted to the health perspective only. For example, the questionnaire used in some 350 interviews stressed mainly matters concerning the provision of improved latrines and new water supplies.

Some of the results are as follows: Half of the community labour involved in supplying the village with water comes from women, with 65 per cent of the members of the Village Water Committees and 40 per cent of the Village Health Workers being women. Women were also Rural Development Assistants and District Rural Development Officers. The only explanation given for this female near-majority is that the men are away in the mines. The study shows, nevertheless, that **some** men are present.

The Village Health Workers are volunteers, chosen by the community. Their task is to promote "positive health behaviour". Among complaints (most of which concerned the scarce material resources available for their work), they thought they should be paid for their work, since they had to abstain from other duties in order to attend the required courses.

The Water Minders are men, who are also not paid.

Near the end of the report, Rembe says, "... women's traditional management responsibilities of water resources and even sanitation is recognised" (p 69).

Here she touches on an issue that could profitably be developed in some other context. One wonders what that traditional responsibility consisted in, and if and why it has changed, why it was assigned to women and in what general context of division of labour; one wonders about the significance of this for the present organisation, and about the significance of all of this for the gender system as a whole.

Rembe summarises,
"The study revealed that the community at large played a great role in the village water supply. Consequently, since the number of women in the rural areas of Lesotho is bigger than that of men, women play a very big role in rural development. The study showed that women are involved in all the aspects of water supply and sanitation" (pp 67-68).

4. Paula Nimpuno-Parente, Kenya:

The Struggle for Shelter: Women in a Site and Service Project in Nairobi, Kenya (Dandora)

In projects to provide housing for the urban poor, incorrect assumptions are often made about women which can make it difficult for them to take part. Dandora, a project in Nairobi, designed specifically to include women, was considered successful since 49 per cent of the beneficiaries in phase I actually were women. In this evaluation, however, it is shown how assumptions about self-help and finance can be detrimental to women.

Dandora was a site-and-services project, which means that the site was provided and the recipients were expected to construct the houses themselves. Social and commercial facilities were provided. The women who applied were almost all heads of households and had an average of five dependants. In Nairobi there is a dialectical relationship between housing insecurity and job insecurity. Therefore, having a house of one's own is extremely important.

But the criteria for selection placed women at a disadvantage. For example, it was assumed that the recipients would spend 20-25 per cent of their income on housing. That is not possible when income is very irregular, as it usually is for women. Because the down payment was also too high, the women had to get private loans to cover it. Married women were assumed not to be heads of households, and were therefore not eligible; however, many were actually separated but could not obtain a divorce for a variety of reasons. Others had simply been abandoned by their husbands. The case of married women was not always more secure, for the title to the land was then in the name of the husband, who could sell without the wife's consent or knowledge.

Another requirement difficult for women to meet was residence in Nairobi.

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Many women were residents but could not prove it. Many of them come to the city without registering the move, and they frequently go back to the village to help with the harvest or get help with child care.

Regular employment was also required, but most women are self-employed or work in the informal sector. A hawker's licence was accepted as proof of activity, but most women vendors are not registered.

Once women were accepted into the project, more difficulties followed. The project was designed to include three types of self-help. Many women preferred true self-help, ie doing the work themselves. In fact, they had to get male friends and relatives to help them do it, although this was very difficult for many women with lost networks, childcare duties, etc. The accepted sexual division of labour prevents women from doing actual construction work. The second kind of self-help was to contract labour. Some women had to choose this modality because they did not have enough free time to do the work themselves, or because they had tried and - because of their lack of experience - had not been able to meet the building standards. Despite the high cost, 89 per cent of the women contracted specialists, twice as often as men, and this placed them in heavy debt. Some craftsmen also abused the situation; there were many cases of theft of materials, shoddy work, etc. The third alternative was the building groups organised by the project agency. It was a slow and costly way, but the finished rooms could be sublet to finance further construction. It was easier to raise loans as a group and easier to contract labour and control the work. But there were many problems with group cohesion and trust.

In spite of all the difficulties, the women beneficiaries are less likely to sell than the men, because they are more dependent on having their own house. They had not previously had any opportunity to own land in the city. Although both men and women valued the house as an economic asset, women also valued it as a social asset, namely as security for the family. For many women, subletting rooms was also an important source of income.

