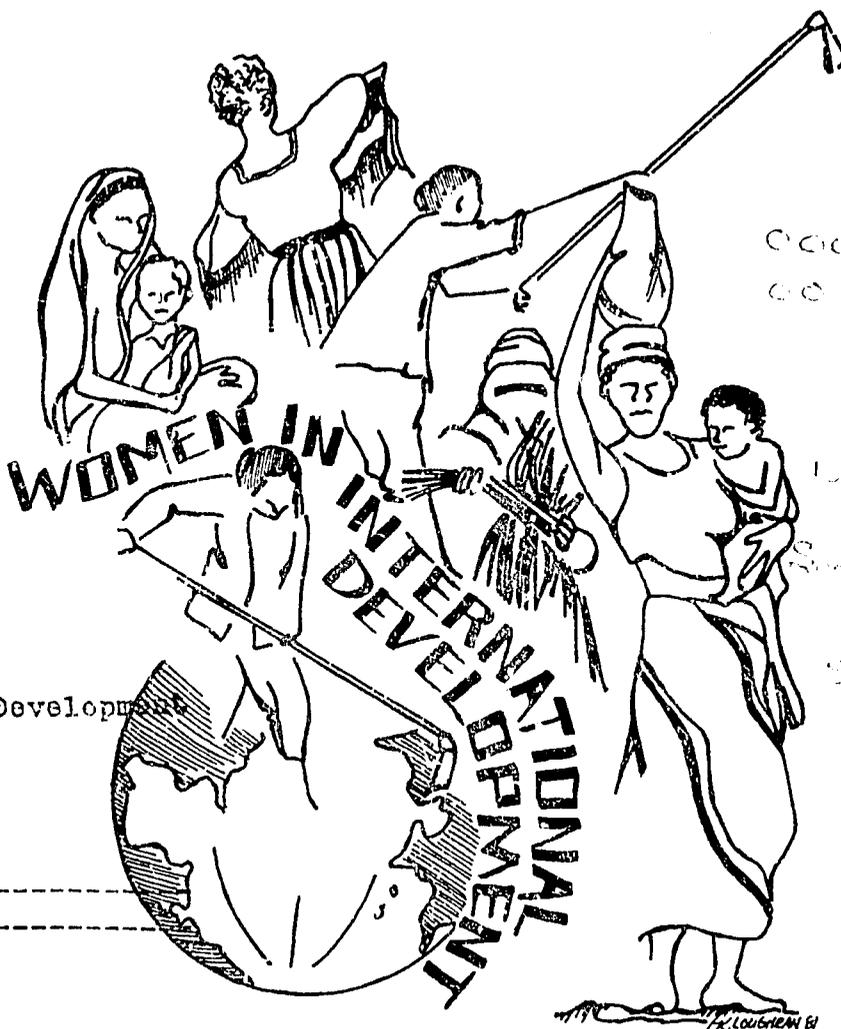


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THE SEPARATION OF WOMEN'S REMUNERATED  
AND HOUSEHOLD WORK: THEORETICAL  
PERSPECTIVES ON "WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT"

by

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Abstract: A major assumption of modernization theory, the perspective which has directed U. S. development policy in recent decades, is that socioeconomic development leads to women's equality, liberation, and material well-being. While socialist-feminist sociologists have repeatedly challenged this thesis, they have yet to present a comprehensive, empirically grounded theory of women in developing societies. On the presumption that a fruitful starting point for such a theory is the separation of women's remunerated from household work, this paper outlines these two contrasting perspectives on this process and suggests a research paradigm for studying women's roles in Third World societies.

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Although women comprise fifty percent of the world's adult population and represent one-third of the official labor force, they perform almost two-thirds of all working hours and receive only one-tenth of the total world income (United Nations, 1980:7). The substantial majority of the female wage earners are employed in a limited number of occupations entailing low levels of skill, responsibility, and remuneration (United Nations, 1976:18). Throughout the world, women's rates of un- and under-employment tend to be substantially higher than those for their male counterparts in the same social class (ICRW:1980a:63-65). This situation is especially likely to entail hardships for women in Third World nations, where economic and demographic changes accompanying the development process are leading to overpopulation, inflation, and widespread poverty.

Traditional explanations for these consistent patterns have stressed personal and cultural factors that limit the supply of qualified women to fill the occupational roles most needed by their societies (ICRW, 1980a:26). Thus, for example, conflicting familial and child care responsibilities, sex-role socialization defining women's primary roles as wives and mothers, and inadequate education and training are seen to limit women's aspirations and qualifications to enter and to remain in the labor force. These conventional analyses are increasingly being challenged by alternative explanations emphasizing social structural or "demand-side" factors. Structural constraints to women's labor force participation are presumed to include rigidly segregated labor markets, overly rapid population growth, and a scarcity of stable, adequately remunerated jobs. The paucity of detailed, comparative studies linking these and other factors to women's labor force participation makes it difficult to select between these competing hypotheses on empirical grounds.<sup>1</sup>

These alternative explanations of women's employment patterns derive from two contrasting theoretical perspectives on women in international development. Modernization theory and its offshoot, developmentalism, tend to emphasize factors that limit the supply of female labor; marxist feminist theory, by contrast, tends to stress factors that restrict the demand for women in the labor force. While these two perspectives are based on radically different values and images of society, fundamental to their analyses of how socioeconomic development affects women's economic status and roles is a common assumption: "Modernization," industrialization, and/or the spread of capitalism leads to an increasing division between women's remunerated work in the market or public sphere and their unpaid work in the household or private sphere. Although the two theories offer contrasting analyses of the causes of this separation and its consequences for women's well-being, their common focus on this process provides a point of reference for analyzing women's work and its relation to socioeconomic development. Such an analysis could lay the groundwork for constructing a synthetic theory of women's work which draws upon propositions from both the marxian and modernization perspectives. Such a goal is clearly beyond the scope of the present paper. Its more modest aim is to suggest a possible direction for future theoretical and empirical analyses of women's work in developing societies by (1) detailing the two contrasting perspectives on the separation of women's remunerated from household work; and (2) presenting a framework outlining the type of information necessary for a comprehensive understanding of women's economic roles.