Nimpuno-Parente concludes that the criteria of selection and implementation made participation more difficult for women than for men, and that the planners underestimated the significance of women's activities. This obviously had serious implications for the women. When, as here, women are the main beneficiaries, such miscalculations also have consequences for the success of the whole project. Nimpuno-Parente has some recommendations to make to avoid such pitfalls in the future.

D. Gender consciousness

1. Graciela Sapriza, Uruguay:

Personal Time and Historical Time. Life Histories in the Reconstruction of Class and Gender Relations[16]

Sapriza questions two common Uruguayan images of the women's movement. One is that the early movement was split into two, one liberal and one socialist, at the beginning of this century, with little communication between the two possible. The other has it that when Uruguay became a reformist state, the women became less militant, since many of their claims were met.

The relationship between the women's movement and the workers' movement has been difficult throughout the Western world during the history of industrialism. Sapriza gives the reader the background of this history since the French Revolution and asks: How could individual women choose between class solidarity and gender solidarity? Or how did they manage to combine the two, in spite of everything? This question is interesting for all countries with a history of tension between these two movements. Sapriza relates the Uruguayan experience in a background chapter about women's conditions in the early years of this century and especially the viewpoints on women held by the major political organisations: socialists, the conservative groups and Batllism (the reformist movement of Uruguay).

In order to find the details in this picture, Sapriza then analyses the lives of seven active women. Two of them were union activists in the early years of the century, one was a suffragist during the I920s, three were active in both unions and political parties during the 1940s and one belongs to both the first and the last category. The four "historical" women's lives are reconstructed mainly with the help of documents and through interviews with persons who knew them. The three "contemporary" women are interviewed in depth.

Those parts or aspects of their lives that the interviewed women themselves have chosen to stress are presented in long excerpts. Amalia tells about her protected but interesting childhood in an upper middle class family, how she later became a communist, how she worked for the party for many years and how she finally broke with it. Jorgelina concentrates on union activities and the working conditions at the large shoe factory where she worked most of her life. Alba seems to be the best-known of the three, a successful upper-level

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[16]A similar version has been published as a book with the title **Memorias de Rebeldia**. Puntosur, GRECMU, Montevideo 1988.

politician, but her story concentrates on her childhood in the country and a series of key events and important personal contacts that led her straight to the centre of national events at an early age.

Sapriza attempts an analysis of differences and similarities in the three life stories. The two women from a middle class background describe their childhood as a period of freedom, while Jorgelina stresses the limitations she experienced. All three underline the strong personalities of their mothers. All mention the importance of school and describe their first job. All feel a certain disappointment with political life. The reasons they give are coloured by their different political ideologies and by the feminist debate. Jorgelina reaches the conclusion that she wants to be recognised as a woman, too, and not just as a politician, while Amalia and Alba deny that gender makes any difference in political work.

The life history method has been popular in the social sciences for over ten years now, but the methods used to analyse the material are still quite experimental. In this case perhaps the method was not well chosen to answer the two significant historical questions posed.

This study contributes to an understanding of how women in societies with both gender and class hierarchies view themselves, discussing what experiences, legitimations and interpretations are involved. It gives a sketch of certain similarities in the backgrounds of women who managed to make political careers in Uruguay in the 1940s.

2. Silvia Rodriguez Villamil, Uruguay:

Woman as Subject in Social Change: Class and Gender Consciousness in the Uruguay of the 1980s

This study can be seen as a continuation of Sapriza's: the focus is on the possibility that women will become conscious of belonging to two different disadvantaged social categories, women and workers. But whereas Sapriza concentrated on an earlier epoch, Rodríguez Villamil brings us up to date. In a background chapter she describes the Uruguayan women's history of this century as having three phases. Between 1900 and 1945 there was a militant women's movement. Between 1945 and 1980 there was relative welfare and women tended to stay within the private sphere. Feminism as such was silent. Around 1980 the third phase began, a phase of reconstructing society after the ravages of the dictatorship. Women had participated in underground activities, in the defence of human rights and so on. The dictatorship experience moved the feminist movement clearly to the left; the women involved now place great emphasis on democracy and believe more in collective than individual action. Rodríguez Villamil thinks the present situation contains an explosive element:

it has become necessary to give women their rights and to transform society as a whole at the same time.

Eighteen activist women are interviewed in order to analyse their consciousness of gender and class and how the two articulate. Their **social participation** is defined as participation in a union, a political party or a women's group. **Gender consciousness** is seen as being analogous to class consciousness in that it is based on an awareness of the special interests of a social category and the concept of solidarity in shared oppression. Conscious women and workers also coincide in believing that a change in their own conditions will necessarily mean a radical transformation of society as a whole. This consciousness may reach varying "depths" and be expressed more or less clearly in different aspects of life such as motherhood, marital relationships, work, political activities, etc.

Where Sapriza structured her analysis to follow accounts of individual lives, Rodríguez Villamil structures hers according to type of social participation and according to the emerging themes. Seven of the women are described as lacking gender consciousness and eleven as having it in varying degrees. All have some sort of awareness of oppression of the working class based on ideologies and/or personal experiences.

Their backgrounds vary but all come from conventional nuclear families. Many of the mothers, however, are described by their daughters as "frustrated". Many of the women feel a stronger identification with their father than with their mother. Rodríguez Villamil finds that class consciousness and participation in salaried employment increases the probability that a woman will reach gender consciousness, but the gender-conscious women do not themselves mention these factors as explanations. Instead they say that the contact with feminist ideas was what was decisive. The material does not indicate that class origin or level of education attained had any specific influence on the degree of gender consciousness.

Some personal characteristics seem to stand in the way of gender consciousness. The most successful women feel equal to men and think they are exceptional as women. They strive to join the men and are not interested in female solidarity. For others, political work is a necessary sacrifice, a social duty analogous to motherhood, and when one does one's duty one does not ask for special attention to one's special difficulties. To be a woman often means more work and less recognition, but these women feel that everyone has to be able to meet the demands of hard times; there is no room for complaints from anyone, so they cannot complain as women. Some even deny that being a woman supposes special disadvantages. Others again recognise them, but find it easy to submit to masculine authority out of habit and custom.

But the greatest obstacles to gender consciousness are lack of contact with feminist ideas and the patriarchal ideology itself.

"If personal experiences contradict the "myth" of equality between the sexes (still very much alive in Uruguay), the difficulties are understood as personal shortcomings. In this way the obstacles and the oppression a woman encounters are made invisible; they are not interpreted as linked to the social structure nor to the system of domination as a whole. The woman herself is also often thought responsible for her situation, because of her fears and indecisiveness" (p 152).

When there is gender consciousness, it expresses itself in different ways in different areas of life. In political work in parties or unions it is difficult to express, because most women's position in the political hierarchies is low. The women who participate in women's groups do of course express their gender consciousness in political work, and several of them have joined these groups precisely because they were disillusioned with a party or a union on gender grounds.

Something similar happens in the workplace. Most of the women think that work is a woman's right and that women work out of economic necessity. They emphasise that women are as capable as men and more responsible. Most of them see that women carry heavier workloads and are discriminated against at their work places, but few of them formulate these thoughts clearly.

In the sphere of daily life in the home and the family, on the other hand, gender consciousness is much expressed. For almost all of the women, childcare is the main burden. For some it feels "natural" but is nevertheless seen as a barrier to other activities. For those with a higher level of consciousness, childcare and housework are something to be constantly renegotiated with the husband. Although some say that in their case everything works out fine, the husband shares in all responsibilities, the children help, and so on, when questioned about the timetables of each family member, a different picture emerges (pp 170-175).

That women are discriminated against in the political sphere is clear to all of these women, and they all have similar substantial ideas about how and why. But they do not call such ideas "feminist". Feminism has a bad name. Some of the women who do have gender consciousness still take exception to the word. Those who do not call themselves feminists say that they do not want to "fight against the men". There is a negative image of feminism in mass media and within most leftist groups, and this influences the women.

The women who are active in women's groups do not believe that machismo will be overcome automatically, but they have a hard time fitting their feminist ideas with their other political opinions; it is a process fraught with conflicts and contradictions.

Rodríguez Villamil concludes that women can develop class consciousness or just general social unease without developing gender consciousness, but when

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they do discover the latter, their motivation for participating in all sorts of political work grows, and their views of collective projects for change become more complete, since they can now include hitherto invisible aspects.