## Modernization Theory

Although modernization theorists rarely focus primarily on women, most would agree that modernization improves the status and increases the well-being of women (and men) over that obtaining in nonmodern or "traditional" societies (Lewis, 1969:12; Moore, 1965:89; Smelser, 1970:37). Life in "traditional" societies is assumed to constrain women's autonomy and options in various ways. The patriarchal structure underpinning pre-modern society is seen as subordinating women to male authority figures within the family and the village (Lerner, 1958:99). Not only are women barred from positions of power and influence, but the rigid sex-based division of labor and the emphasis on ascription as a determinant of social status presumably prevent women from freely choosing their economic roles and activities (Hoselitz, 1970:18-19). Traditional customs and laws that exclude women from ownership and control of property are assumed to limit their access to the means of production and to minimize their control over the fruits of their labor. Further, the low level of technological sophistication dooms women, whose work in the fields and in the household contributes substantially to their families' subsistence, to a lifetime of drudgery.

Proponents of modernization theory view socioeconomic development as entailing a series of related structural and cultural transformations. At the root of these changes is "structural differentiation," which Smelser (1970:35) defines as:

the process through which one social role or organization differentiates into two or more roles or organizations which function more effectively in the new historical circumstances. The new social units are structurally distinct from each other, but taken together are functionally equivalent to the original unit.

Structural differentiation, which presumably both arises from and propels the evolution of a social system toward increasing complexity, leads to an ever more elaborate division of labor among increasingly specialized roles.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps the most fundamental aspect of this process is the differentiation of the "workplace" from the "household" and the increasing separation of the family from the contexts of socially valued production. The family in "traditional" society performs virtually all activities necessary for social life (Smelser, 1960:37). Its functions include the production and consumption of material goods, the reproduction and socialization of new generations, and the provision of security, health care, and other social services to family members. With increasing structural differentiation, responsibility for production is transferred from the family to the modern farm, firm, and factory (Smelser, 1970:37; Goode, 1970:242-43). Specialized agencies such as the education system, the mass media, and the medical establishment assume other duties of the traditional family. Although this loss of functions transforms the structure and composition of the family, it nevertheless remains the basic unit of modern society, retaining primary responsibility for consumption, procreation, and the emotional gratification of its members (Moore, 1965: 87-89; Smelser, 1970:37).

Proponents of modernization theory would agree that these structural changes produce a monogamous nuclear family within which familial roles are redefined: The sex-based economic division of labor is reformulated to correspond to the division between the household and the workplace. The husband becomes the primary breadwinner, sustaining the family economically with wages earned outside the home (Smelser, 1970:37; Parsons, 1954:94-95). The wife is entrusted with the efficient management of the household, translating externally-earned income into family sustenance. Women also assume primary responsibility for raising children and providing love and affection to family members (Moore, 1965:86-88; Smelser, 1970:37; Parsons, 1954:94). The modern wife thus acquires her own sphere, the household, over which she presumably has considerable autonomy and decision-making control vis-a-vis her husband (Parsons, 1954:95). Moreover, the tendency for "modern" couples to set up separate households from their extended family furthers the wife's independence (Goode, 1970:239).

Although the household comes to be defined as women's primary sphere, this development does not, according to modernization theory, substantially limit women's opportunities for employment outside the home. To the contrary, a number of changes associated with socioeconomic development are assumed to expand women's range of options for labor force participation (see Little, 1976:79). Increasing structural differentiation presumably leads to a proliferation of specialized occupations in the secondary and tertiary sectors of the modernizing economy, thus expanding the range of employment opportunities for women as well as men (Smelser, 1970:36; Hoselitz, 1970:19). Socioeconomic development also supposedly transforms the stratification system from a rigid, bifurcated "caste" system permitting little mobility between status positions, into a fluid, multi-strata "class" system that allows frequent upward and downward movement among strata (Moore, 1965:94; Smelser, 1970:40). Men's and women's statuses and roles cease being ascribed to them on the basis of innate characteristics and become instead the results of personal achievements (Eisenstadt, 1966:38; Smelser, 1970:40; Tumin, 1969:225-229). As skill, interest, and training replace gender as the major determinants of social roles and statuses (Eisenstadt, 1966:38; Hoselitz, 1970:17-20), women presumably gain access to a variety of economic roles outside the home (Moore, 1965:89; Goode, 1970:243). Modern norms emphasizing individual achievement are expected to free women to improve their status through hard work, educational attainment, or wise investment. Accompanying these economic changes, the argument continues, are various juridical and legislative reforms that remove traditional barriers to women's employment.

Although modernization theorists seldom directly address empirical issues of women's employment, their approach is consistent with those of the Status Attainment Theory of social stratification and the Human Capital School of neoclassical economics.<sup>3</sup> Proponents of these perspectives attribute women's employment to education, occupational training and experience, sex role socialization, and other personal characteristics that influence women's occupational choices and determine their competitiveness within the labor market (Sokoloff, 1979:5-6).

According to modernization theory, once a society has achieved a certain level of socioeconomic development, women's relatively low rates of labor force participation and their predominance in certain occupations are not due primarily to a shortage of employment opportunities. Instead

these patterns are generally attributed to factors that limit the supply of qualified women in the labor force (Hoselitz, 1970:170; Anderson, 1970:264-266; Moore, 1970:319-320)<sup>4</sup>. Since women tend to view the household as their primary sphere of responsibility, they often choose not to enter or to leave the workforce in order to concentrate their time and energy on childcare and homemaking activities (Parsons, 1954:94). It is assumed that this decision often reflects a preference for the temporal flexibility and autonomy of the homemaker role in contrast to the more regimented and more closely supervised work of the industrial or service employee. Also, since economic growth presumably leads to an increasingly affluent society, the wages or salary of the primary breadwinner are often sufficient for family maintenance. Such affluence presumably reduces the number of women who must earn an income in order to supplement family finances (Goode, 1970:242; Parsons, 1954:94-95).

The underrepresentation of women in better-paid, more prestigious professional and skilled occupations is assumed to reflect a shortage of qualified, interested women (see ICRW, 1980b:2). Modern labor markets presumably afford men and women equal opportunity to compete for jobs that are allocated on the basis of personal qualifications and skills (see Sokoloff, 1979:5). However, since women's socialization tends to emphasize marital and familial, as opposed to occupational, roles, many women do not internalize achievement-oriented values or develop aspirations for professional careers. Similarly, they are less likely than men to avail themselves of educational or training opportunities that could prepare them for top-level jobs. Further, since most women participate in the labor force as secondary wage earners whose primary obligations are to their homes and families, they tend to enter and leave their jobs as familial and child-rearing responsibilities dictate. This makes it difficult for women to acquire the seniority, experience, and competence necessary for promotions and salary increases. Such frequent turnover also makes employers reluctant to hire women for responsible positions. Thus, although socio-economic development presumably expands the range of employment options for men and women, women often have neither the qualifications nor the desire to take advantage of these opportunities. In sum, modernization theory would tend to explain the prevailing patterns of women's labor force participation in developing and industrialized societies with reference to "supply side" factors.

Several logical flaws pervade modernization theory's analysis of women's employment. The claim that with modernization achievement replaces ascription as a determinant of roles and statuses implies an obvious contradiction: If, as modernization theorists admit, gender remains a key dimension of the economic division of labor in modern society, then an ascribed characteristic (gender) continues to be a primary criterion for allocating social roles. To the extent that a society has a sex-based division of labor, women's economic roles are as or more likely to be determined by their gender as by their own personal achievements. A second contradiction is implicit in the argument that women are free to enter and remain in the labor force despite the presence of cultural norms defining the household as women's primary sphere. Clearly, sex-role socialization defining women's predominant roles as wives and mothers constrains their choice of occupational roles. The anticipation that job-related responsibilities may conflict with familial duties often makes even strongly career-oriented women hesitant to seek or to prepare themselves for employment outside the home. Further, male sex roles, which define masculinity in terms of a man's

ability to provide for his wife and children, often lead men to resist their wives' desires to participate in the labor force (Little, 1976:82).

Critics of modernization theory have mustered considerable empirical evidence challenging its conception of women's work in developing societies. Although their numerous arguments cannot be summarized here, two are particularly relevant to the present discussion. First, modernization theory's emphasis on the monogamous, nuclear family as the universal or modal form in nontraditional society neglects the fact that approximately thirty percent of the world's households are headed by women (ICRW, 1980a:3). Most of these women must seek waged employment in order to support themselves and their families (Papanek, 1976:58). A growing body of evidence links female-headed households to rural-to-urban migration, seasonal and marginal employment of males, and other factors that have tended to accompany socioeconomic development in many Third World societies (ICRW, 1980a:4).

Second, in many developing societies, a substantial proportion of women in stable heterosexual relationships are forced by economic necessity to work outside the home. Many lower-class families could not subsist upon a single income and thus require the woman's wages for their economic survival (Safa, 1977:23; Arizpe, 1977:37). Similarly, spiraling inflation in many nations of the world is propelling middle class women into the labor force in order to maintain their families' standard of living. In sum, the assumption that most women need not work to provide for themselves and their families does not correspond to women's actual economic situation in many Third World nations.

In response to criticisms such as these, some social scientists have attempted to reformulate modernization theory so that it better reflects the reality of women's work in developing societies. One product of these efforts is "developmentalism," which confronts many issues that modernization theory fails to address (see Elliott, 1977:4-5). Central to developmentalism is the thesis that modernization entails costs as well as benefits and that the impacts of social and cultural changes are unevenly distributed throughout different sectors of society. Certain disadvantaged groups such as women, minorities, and the poor tend to bear a disproportionate share of the burdens of socioeconomic development (Tinker, 1976:22; Youssef, 1976:72). In Latin America, Africa, and Asia, modernization has entailed a number of changes that have usurped women's productive roles and have threatened their material well-being (Boserup, 1970:53-65).

Proponents of this perspective hold that processes of planned and unplanned development have frequently led to a loss of traditional roles that gave women autonomy, influence, and resource access (Tinker, 1976:25). Women are responsible for a substantial proportion of subsistence production in hunting-and-gathering and horticultural societies (Blumberg, 1976:13; Palmer, 1979:90). With the transformation of these economies from subsistence to market production systems, men have become the primary producers of cash crops (Mead, 1976:9). In part, this change is attributed to the diffusion of European ideologies that define agricultural and other forms of market production as men's work (Boserup, 1970:53; Tinker, 1976:33). In part, this change also reflects the fact that colonial and subsequent administrations tended to introduce new varieties of seed, fertilizer, and other production-enhancing technologies to men rather than to women (Boserup, 1970:55; Tinker, 1976:23). Further, as agricultural mechanization and increased concentration of land ownership have led many people

to lose their rights to the land, men have been more likely than women to find waged work as agricultural laborers.