3. Beatriz Lovesio, Uruguay:

Women's Work in Textile Manufacturing: From Work in the Home to Factory Work

Lovesio's study focuses on the relationship between forms of participation in the labour market and awareness of gender injustices. Through interviews with 31 textile workers, half of them working in their homes on the putting-out system and the other half in factories, Lovesio finds that participation in the labour market does not guarantee a woman's independence, either from the demands of her family, in relationship to men or in society at large. Her main conclusions are:

1. Participation in the labour market does not guarantee consciousness either of gender or of class.
2. Participation in salaried work does not guarantee the elimination of discrimination against women in society or inside the family.
3. The factory workers have a stronger consciousness of both class and gender than do the home workers, even though work relationships in the small companies are quite paternalistic.
4. There is no automatic road from class consciousness to gender consciousness, but class consciousness does help. Even women without gender consciousness usually react in a rebellious way to situations such as a wrecked marriage or too much housework. But they experience their difficulties privately and passively. They do not connect them to social circumstances. That is why it helps to work in a factory and be able to reflect on events together with other women.

Some of these conclusions would seem to have to be based on a large statistical material. They are not. Lovesio's principal arguments, however, are of a more qualitative kind.

Most of the home workers live in the Uruguayan inland, where there are few other opportunities for female employment. Of the 16 women interviewed, all were married and most had had very little schooling. Almost all of them knitted by hand. Their husbands had low-income jobs in the service sector. The women's incomes represented between 10 and 20 per cent of the family income. The women usually found their jobs through informal contacts. Some did not even know what company they worked for. Usually a female group boss contracted with the company and then found local women workers. As is usual in the putting-out system, the workers ran all the risks: if they missed a shipment, they were not paid; they paid for their material, etc. Only one of

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the sixteen had social security. To obtain it, she had to maintain a production pace that was unattainable for the others.

Only one of the workers had changed from home work to factory work, and she was young and childless. The others said they could not do it, not so much because of housework duties as because of the children. Who would take care of them? But they liked working. They had to earn a living, and working at home did not conflict too much with their "natural" obligations. They did not feel socially isolated. Their work was in a sense qualified. This can be shown in various ways, for example that a certain speed and skill were required both to be contracted and to be able to pass quality controls. But the women did not consider themselves skilled, since their skill was a product of their socialisation into female roles.

Both the employers and the women themselves legitimated their working conditions by distinguishing themselves from "simple salaried workers". They were instead defined as "true artisans", selling the products of their handicraft.

The factory workers did see themselves as workers, of course. All of them had social security and saw this as an important asset and looked forward to having an old age pension. They changed jobs often in their youth but from the age of twenty or so they usually found a permanent position from which they would not move if they could help it. They thought that salaries were low, and in some places there were other drawbacks, but they felt that this was what they "knew how to do". Another reason for stability was that all of them had family responsibilities, including the unmarried women (who were taking care of children or parents). Most of them had had only primary schooling, but their children sometimes had more. Many said they would have liked to learn how to do other things. Those who had small children usually sent them to daycare centres.

It looks, says Lovesio, as if family obligations determine women's choices. For hardly any of these women was working a question of choice or individual expectations; they worked because their families needed the money to survive. They might say they would have liked to do something else in life, but they did not question the sexual division of work and they were proud of their work and thought they did it well. Job security was a major criterion, but it was also important to have good relationships with one's workmates.

Lovesio found two ways of thinking about home work versus factory work among the factory workers. Some said that it would be more comfortable to work at home, for then they could choose their own hours, take care of their children and save money on transportation and clothing. Others emphasised rather the need for getting out of the house and meeting people, having workmates, learning more about the world. Some also stressed worker solidarity. But for all the children posed the most serious problem, which sometimes became decisive. There was also a conflict for all between

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household work and paid work. Household responsibilities were always given
priority by the home workers. In each family there was a "head" woman who
was responsible, and her daughters and other women in the household and
sometimes the husband "helped".

All of the families needed the women's incomes, and in the case of the factory
workers, the woman's salary usually represented between 50 and 100 per
cent of the household income. How it was spent depended on the size and
type of family, but all of the women, even the married ones, said they
participated in decisions about spending money.

Motherhood was seen as the main social legitimation and the central element
of identity for a woman. Even those who were not mothers thought so. Some
young women tried to see the limitations of motherhood and talked about lack
of autonomy, but it was hard for them to see alternatives. Only one woman
interviewed said she placed the couple relationship ahead of her maternal role.