Developmentalists agree that this erosion of women's agricultural roles has not "freed" the majority of women for full-time roles as homemakers and childrearers (Youssef, 1976:71). Men's increasing involvement in cash crop production has often left women with the responsibility for producing subsistence crops to feed their families.<sup>5</sup> Further, as men have migrated to cities or large commercial farms in search of waged employment, women have often remained behind to till the soil and to manage the farm (Elmendorf, 1976:90). Many rural women have taken up marketing or small-scale production to supplement family incomes. Others have migrated to jobs in domestic service, petty trading, or other occupations within the "informal sector" of the urban economy (Arizpe, 1977:29, Jelin, 1979:68). Most women must perform these subsistence and income-generating activities in addition to their domestic tasks within the household. This usually requires an extension of a woman's workday to accommodate the responsibilities of her "double burden" (Palmer, 1979:91-2; Huston, 1979:64). The psychological and physical costs of this expansion of women's already heavy work load are often considerable. The inability of women to balance successfully conflicting domestic and employment demands can lead to absenteeism, reduced earning capacity, intermittent exits from the active labor force, and other behaviors that are often interpreted to reflect a lack of job commitment (ICRW, 1980a:55).

The empirically-grounded work of many developmentalists has provided much-needed insights into women's economic roles in developing societies. By drawing attention to social structural and cultural factors underlying women's problematic work situation, developmentalists depart from many modernization theorists' propensity to focus narrowly on individual characteristics and personal choices.

Nevertheless, the developmentalist tendency to explain women's employment patterns with reference to "supply side" factors and to stress the duality of women's household and remunerated work limits developmentalists' forays beyond the analytical confines established by modernization theory.<sup>6</sup> Their explanations of the prevailing patterns of women's labor force participation rely heavily on traditional patriarchal values (reinforced by contact with Western culture) that limit women's qualifications for achieving employment parity with men (see Chinchilla, 1977:39). The expansion of women's already-heavy workloads, the need for women to assume the "double burden" of familial and job-related responsibilities, and the marginalization of women from agricultural and industrial production are often assumed to reflect the persistence of conventional sex-role stereotypes. Norms that attribute to women all responsibility for childcare and household management while holding men accountable for the financial support of the family presumably limit women's education and training, lower their employment aspirations, reduce the time and energy available for extra-domestic work, and restrict women's access to technology and credit. As a result, women are unable to compete successfully with men for employment opportunities within the labor market (see, for example, Boserup, 1970:97; Little, 1976:80-82; Papanek, 1976:56, 58; Huston, 1979:59-66). However, developmentalists are less likely to question whether the range and number of occupational alternatives are sufficient to accommodate large numbers of qualified women seeking paid employment. Instead they tend to accept the assumption of modernization theory that industrialization,

urbanization, and structural differentiation eventually expand opportunities for qualified persons to find work in the "modern" manufacturing and service sectors (see, e.g., Little, 1976:86). Thus, women's relatively low rates of labor force participation and their concentration in certain occupations are generally attributed not to an inadequate demand for labor but, rather, to conflicting familial responsibilities, women's inadequate motivation and training, cultural stereotypes confining women to "feminine" roles, and other factors that presumably place women at a competitive disadvantage in the labor market (ICRW, 1980b:2-3).

An alternative explanation of women's employment patterns might question whether a society can consistently provide enough jobs to meet men's and women's needs for stable employment. If prevailing economic conditions fail to supply sufficient occupational opportunities, even highly qualified and motivated workers will experience un- and underemployment. In order for such a system to avoid political unrest and widespread material hardship, an arrangement will be needed that cushions the blow of unemployment and reduces the size of the labor force. Proponents of marxist theory employ this perspective for advanced and developing capitalist societies to explain women's work. The following section focuses upon their analysis.

### Marxist Feminist Theory

Proponents of marxist feminist theory maintain that the status of women has deteriorated with the spread of a market-based, capitalist economy. According to this view, in pre-class societies in which women shared with men the responsibility for transforming collectively-owned resources into socially useful goods and services, women had substantial autonomy over decisions relevant to their productive activities (Leacock, 1975:34). The reciprocal division of labor between the sexes within the communal household afforded women considerable economic independence (Leacock, 1975:33). Further, the tendency for descent and inheritance patterns to be reckoned along female lines augmented women's prestige and resource access (Engels, 1975:113).

Most marxist feminist theorists agree that the development of class society, two cornerstones of which are private property and the monogamous family, has led to the subjugation of women by men.<sup>7</sup> Once material resources ceased being held collectively and became personal property monopolized by members of the upper classes, a mechanism was needed to ensure the transmission of accumulated wealth to subsequent generations of the elite. The monogamous family performed this role by harnessing women's capacity for biological reproduction in order to produce "legitimate" heirs (Engels, 1975:122). With the transition from matrilineal to patrilineal descent systems, entry into a marital union gave a man the "right" to offspring resulting from the union. Monogamous marriage enabled him to ensure his paternity by monopolizing his wife's sexual activity (Engels, 1975:125). Such an arrangement provided him with sons, to whom he could bequeath his property, and daughters, whose arranged marriages could strengthen his linkages to other upper-class families. In this way monogamy, by controlling women's biological reproduction, enabled the upper class to consolidate and maintain its monopoly of wealth and power. This family form also became the means through which individual men came to subordinate women in their roles as wives and daughters. As Engels (1975:120-21) puts it:

The overthrow of mother right was the world historical defeat of the female sex (Italics his). The man took command of the home also; the woman was degraded and reduced to servitude; she became the slave of his lust and a mere instrument for the production of children.

The ascendancy of capitalism as the dominant mode of production in a society increasingly organized into isolated nuclear families presumably led to a bifurcation of the "public" and "private" spheres of social and economic activity. In precapitalist society, in which the family was firmly embedded in the communally-organized kinship network, subsistence production and other household activities were performed collectively by female and male members of the clan (Leacock, 1975:33). Household activities, like other forms of socially valued production, assumed a "public" character because they served the community as a whole (Engels, 1975:137). As the transition to capitalism undermined collective property ownership and isolated the family from the communal kin group, women's socially necessary labor was transformed into a private service (Leacock, 1975:41). The sexual division of labor within the monogamous family corresponded to a separation between a "public" context of production and a "private" context of reproduction and consumption (Engels, 1975:137; Leacock, 1975:33; Benston, 1969:18; Deere, 1979:27). Goods produced in the public sphere became commodities to be exchanged for consumption in the private sphere. Production was expropriated from the family and allocated to the commercial farm or factory, where it could occur more efficiently (Smith, 1975:57). Men were transformed into laborers, producing surplus value for which they were paid wages that supported themselves and their families economically. Women became consumption workers, exchanging their husbands' income at the marketplace for commodities essential to their family's subsistence (Weinbaum and Bridges, 1979:193). Thus, women assumed the responsibility for reproducing the labor force in two ways: In addition to bearing and socializing new generations of workers, they serviced and nurtured their husbands to permit their continued labor. This arrangement benefitted the capitalist system in a number of ways. By relegating women to the household as unpaid domestic workers, a vast range of socially-necessary services could be utilized without reducing profits or investment capital. At the same time, by making individual men responsible for supporting their wives and families, men were afforded little choice but to sell their labor under exploitive and often harsh working conditions (Leacock, 1975:42; Smith, 1975:68).

Proponents of this perspective agree that the separation of the masculine world of public production from the feminine world of private service has lowered women's status in society and has led to their subordination in the home. A woman's isolation from the contexts of socially valued production and her resulting economic dependence upon her husband affords her little material basis for authority within the family (Smith, 1975:71; de Miranda, 1977:262). Further, since her household activities do not produce exchangeable commodities, a woman's domestic tasks are not considered "work" (Eisenstein, 1979:30; Smith, 1975:68).<sup>8</sup> In a capitalist society that evaluates individuals according to their contribution to commodity production, a woman's confinement to the domestic sphere offers few opportunities for enhancing her social status (Eisenstein, 1979:30; Benston, 1969:16).

Although the sexual division of labor that reflects the public-private dichotomy does not, the argument continues, prevent women from entering paid employment, it severely limits the conditions under which women may participate in the labor force. The segregation of labor markets according to culturally-determined definitions of "men's" and "women's" jobs restricts women's access to better-paying, high status occupations (de Miranda, 1977:266; Chinchilla, 1977:54). Women tend to be "ghettoized" in jobs involving personal services, textile or food production, or other activities that are extensions of their domestic roles as housewives. Such positions are typically poorly remunerated and offer their incumbents little prestige or decision-making power (Eisenstein, 1979:30; Saffioti, 1975:81; Leacock, 1979:8).

A key thesis of marxist feminist theory is that women constitute a reserve labor supply to be drawn into and expelled from the labor market according to the needs of the capitalist system (Benston, 1969:21; Saffioti, 1975:passim). On the one hand, women constitute a latent labor reserve that expands and contracts as commodity production replaces subsistence production or as technological innovations change the organic composition of capital (Simeral, 1978:166). On the other hand, the level of women's labor force participation varies considerably with the cyclical fluctuations of the capitalist economy and the resulting variations in the system's demand for labor (Simeral, 1978:166-167; Saffioti, 1975:88). The absorption of women into the labor force during wartime or periods of economic growth enables the capitalist class to maintain acceptable levels of production without being forced to raise wages in response to labor shortages. Conversely, when economic recessions reduce the system's labor needs, women are expelled from the labor force to assume full-time domestic activities in the household (Benston, 1969:21; Saffioti, 1975:88; Simeral, 1978:168). While men may also constitute a reserve labor force, the cultural conception that women's sphere is the household makes them especially vulnerable to the exigencies of the labor market. Women are seen--and are socialized to view themselves--as temporary or transient employees whose primary responsibilities are to their homes and families (Benston, 1969:21). As a result, women tend to develop a fundamental ambivalence toward their occupational roles that makes them willing to work under unstable or temporary conditions (Saffioti, 1975:83). The "cult of the home" thus facilitates the movement of large numbers of women into and out of the labor force without leading to political instability or jeopardizing the efficient functioning of the economy.

Many marxist feminist theorists argue that women's economic marginality is exacerbated in Third World nations on the "periphery" of the world capitalist system, where a combination of factors have led to an oversupply of labor relative to the availability of employment opportunities (Saffioti, 1975:79-83; de Miranda, 1977:263). These societies' colonial experience has left a legacy of political and economic dependence upon the more advanced capitalist "centers" in North America and Western Europe.<sup>9</sup> Such dependency has led to the underdevelopment of productive infrastructures, foreign ownership of land and other resources, a shortage of domestic capital, and other conditions that have limited economic growth. The highly specialized, export-oriented nature of production and the high level of foreign investment in many of these societies makes them especially vulnerable to international market

fluctuations. Mechanization of agriculture and increasing concentration of land ownership has displaced workers from subsistence production. Yet, the capital-intensive nature of manufacturing has limited alternative employment opportunities in industry. While these and other factors have combined to restrict the demand for labor, spiraling urban and rural population growth is rapidly increasing the number of persons seeking waged work. These trends have resulted in high levels of un- and underemployment of the labor force.