All of the women wanted their husbands to share in household duties, but "to
share" meant very different things to different women. Some would not allow
the men to do much. Or they felt guilty for not doing it themselves. Their
self-esteem often depended on what they were able to do for husband and
children.

Lovesio concludes that in spite of the differences, the women did have some
sort of consciousness of being workers. Women with a clear class
consciousness tended to hope for gender equality some day, and this hope
enabled them to carry out both domestic and non-domestic tasks. But they
interpreted society as a system of roles and expectations that exists on its
own, beyond the will of those who live within it. Therefore, it is extremely
difficult to change. With or without class or gender consciousness, the women
found their domestic duties heavy and tried to think of solutions such as
daycare centres or more helpful husbands.
"A majority of the women workers who recognise the existence of a
differentiation between men's and women's activities, offer explanations of a
more ideological than structural nature. It is significant that even the women
with the clearest vision of their class condition consider that culture mediates
the concept of "a woman's place" in both domestic and paid work and that
this is what articulates the hierarchic relation between the sexes" (p 131).

4. Silvia Chéjter and Inés Hercovich, Argentina:

A Study of Sexual Rape of Women

This is a study of various discourses about rape. The victims, their families
and various kinds of specialists were interviewed in depth. But it was difficult

to get some of them, notably the victims themselves, to talk about rape, and most of the interviewed persons allowed their discourse[17] to be shaped by common stereotypes. Why is this so? Why the compact silence around rape? And why is it so difficult for the victims to be believed? How should a woman tell her story to be believed?

Among other results, Chéjter and Hercovich found a gap between the authority of the dominant discourses and certain experiences. The women who found that there was no possibility of expressing what they had actually felt must question the dominant discourse. Or remain silent.

The point of departure is not the - according to the authors - naive purpose to dissolve ideological confusion and discover "The Truth", but rather to discover why some discourses are viewed as more credible than others. Chéjter and Hercovich do not see rape as being inevitable because of men's nature, as some essentialist[18] feminists and some resigned women believe. Nor do they view rape as an inexplicable event between two individuals, as do those who do not believe that social and cultural patterns influence sexuality and gender relations. Chéjter and Hercovich belong to the school of thought that sees rape as dangerous to all women, not only to the actual victims, because it involves "multiple control mechanisms over our own bodies and behaviours, ranging from the most spontaneous gesture to the most elaborate action" (p 6).

The analysis is based on the discourse theories of Foucault and Bakhtin. According to these theories, the discourse is not taken to be either subjective or objective. Instead, meaning is formed in the immediate context of discourse itself, and therefore it can be analysed only by a non-participant. Thus, Chéjter and Hercovich can describe the differences between the discourses of the various categories of people interviewed without deciding who is right or wrong. What is interesting is rather the cultural reality created by the discourses.

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[17] Discourse, as used by Chéjter and Hercóvich, means approximately patterns of speech or recurrent ideas and ways of expressing them, in relation to a certain theme.

[18] There are some feminists who believe that there is a certain essence to sex, something which is universally given and cannot be altered. This is the essentialist position. Its opposite is the constructivist position which says that everything, or almost everything, that we see as pertaining to one sex and not the other is a result of culture and social organisation, ie that sex is really gender, something constructed by human beings. Of course, all essentialists also think that **some** portions of gender are constructed, and all constructivists recognise a minimum biological given. The positions are relative.

To place the discourse in a wider context, the authors describe the background of the situation in Argentina: the democratisation process, which began in 1983, included many basic debates, some of which were important for gender issues, such as the one on divorce. But no attention was paid to the problem of rape because the Church was against such a discussion. The laws regarding rape have been unchanged for sixty years. The alliance between the Church and the military has been especially harmful from 1966 on, the authors say, and now it is precisely from these quarters that one hears talk about how democratisation entails weaker morals, less personal security, etc.

How, then, do people talk about rape in Argentina today?

The discourse of the law: According to Argentinian law, rape is the most serious offence after homicide, and it is the most difficult one to prove. Thus almost all cases end with the accused man being absolved. Most accusations of rape are not believed. This shows, Chéjter and Hercovich say, that the system deals with the problem of a serious crime which is difficult to prove by declaring the offense non-existent.