Although males as well as females have suffered the economic consequences of these processes, proponents of this perspective agree that the resulting shortage of employment opportunities has particularly disadvantaged women (Saffioti, 1975:89; Chinchilla, 1977:50, 54-55). Patriarchal norms stressing women's domestic roles have led employers to reserve scarce jobs in the modern formal sectors for the male labor force. Many women have been forced into the already-swollen "informal" sector to assume jobs in domestic service or petty commodity production or circulation, while others have engaged in subsistence agriculture (Arizpe, 1977:25-26; Chinchilla, 1977:50). Since the relative labor surplus in peripheral economies enables employers to keep men's wages at or below subsistence levels, women's food-raising activities are frequently critical to family survival (Deere, 1976:10). Thus, while a substantial proportion of Third World women must work to furnish or supplement family incomes, the limited demand for labor combines with patriarchal ideologies to confine women within marginal occupations.

To summarize, marxist feminist analyses of women's labor force participation in capitalist societies tend to emphasize structural factors that determine the demand for female labor. Integral to the functioning of the capitalist system is the separation of production from reproduction and the bifurcation of the public and private spheres of social life. The resulting sexual division of labor presumably confines women to the household or isolates them in segregated occupations affording little prestige, power, or resource access. Women constitute a labor reserve to be drawn into and forced out of the occupational structure as cyclical and long-term economic processes condition the capitalist system's labor needs. Women's employment options are particularly restricted in Third World nations, where demographic and economic conditions coalesce to limit the economy's demand for labor relative to the numbers of men and women seeking work.

The ideology that defines women's primary roles as wives and mothers is seen by marxist feminists as reflecting and reinforcing the social relationships that maintain the capitalist economy (Eisenstein, 1979; Saffioti, 1975:81). It reconciles women to their unremunerated work in the home so that they reproduce the labor force at minimal economic and political cost to the capitalist system. This ideology is also assumed to make women so ambivalent about their roles as workers that they are willing to enter the workforce when needed and to exit when their labor is superfluous (Saffioti, 1975:83). In sum, while it may appear that a woman's participation in household and/or remunerated work is a product of her own volition, her "choice" actually stems from material and ideological factors that condition and define her work role and employment opportunities (Benston, 1969:16; Smith, 1975:57).

## Analysis

The preceding discussion reveals several fundamental points of contrast between the modernization and marxist feminist perspectives on women's work and its relation to socioeconomic development. Proponents of modernization theory consider life in "traditional" societies to limit women's resource access, decision-making power, and work role options. They claim that modernization improves women's situation by expanding their occupational choices and by increasing their material security. Advocates of marxist feminist theory, on the other hand, hold that women's well-being deteriorates with the advent of class-based, capitalist society. Whereas women are presumably equal partners in the egalitarian, communal economy of preclass society, their transformation into private household workers under capitalism divorces them from commodity production and thus limits their autonomy and social standing. Thus, while modernization theorists expect development to increase women's freedom to play a variety of roles with and outside the home, marxist feminist theorists hold that such changes subordinate women within the private sphere and restrict their employment opportunities. The former perspective to a large extent explains female labor force participation in terms of individual choices and preferences; the latter theory emphasizes structural factors over which women have little control. Modernization theory tends to attribute women's inability to enter and to remain in remunerated employment to factors that limit the supply of qualified and interested female workers. Marxist feminist theory emphasizes instead conditions that restrict the capitalist system's demand for female labor.

Pervading these contrasting analyses are several common assumptions. Both theories underscore the importance of the monogamous nuclear family for conditioning women's work in advanced capitalist societies. Each assumes that modernization and/or capitalism lead to a separation between the private context of household service and the public context of productive work. Each also assumes a sexual division of labor that allocates women to the former and men to the latter sphere. Both theories stress the importance of sex-role socialization for perpetuating these divisions in a manner that reduces women's labor force participation. Further, each considers women's primary commitment to domestic roles to be critical to the functioning of "modern" capitalist society.

Although both theories contain important insights, neither adequately explains the complex reality of women's work in developing societies. Marxist feminist theory offers a more realistic appraisal of the structural conditions that constrain women's employment options; however, it sheds little light on the social psychological dynamics underlying women's occupational choices. Yet, although modernization theory does not neglect individual volition, it glosses over the role of gender stratification in maintaining women's inequality within the home and in the labor force. Accordingly, a synthetic theory integrating propositions from the developmentalist variant of modernization theory into the marxist feminist framework could increase our understanding of women's work roles in developing nations.

An adequate explanation of women's labor force participation should make reference to both "supply" and "demand" factors. Indeed, these are

but two faces of the same process through which women are attracted into and excluded from the labor force. The needs of the market economy to maintain optimal production levels and profit margins, given particular technological, political, and economic circumstances, determine its demand for female labor. "Supply factors" are the mechanisms through which members of the female labor reserve are absorbed into or expelled from the occupational structure. Ideologies such as the "feminine mystique" mediate between the system's labor needs and women's decisions to enter or to leave the labor force. Socialization into feminine sex roles tends to restrict women's career aspirations, to minimize their achievement-orientation, and to prevent them from acquiring the training and skills essential for many occupations. At the same time, however, such socialization prepares women to enter the labor force temporarily at "appropriate" stages of their life cycles to supplement family finances when necessary or to minimize wartime labor shortages. Thus, while women tend to define themselves primarily as wives and mothers, many embrace a secondary, albeit unstable, role as wage workers. This role ambiguity makes them willing to either enter paid employment or to assume full-time roles as housewives. For example, wartime mobilization or rapid economic growth may temporarily increase the economy's labor needs relative to the supply of female workers. Such labor shortages are rarely longlasting, however, because women's role ambivalence allows them to be coaxed into the labor force through mass media campaigns or the lure of adequately remunerated employment. When changing economic or political conditions reduce the demand for female labor, women can be induced to return to full-time domestic responsibilities without substantial resistance. Thus, the supply of female workers contracts to meet the system's constricted labor demands.

Culturally-defined sex roles also legitimate and maintain segregated labor markets that isolate women in "female" occupations. On the one hand, gender-role stereotyping restricts the demand for women to enter "masculine" occupations: Employers may prefer to leave jobs vacant rather than hire women. On the other hand, since most women are not likely to aspire to or to equip themselves for occupations that tend to be reserved for men, labor market segregation limits the supply of women qualified for such jobs (ICRW, 1980a:30).

Although developing nations may experience a scarcity of qualified labor for highly skilled occupations, their more pressing problem is usually a surplus of labor relative to employment opportunities. An oversupply of male workers tends to limit the demand for female labor and thus to restrict women's employment options (ICRW, 1980a:38). Sex-role stereotypes stressing women's domestic roles maintain and are used to justify discriminatory employment practices in the face of substantial male unemployment. Anticipation of limited occupational options makes women less likely than men to develop the motivations or to acquire the skills necessary for high-level jobs. Communities and families are understandably reluctant to invest scarce resources in girl's educations when most high-level jobs are reserved for men. Thus, in many Third World nations the low demand for female labor in many occupational sectors ultimately limits the supply of women qualified to assume such positions. As these considerations suggest, theoretical analyses restricted to either "demand" or "supply" side factors deflect attention from the reciprocal interactions among these two sets of influences.

The separation of the household from the public sphere of market-oriented production underlies the operation of both "supply" and "demand" factors as they condition women's employment. The physical and organizational isolation of the home from the workplace and the cultural norms that hold women responsible for maintaining the private sphere restrict the supply of women who desire and/or are qualified to enter the workforce. However, the need for such limitations on women's labor force participation stems from the inability of the economy to provide jobs for all sectors of the population. The household is a flexible structure that harbors members of the female labor reserve when their labor is superfluous, yet is able to release women for waged employment when necessary to meet the economy's expanded labor requirements.

It should be stressed, however, that the tendency of both marxist feminist and modernization theories to conceptualize the "household" and the "workplace" as dichotomous spheres may distort our understanding of women's economic roles. In reality, the separation between the two contexts is often neither as rigid nor as ubiquitous as the theories suggest. Many women who are seen (and define themselves) as full-time household workers actually engage in various income-generating activities to supplement family subsistence (Arizpe, 1977:33-35; Papanek, 1977:17). A woman may take in washing and ironing, supervise a neighbor's children, or prepare food items for sale. Such home-based activities are clearly not private services for family members; yet, because they are marginal to the market economy and do not directly produce surplus value, they are not considered "public" production. Perspectives bifurcating women's work into public production and private service may ignore the contribution of such income-generating activities to the economic well-being of women and their families. Nor can such dichotomies adequately account for the productive contributions women make as unpaid agricultural workers growing food for family subsistence. Too, these dichotomous concepts imply that women's numerous household tasks are nonproductive and cannot really be considered "work."

Underlying the public-private dichotomy is the assumption that women's familial responsibilities restrict their ability to enter and to remain in the labor force. Familial norms emphasizing nurturance and emotional support are seen to contradict the efficiency and task-orientation required at the workplace. Such an analysis neglects the family's important role as mediator between the fluctuating labor demands of the occupational structure and the constant subsistence needs of the individual. When a relative labor surplus causes many to lose their jobs, the family channels excess labor into subsistence or domestic production in order to meet its members' material needs. In this way the family minimizes the personal and political tensions that could accompany widespread unemployment. By harboring the labor reserve during economic downturns and crises, the family cushions against the dislocations of the market economy (Saffioti, 1975:92). In this way the family supports and complements, rather than competes against, the occupational structure.

The "work-home" dichotomy also implies the opposition between women's "private" roles as household managers and childrearers, and their "public" roles as wage workers. Yet, the fact that many women successfully balance domestic and job-related responsibilities indicates that these roles are not inherently contradictory. Saffioti (1975:88) argues that women's

domestic roles are continually redefined so that large numbers of women can be maneuvered into and out of the labor force. During wartime or other periods of labor scarcity, socialization of childcare and household services can facilitate women's entrance into the labor force by lightening their domestic responsibilities. Alternatively, when economic recessions reduce the system's demand for female labor, women's subsistence and domestic activities expand to absorb their excess time and energy. The flexibility and complementarity among women's roles allows members of the female labor reserve considerable movement between the "public" and "private" spheres.

Such considerations suggest the need for reconceptualizing the "public-private" distinction. Rather than constituting dichotomous categories, these concepts might more accurately represent poles or ends of a continuum. Women's work could then be seen as a continuous series of productive activities ranging from private household service through temporary or marginal participation in the "informal sector," to full-time employment in the regular labor force. Movement of the female labor reserve along the continuum would reflect the level of demand for women's labor. Conceptualizing women's work in this manner would direct attention toward the numerous and varied productive contributions women make as private household workers. So, too, it would illustrate the fact that women's remunerated activities are often extensions of their domestic tasks. Such a conception would retain the insight that the sexual division of labor and the nature of social production change with the transition from pre-market to modern capitalist societies. Yet, it would accommodate the numerous combinations of subsistence and market-oriented production through which present-day Third World households adapt to economic conditions. It would also sensitize scholars to the need for reconceptualizing "work" to encompass the range of productive and reproductive tasks that occupy women in developed and developing societies.