The psychological discourse: Psychology works with a dichotomy of normal/pathological. Rape is a violent act, and since it does not conform to the model of normal sexuality, it cannot be spoken of within the discourse of the sexual. Rape is simply violence. But there is also another dichotomy that is central for the psychologists, that of conscious/unconscious. Therefore they must speak cautiously. They are not sure of the nature of what they are talking about nor about the truthfulness of the victims. They interpret the victim's discourse as a result of a traumatic situation. If there is power, then there must be a will that is overpowered, and the victim's unconscious desire might mean that what happens is not rape at all. The psychologists relativise the victim. True, they do not place any guilt at all on the possible unconscious desire. But where there is doubt, there is also room for justification. The psychologists say, for example, that this issue is after all a secondary one.

The religious discourse: The priests relate rape to religious laws. They can have absolute certainty, since they believe their words originate in sacred knowledge. Religious words therefore legitimate and govern all human beings. We are all victims of lust, so victims and rapists alike are both guilty and innocent. Both merit compassion. Rape has to do with sexuality and with power. There is a male-dominant order that oppresses women, and women resign themselves to this. This discourse is paternal and consoling. It is based on mythical images of women and men, in the context of which it is difficult to differentiate rape from sexuality. And if rape is to be considered a perversity, there are worse ones, the priests think.

The medical discourse: Clinical medicine asserts its limited responsibility. Doctors cure bodies, not souls. They also consider it outside their professional competence to give the minute description of signs of violence that the lawyers

request. Most doctors lack knowledge of legal medicine. They see rape as a disaster or an accident. What they can do is only to alleviate the consequences. How do they define rape? They follow the legal definition and say that it is a sexual act executed with violence. Men have a potent sexuality; the sexuality of women depends on that of men. Although the conventional model of sexuality is that women are passive, in the context of rape they are interpreted as being active, either because they provoke it or because they resist it. If they feel pleasure, there is no rape by definition. A victim is defined by the marks on her body. But the medical discourse is paternalist and protective, it does not define the woman as guilty and does not require her story to be credible.

The discourse of social work: Social workers speak compassionately about women as victims, weak and impotent. Rape is a "natural" consequence of a social order that certainly victimises both men and women, although not in the same way. Social workers see rape as a violent attack, the extreme form of social victimisation. The only thing left to do after the fact is to listen and try to understand.

The victims and their families: This discourse speaks of the attack, of fear, of violence and of all the practical circumstances around the event, but it does not mention the genital meeting. This silence can be understood by its contrast. The narratives include desperation, pain and so on, but also a strong desire, the will to manage the situation, the will to live.
"(The victim) is not a passive woman, but a woman who thinks and calculates, who registers the smallest details, who sharpens her senses to be able to catch the slightest sign of anything that might enable her to find a gap where she can recognise herself and not have to accept nor have to surrender her own desire totally" (p 93).

All the categories interviewed have in common a legal concept of "power" as something someone "has" and can exercise over someone else. Doctors, psychologists and lawyers speak of rape as a case of someone forcing his will on someone else. Priests and social workers speak of oppression. In both discourses the woman is seen as the centre of the discourse. For some she is to blame, for others she is an absolute victim. Those who speak of enforced will say that if the woman has not agreed, this must be proven by her resistance, and only if she resists can the relationship of power be defined as rape. Those who speak of oppression concentrate not on the act of rape itself but on the conditions that make a woman submit. There is very little talk about the rapists. What knowledge there is, is about the victims.

What the victim reveals in her discourse is what determines whether rape is thought to have occurred or not: her words and/or signs of violence on her body are necessary but not sufficient proof. This is true of all the analysed discourses except that of the victims themselves.

The victims express demands, of course, based on their own need to be believed, to obtain medical help and legal assistance. Expressing such demands is difficult for them, since the cultural image of rape and of women and men and their relationships is shared by all, even by these women. However, there is a gap. The women show in numerous ways that they experience strong tensions between what they say and what their own senses tell them, on the one hand, and on the other what they believe the listener can understand. This situation makes them feel, intimately and strongly, how effective the dominant attitude toward rape is. Yet they cannot help participating in the social discourse style, while they question it and even undermine it. This makes it close to impossible to speak. The dominant discourse about rape has it that the women do not want to speak, they are afraid or ashamed. Actually, all feel a strong need to talk, but they hesitate: what can they tell and to whom?

Apart from the political centrality of its theme from a feminist perspective and its theoretical sophistication, this study also includes an effort to make academic research useful to its objects of study. The authors experiment with consciousness-raising encounters and activities to divulge the results.

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