A comprehensive theory of women's economic roles must be empirically grounded. In the absence of detailed, comparative data and empirically-verified hypotheses, theories may merely reiterate popular stereotypes and unquestioned value assumptions. Future studies of women's work should specify the personal and structural factors that affect the supply and demand for female labor. They should describe the activities that occupy women in the home and in the informal and formal sectors of the workforce. They should also analyze the effects of women's participation in the household and in the labor force on their political power, social status, and economic well-being. The following paradigm summarizes some types of information necessary for a thorough empirical assessment of women's work. It is not intended to represent a complete or comprehensive typology of relevant variables; rather, it suggests possible avenues for future research. Comparative data reflecting the linkages among these factors and processes would suggest ways to reformulate existing theories in order to provide a more comprehensive and accurate understanding of women's work and its relation to socioeconomic development.

TYPE OF INFORMATION NEEDED FOR ACCURATE PORTRAYAL  
OF WOMEN'S WORK IN THE THIRD WORLD

	Factors Affecting Allocation of Women into Productive Roles	Nature of Work	Consequences of Women's Productive Activities
Personal and Familial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"supply factors"</li> <li>-education, interest, aptitude</li> <li>-goals and aspirations</li> <li>-age, position in lifecycle</li> <li>-parents' socioeconomic status</li> <li>-rural vs. urban origin</li> <li>-ethnicity, race, religion</li> <li>-economic necessity</li> <li>-family composition</li> <li>-employment history</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-type of activity</li> <li>-work load, working conditions</li> <li>-independence/autonomy vs. supervision</li> <li>-place of work</li> <li>-isolation vs. interaction with other workers</li> <li>-ownership of factors of production</li> <li>-stability</li> <li>-compatibility with familial responsibilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-remuneration and rewards: income, prestige, power</li> <li>-self-concept</li> <li>-personal satisfaction</li> <li>-security</li> <li>-physical, mental disabilities/health</li> <li>-politicization/mobilization</li> <li>-authority within family</li> <li>-family well-being and security</li> </ul>
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-cultural norms regarding appropriate work for women</li> <li>-ecological factors</li> <li>-level of employment</li> <li>-degree of racial and ethnic stratification</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-value of activity-prestige, status</li> <li>-social context: isolation vs. interaction</li> <li>-ownership of workplace</li> <li>-degree of horizontal and vertical mobility in and out of job</li> <li>-sex segregation of occupation</li> <li>-organization/unionization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-class formation and identification</li> <li>-spatial distribution of labor force: rural-to-urban migration</li> <li>-organization of women's collectives, parties</li> </ul>
National and International	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"demand factors"</li> <li>-level of industrialization</li> <li>-degree of capitalist development</li> <li>-dominant mode of production</li> <li>-size of reserve army of labor</li> <li>-historical factors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-international and national division of labor</li> <li>-degree of foreign investment in economic sector</li> <li>-degree of regulation by state</li> <li>-provision of state-sponsored legal services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-foreign investment</li> <li>-development of infrastructure</li> <li>-labor market segmentation</li> <li>-change division of labor by sex, race, ethnicity</li> </ul>

Notes

1. Although research focusing on women's work is still in its infancy, the proliferation of studies during the past decade has greatly expanded the empirical literature. Significant contributions have been made by Boserup (1970), Youssef (1972), Chinchilla (1972), Arizpe (1977), de Miranda (1977), Clignet (1977), Saffioti (1975), and many others.
2. Stemming from the work of Durkheim (1933), the concept of structural differentiation has been elaborated by Parsons (1971), Levy (1966), and others. A comprehensive discussion of the process can be found in Smelser (1970).
3. A critical analysis of Status Attainment Theory is included in Sokoloff (1978).
4. For a detailed discussion of factors affecting the supply of female labor force participants, see International Center for Research on Women (1980).
5. An insightful discussion of women's subsistence production in Third World societies is contained in Deere (1976). Although Deere's analysis draws heavily upon Marxian theory, its thesis that women's subsistence agriculture is often critical for household survival is shared by many developmentalist theorists.
6. It should be stressed that while developmentalists' analyses of women's labor force participation tend to emphasize "supply" factors, some works within this tradition also underline the importance of "demand" factors. See, for example, Youssef (1976).
7. An ongoing debate in the leftist literature is between those who argue that capitalism is the major source of women's oppression, and others who claim that capitalism merely exacerbates women's disadvantaged situation. The latter position, socialist feminism, has it that "patriarchy," a hierarchical system of male supremacy, is a universal aspect of human society that predates capitalism as a cause of women's subordination to men. Emphasizing the mutual interdependence between class- and gender-based systems of domination in present-day capitalist societies, socialist feminists consider the abolition of capitalism to be a necessary but insufficient condition for women's liberation. For a thorough presentation of the socialist feminist perspective, see Eisenstein (1979).
8. A hotly debated issue in the marxist feminist literature is the degree to which housework is an aspect of the production process in advanced capitalist society. Drawing upon Marx's conception of production as the creation of surplus value, Benston (1969) has argued that domestic work does not produce exchangeable commodities and thus cannot be considered productive. This view has been challenged by Dalla Costa and James (1972) who view housewives as a "hidden source of surplus labor," whose work is in fact productive. Falling between these extremes are the positions of Seacomb (1973), Gerstein (1973), and others. A detailed discussion of these and other arguments is presented in Fee (1976).

9. A rapidly-growing body of literature within the Dependency Theory framework focuses upon the unequal economic and political relationships among nations in the world capitalist system. Leading proponents of the perspective include Dos Santos (1970), Frank (1972), Furtado (1973), and Baran (1979). A critical analysis of dependency theory is found in O'Brien (1975).

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